COMPOUND NOUNS IN THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD: FUNCTIONAL AND PRAGMATIC APPROACHES IN ÆLFRIC'S *LIVES OF SAINTS*[1]

Compound nouns, which by definition imply a condensation of information, seem to be particularly important at the stage of the Old English period, because the predominant synthetic tendencies of the language and the comparative scarcity of prepositions may have fostered such formations. Together with this primarily syntactic phenomenon, an additional but not less important factor in the development of compounds can also be found. They are cognitively or functionally grounded, and their use has to do as well with the evolution of the English language, which progressively tends to reflect more complex ideas and thoughts. All this can be analysed under functional approaches, whose overall framework is the study of language as a means of communication, as well as under the perspectives opened by relevance theory, based upon the study of the existing relationships between communicative efforts and effects. In this paper, the issue of compound nouns during the Old English period will be developed on the basis of two of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*.

1. INTRODUCTION. THE STATE OF THE ART. COMPOUND NOUNS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Functional grammar has opened new approaches to the study of communication, precisely because, in clear opposition to the previous tradition of formal grammars, it concentrates upon the study of communication: language is thus

regarded as a fundamental tool of social interaction, and consequently, it is studied in the actual settings where it is produced. Moreover, it is not a self - contained, formal and abstract entity, but an organised system devised to achieve its main purpose: communication.

In the same way, language is not regarded as an autonomous system, but one of its main functions is to reflect and influence the particular cosmovision shared by its speakers. Language refers to the world, and any linguistic item is used to refer to a corresponding entity of the real world with which this unity is correlated.

At this stage, it may be worth remembering that DIK's grammar is basically founded upon the assumption that language is an instrument of social interaction, and that the study of the language system must depart from and start with the framework of language use. Grammar, then, aims to explain the functioning of the language as it is used in communication.

In the perspective of Functional Grammar, reference acquires a central importance because the ultimate end of linguistic expressions is to describe a certain state of affairs. Language represents a possible way of codification, among many, of the ways in which the real world or cognitive environment is perceived and conceptualised by speakers. This accounts for the fact that the core of the syntactic functions expressed in and above the sentence is in fact constituted by semantic functions. In other words, the syntactic organisation of the message conveys a certain meaning to which it is subdued. Syntax gives a certain structure to a basic material that is in fact the root of any communicative act, a certain content. Moreover, this content has to be placed under the wider contexts where it is produced.

The noun plays a very important role in the organisation of the perception of reality, as it refers to "those aspects of our experience which we perceive as things or entities." (Downing, A. & P. Locke, 1992: 406). It is probably the most important lexical item to define the main focus of the communicative interaction. If communication is aimed to be effective, it will be relevant for its participants, with a view to achieving the maximum possible communicative effects with the least, minimum processing efforts. (Sperber, D. & D. Wilson, 1986). The information offered in the act of communication is intended by the speaker to be easily processed by the listener, and to achieve this, the former

estimates "the Addressee's antecedent capacities for identifying the intended referent." (DIK, 1978: 55).

Stated in terms of relevance, and assuming conditions of optimal relevance,[1] this implies that the speaker conveys his / her message in such a way that the listener can receive it with the least possible effort, and that the message will achieve the maximum possible communicative effects. In any case, the information provided in communication is directly and strongly related to the participants' interests and assumptions of one another, and it can be doubted whether the success or failure of communication is to be charged exclusively to the communicator, as these authors seem to claim. Concretely, Sperber and Wilson point out the following:

> … Communication is an asymmetrical process anyhow. (…) It is left to the communicator to make correct assumptions about the codes and contextual information that the audience will have accessible and be likely to use in the comprehension process. The responsibility for avoiding misunderstandings also lies within the speaker, so that all the hearer has to do is go ahead and use whatever code and contextual information come most easily to hand. (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 43).

As for *compound nouns*, they imply, by definition, a condensation of the information, because the procedure of the formation of compound nouns entails the suppression of superfluous elements, such as prepositions, which do not add any significant information. This is the main reason why many authors establish the difference between content words and formal words. In terms of relevance theory, it might be stated that the use of compound nouns aims at maximal relevance, because the information processed will be the

---

[1] The *presumption of optimal relevance* may be said to be a condition of the principle of relevance. The latter states that "Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance". (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 158). As for the *presumption of optimal relevance*, it may be said to be a consequence of the responsibility of the speaker for the success of communication, which these authors also assume, creating thus a controversial asymmetry of the communicative process. It goes as follows: "(a): The set of assumptions *I* which the communicator intends to make manifest to the addressee is relevant enough to make it worth the addressee's while to process the ostensive stimulus. b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one the communicator the communicator could have used to communicate *I*". (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 158).

highest possible, and this will be achieved with the lowest possible number of elements. Due to the complexity that this construction may acquire if there is a lot of premodification, it may require further processing efforts.

Compound nouns are particularly important as a part of the more general issue of *word formation*. Old English, as a synthetic language, indicates the relationship between words not with prepositions, but by means of inflections. The scarcity of prepositions may foster the tendency towards the formation of compounds, and more concretely, of compound nouns, which could be expanded through these prepositions.

In a functional grammar such as Dik's work, (1978), the status of the noun is closely linked to the aspects of reference. Thus, a *term* is defined as "any expression which can be used to refer to an entity or set of entities in some world." (1978: 55); (1989: 89).. This definition clearly reflects DIK's view of language as a means to refer to the world, and not being an autonomous, self-contained unit: *"The semantic functions* which characterize the argument positions of a predicate frame have been devised in such a way as to correlate partially with the typology of SoAs". (1989: 89). Besides, it will be the actual context that will define the reference of a definite expression, as a term has a set of potential referents, from which only some are referred to in a communication act. The analysis of compounds put forward by Dik rejects a reductionistic approach in which the meaning of a compound can be explained as the sum of the meaning of its parts. (1978: 56 ff.). This further allows us to account for the fact that not always will a compound be open to several interpretations, but the meaning of the terms that form it will constrain the actual interpretation which the expression may acquire in a certain context. The actual instance given by Dik, *pregnant women*, (1978: 56), clearly rejects a summary analysis of "pregnant" + "women": It is only women that can be pregnant, and therefore, an explanation such as "persons who are pregnant and female" would be clearly redundant. However, the same is not applied to a second possible interpretation, "persons who are female and pregnant": It is only women that can be pregnant, but obviously, not all women are pregnant; the latter would only be a subset. This further shows that the meaning of a compound expression cannot be expressed as the atomistic sum of the meaning of its parts. On the contrary, the combination of several significant units constructs a new meaning, which is formed on the basis of each of them, and yet is different either from each of

them or all of them together. Among each of the members a close relationship of meaning can be established, by which the Head and the Modifiers located nearer to it offer the most significant information.

There seems to be a functional, cognitive reason for the tendency towards the formation of compounds, which would apply for compound nouns. This has to be included within the general search for relevance, and for the easiest way to process the information. As DIK points out,

> It is easier to perceive, process and store complex information when this information is presented in chunks of increasing internal complexity. (1978: 212)[1]

The formation of compound nouns may foster an easier processing of information, because thanks to the avoidance of superfluous elements, the latter tends to be stored in internally complex groups. Moreover, this perspective has advanced many present - day approaches, of the eighties and the nineties, on discourse processing.

Thus, the treatment given by Downing & Locke (1992), to compound nouns relates them to the *classifiers*, which are characterised as those elements which restrict "the class of entity named by the head noun to a subclass". (1992: 453). As these authors point out, most of them are nouns, and in those cases "when the semantic relation between a classifier and a noun is very cohesive, they are sometimes fused as a compound denoting a single referent". *(Ibid.)*. In these cases, the classifier is regarded as fused with the entity.

Furthermore, these authors regard compound nouns as a relationship of *degree*, which will depend on how close the relationship between the elements that form it may be (1992: 478). This entails that the link established between both entities may oscillate between either a subclassification, or being both terms a class in their own right. In any case, this will mean that there does not seem to be a sharp, discrete distinction *compound versus not com-*

---

[1] This assumption will be highly influential in most models of cognitive linguistics, and relevance is no exception here: the concept of *encyclopaedic entry*, which refers to "information about the extension / denotation of a concept", contains factual assumptions and also assumption *schemas*, "which an adequate context may convert into full - fledged assumptions". (p. 88).

pound, but, on the contrary, as the authors say, "compounding (…) constitutes a cline of associations and degrees of semantic cohesiveness." *(Ibid.)*. The definition of compounds entails then an aspect of gradation or degree, which would be influenced by the way in which they are perceived by language users.

Much of the theory of Downing & Locke can be said to be based upon Halliday's work, as the authors themselves state. In fact, Halliday's Functional Grammar has been acknowledgedly influential. Thus, the term of *classifier* is firstly distinguished by this author in the experiential structure of the nominal group. (1985: 161). It may either be an adjective or a noun. In the latter case, it gives way to the compound noun. From the point of view of the logical macrofunction, which represents the logic - semantic relations encoded in reality, the modifiers of the noun may antecede it or else be postponed. If they are forming a compound with the Nucleus or Head, they both will admit modification that affects them all.

Indeed, the general relationship established by the members of a compound noun can be said to be one of classification. Thus, the second element is classified in terms of the first (Quirk *et al*, 1985: 1568), in such a way that the second constituent is thematic and bears the main significative content as well as the main stress.

These same tendencies can be applied to the formation of compounds in the Old English period. In fact, the Present Day formation of compounds draws back to the origins of the language, and confers a certain uniformity to language evolution itself, in the sense that the Modern English formation continues the tendencies of the past. In any case, the formation of compounds constitutes an important source for the improvement of resourcefulness of vocabulary.

What is characteristic about compounds is that in many ways they function as a single word. In a compound, the first component receives the main stress. Semantically, the meaning of the compound is different from the sum of each of the parts forming it. The relationship established between the members of a compound can be very varied, but the most commonly implied relations tend to be of resemblance, function, purpose or finality, instrument, etc. Compounding is moreover one of the most productive resources of lexi-

cal formation in English, which is maintained throughout its history, and which can also be found in other Germanic languages.

2. THE FORMATION OF COMPOUNDS IN THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD.

In contrast to what happened from the Middle English period onwards, during the stage of Old English the expression of new concepts and ideas was expressed having recourse to the already existing resources in the language. The introduction of words from other languages was but scarce, and it was even preferred to apply old words to new concepts. As Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable put it,

> The language in this stage shows great flexibility, a capacity for bending old words to new uses. By means of prefixes and suffixes a single root is made to yield a variety of derivatives, and the range of these is greatly extended by the ease with which compounds are formed. (1951: 64)

> (…) the remarkable capacity of Old English for derivation and word - formation, and what variety and flexibility of expression it possessed. It was more resourceful in utilizing its native material than Modern English, which has come to rely to a large extent on its facility in borrowing and assimilating elements from other languages. (1951: 65).

This tendency towards the formation of compounds seems to be characteristic of Germanic languages, as it is present not only in Old English, but also in Modern German, for instance. In any case, the use of compounds conferred the language a wide range of expression. In the case of Old English, the language could testify and name the new objects, concepts and ideas through native expressions, although the former were being introduced precisely as a result of the contacts of the Anglo - Saxons with the peoples that successively came to inhabit the island:

> As a result of this capacity, Old English seems never to have been at a loss for a word to express even the abstractions of science, theology and metaphysics, which it came to know through contact

with the church and Latin culture. (Baugh, A. C. & T. Cable: 1951: 65).

Another factor which contributed to the formation of compounds during the Old English period was the synthetic character of the language, although the analytic tendencies of the use of prepositions were already present. (Fernández, F., 1982: 209). In any case, the abundance of inflections is considered definitory of the Old English Period, to the extent that it can also be known as the *Period of Full Inflections*. In this sense, as it will be seen in the analysis of the corpus, some compounds in Old English are formed precisely through the absence of prepositions. Moreover, this tendency still continues in the present times, although instances of constructions of Old English can be found, which are formed by N + N and which may be expressed through prepositions later on.

In compound nouns, both a *main* and a *secondary accent* can be distinguished. There is a main word, which, at least in Modern English, tends to be located at the end of the nominal group. This feature would need further testing to establish whether this is also the case in the Old English Period.

In any case, it seems clear that in either stage of the development of the language the grammatical function and the semantic category of the group is provided by the Nucleus of the construction, which tends to be located at the end. In the same way, in a complex Noun Phrase, those words which have a closer relationship with the Nucleus tend to be located in the nearest possible position to it. Sometimes, the relationship established between the words forming a compound noun may become so close that they are regarded as a single word.

The relationship between the words forming the compound is not fixed or equally established for all compounds; on the contrary, this link is open to definition: thus, for example, the members of a compound may be equivalent in meaning to a relation of addition: "AB" = A + B, although this will not always be the case: for instance, WUR? MYNTE = WEOR? + MYNTE, *worth* + *mind*, although the meaning that it has is "honour, dignity". The actual meaning is somehow related to the words that form it: the connotations are positive, in both cases they refer to a positive attitude or quality of behaviour and feelings; and yet the meaning of the compound adds peculiar shades of meaning, or even develops new connotations that are not offered

by the separate parts themselves. The " new " meaning may even be completely different altogether: ex: FLOTMEN, literally, it would mean something like "*the men of the sea"*. However, in the text where it is found its meaning is rather "*the pirates"*. Of course, in addition to this feature of the nature of compounds, the contextual factors which exert influence upon the meaning and usage of an expression should also be taken into account.

Fernández (1982: 515) remarks that the composition of words as a lexical process, by means of the combination of forms or elements already existing in the language, is very frequent since the Old English Period. The commonest ways or procedures to form compound nouns during this period, according to the above mentioned author, are:

- Noun + Noun
- Adjective + Noun
- Adverb + Noun

In any case, in any of these formations, - as well as those other formations of words giving way to categories such as adjectives or adverbs - this lexical procedure tends to follow the principles inherited from the Germanic language. The latter is even still felt nowadays not only in English, but in languages such as German. As we have already remarked, the second element - or that located at the right hand side of the group - is the most important one, both lexically and syntactically.

3. TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF THE COMPOUND NOUN IN THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD: ÆLFRIC'S *ST. OSWALD, KING AND MARTYR* AND *ST. EDMUND, KING AND MARTYR*

Before going into the analysis of the compound nouns that appear in the texts under analysis, with a view to establishing a possible typology of the compound noun in the Old English period, let us synthesise the main features of the compound noun, according to what has been discussed in the previous section.

A compound noun is a construction that involves two nouns, in a special relation of modification, characterised by the fact that this combination of

words functions in many respects like a single word. In contrast to what hap-
pens with other noun phrases, the compound is treated as a single word, and
the first component receives the main stress. Semantically, compounds are
treated as single units, and not just as the sum of some units or contents. In
this way, they are different from other relations of modification.

It can be assumed that the parts forming a compound cannot be
separated, that is, that the possible addition of other modifiers will affect all
the members of the compound as a whole. Thus, another possible way to
recognise a compound will be its semantic unity and its distributional
cohesiveness.

All these assumptions about compound nouns will be next applied to Old
English, on the basis of the corpus formed by Ælfric's *St. Oswald* and *St.
Edmund*.

After the detailed analysis of both works, the following constructions will
be discussed:

> - noun + suffix, adjective + suffix
> - noun + noun
> - noun + noun in apposition
> - determiner + adjective + noun
> - genitive + noun
> - prefix + noun.

Instances of each of these constructions, found in the above mentioned
texts, and analysed in this paper, are given in Appendix I.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THESE CONSTRUCTIONS

A) NOUN + NOUN

As can be observed from the words found in the text, an important part of
this group is formed by words which designate place names (toponyms) and
names of peoples associated with these places. Some instances are: *Scotlan-
de, Norphymbra, Englalande, Dorcanceaster*,…. In many cases these words

have only undergone slight variations in their evolution towards the Modern English period. The names are interesting, because these place names constitute today a sign, or even a relic, of the various peoples that inhabited the British isles, and tell us about them. In some of them a foreign element can also be appreciated: ex.: *wintanceastre*, from Latin *castra - orum*. This further shows that the loanwords taken by the language may also become affected by the processes undergone by the latter. These words really come to form part of the language, and so, they are subjected, at least potentially, to all the changes and transformations that the words in the language may undergo. This also shows that the flexibility of English to accept new words that become fully incorporated to the language is already present in the earliest stages of its development, even though during the Old English period the most widespread tendencies are based on composition and derivation.

Similarly to what happens in Modern English, where the most widely spread tendency is that the Nucleus of the compound noun phrase tends to be displaced towards the end of the group, the situation is also present in the Old English period. Many instances where this occurs can be given as examples, such as: *Wintanceastre, Maserfelda, Angelcynn*, etc.

Sometimes, the meaning of the compound is related to the meanings of the units forming it. Thus, for example, Romebyrig (the city of Rome). However, in some other occasions a new meaning is created altogether: *pa mynstermenn* (the monks), *pa flotmen* (the privates).

The forms adopted by the Modern English counterparts are varied, and not always do they coincide with the corresponding Old English forms. The following may be given as examples:

OLD ENGLISH	FORM	MODERN ENGLISH	FORM
ÆLMIHTIGAN	PRONOUN + ADJECTIVE	- ALMIGHTY	PRONOUN + ADJECTIVE
WORULDCARA	NOUN + NOUN	- WORDLY CARES	ADJECTIVE + NOUN
BISCEOPSTOLE	NOUN + NOUN	- EPISCOPAL SEE - BISHOPRIC	ADJECTIVE + NOUN NOUN + SUFFIX,DERIVATION
GODES LOF	GENITIVE + NOUN	- LOVE OF GOD - DIVINE LOVE	OF - CONSTRUCTION ADJECTIVE + NOUN

GODES WILLAN	*GENITIVE+ NOUN*	*- WILL OF GOD* *- DIVINE WILL*	*OF - CONSTRUCTION* *ADJECTIVE + NOUN*

As it can be noticed, in the last two examples at least two possible Modern English constructions come easily to mind. Therefore, these two constructions seem to appear in *complementary distribution*.

In some cases, the corresponding Modern English evolution of the Old English compounds has given way to the consideration of one of the present forms as either a prefix or a suffix. This is the case of - CEASTER, present here in words such as Dorcanceaster or Wintanceastre. In any case, either formation has been very productive in the history of the language.

Sometimes, processes of *derivation* are also present. This is the case of words such as: *godnysse, yfelnysse, wodnysse, cynedom*, etc. This formation is also present in the Modern English period. Strictly speaking, it is not a case of composition, but rather of derivation, because it implies a change in the morphological category of the word. In this case, an adjective is added a suffix, by means of which a noun is formed. However, the resulting noun is a complex unit, because it is the outcome of some definite semantic processes.

The use of both Saxon and loan forms combined in compounds is also noticeable. An example may be *Halig Sanct*. This further shows that even at this stage the English language showed a great flexibility. These forms may appear in complementary distribution.

B) ADJECTIVE + NOUN

In both texts an important number of constructions formed by a noun and an adjective can be found. It can be assumed that the possible relationships es-tablished between a noun and an adjective are not fixed or constant, there is not a constant relationship between both, but, on the contrary, instances can be found where the adjective conveys a lexical meaning which is important for the predication given by the noun.

Cases such as *sum swipe gelμred munuc, halige rædinge, pam læwedum folc, heofonan rice or Laidanus se æpela bisceop,* show a very close relationship between the adjective and the noun. It can be noted that in all

these examples the adjective carries a heavy significative content, without which the predication held by the noun is far from complete. The adjectives, in cases such as these, offer a meaning which is necessary to understand and recognise the precise, concrete reference that the noun has in that particular context. Moreover, the qualities or features predicated by the adjective are felt as permanent. Therefore, the adjective in cases such as these does not qualify the content expressed by the noun, but helps to define its content, in such a way that the meaning of the noun cannot be properly understood without the adjective.

All these features point to a gradation in the lexical relationship between the adjective and the noun that form the nominal group, from those cases in which the adjective expresses intrinsic features of the noun to those in which the information provided by the adjective is merely additive. Therefore, the syntactic construction of noun + noun can be considered to comprise both compound nouns and expressions which would not be regarded as such, and further shows that syntax cannot be studied as a self-contained unit, independently of the other linguistic aspects. Among these, the semantic and pragmatic layers influence the way in which syntax is organised. This is probably the ultimate reason that accounts for the above fact, which moreover contradicts those approaches for which it is the function of the word that determines its form.

C) NOUN + NOUN IN APPOSITION

In this structure, a nominal group is modified by another nominal group. Both of them tend to be co-referential. However, this structure is different from compound nouns in some and important ways. Thus, in some contexts one of the nominal groups could be eliminated, and as long as the reference can be clearly identified, no significant changes in meaning would be produced. Moreover, some modifiers could be added, and only affect one of the nominal groups, but not the other. Therefore, it can be concluded that this structure is different from that of compound nouns.

D) GENITIVE + NOUN

By definition, the genitive is the case which is used to modify the noun, thus forming a group. However, although in some contexts, they function in ways

similar to compound nouns, the referents of both words may be different. Moreover, either of the words of the genitive construction may accept modification which does not refer to the whole group.

E) PREFIX + NOUN

Although it works in a similar way to the formation of compound nouns, this construction is not really a compound noun, because there is only just one possible concept, and not two concepts or ideas which are co - referential, as is the case in compound nouns.

CONCLUSIONS

In the analysis which has just been carried out, we have tried to test the hypothesis that compound nouns are important in the Old English period because they offer a great condensation of the information to be processed, and they also allow the suppression of superfluous elements, such as prepositions or conjunctions. The structure of the language during this period also fosters the formation of compound nouns.

The authors consulted, inscribed all of them in the trends of Functional Grammar or Pragmatics, seem to coincide on the idea, which we have tried to follow, that there cannot be a sharp distinction between compounds and not compounds. It seems more reasonable, then, to speak of a *gradation* in the constructions. Furthermore, as it will be further commented below, compound nouns (and, by extension, any other grammatical category or phenomenon) cannot be adequately studied by the exclusive basis of syntax. From the analysis carried out in this work, we assume that a compound as a linguistic structure is mainly defined by the actual *meaning* that it has for the language users in the context where it can be located.

The fact that there is not a one - to one correspondence between the compound noun in the Old English period with the possible meanings that it expresses, and that several forms may be distinguished, demonstrates that syntax alone is unable and insufficient to account for the relationships established between words. All these relationships are semantically motivated, depending on the relationship that is expressed, and refer to the external, ob-

jective world, which, on the one hand, defines and shapes language, and on the other hand, is defined and shaped by it.

Furthermore, the relationships expressed by compound nouns are also pragmatically motivated, in the sense that language users refer by means of them to a variety of states and relationships between these states. The achievement of an economic, as well as productive expression is probably the point at issue here. In any case, both the codification and de - codification of these expressions call for strategies of the processing of information, such as those referred by Brown & Yule (1983) as *bottom - up* and *top - down processing*. These techniques, which have been adapted from the computational modelling of language understanding, refer to the ways in which words relate to the context in which they appear, and how this influences meaning is processed and understood. As these authors point out:

> We can think of our processing of incoming discourse as the combination of (at least) two activities. In one part of the processing, we work out the meanings of the words and structure of a sentence and build up a composite meaning for the sentence. (i. e. *bottom - up processing*). At the same time, we are predicting, on the basis of the context plus the composite meaning of the sentences already processed, what the next sentence is most like to mean. (i.e. *top - down processing*). (1983: 234, bold types as in original)

These two models can be applied to compound nouns, insofar as they are designing entities or categories which are sensitive to be processed mentally by language users.

If we think about the *bottom - up processing* of compound nouns, we think about the way they are formed up by several nouns or other categories which contribute with their meanings to the formation and outcome of a new, different meaning altogether.

But at the same time, a compound noun has an internal meaning, contained by the units it has, and is further specified by the group that it forms; its meaning is also contained by the discourse context which creates expectations relating to discourse content. This is so because in the functional approach that is being followed in the present work, the linguistic elements are

not considered in isolation, but related to one another, to the context and situation and to the linguistic users.

Thus, the meaning of a compound is bound to modify and at the same time be motivated by the context in which it is found.

But in the same way, we may assume that the *compound noun*, because of its structure, is also likely to call for a *specific processing*. The compound noun entails a condensation, in some way a package of information that is stored and de - codified: we would like to refer again to the above commented assumption already introduced by DIK in 1978:

> It is easier to perceive, process and store complex information when this information is presented in chunks of increasing internal complexity. (1978: 212).

As we referred above, this assumption has been crucial in the development of theories dealing with the processing and storing of information.

In the case of compound nouns, when finding one in a text, we would firstly try to recognise it as a complex structure on the basis of our previous experience of such unities, or, in any case, by contrasting it with simpler units. Even an intuitive perception of it would recognise a certain complexity. We would also recur to our background or world knowledge.

The final conclusion that can be reached is that compound nouns call for a specific organisation of the information, which may be characterised by "the left branching" of the decodification of information. This is present in Old English, and still continues throughout the history of the language. However, this tendency is particularly reinforced by the inflected nature of the language at this stage. In the texts under analysis, this is especially manifest in toponyms, and words of highly symbolic content. We assume that the same is true of the Old English period as a whole. It is also remarkably interesting how the procedures of noun compound formation are applied not only to original, genuine Anglo - Saxon words, but the process often involves some of the comparatively few loanwords that can be found in the language. This already shows the perhaps at this stage still incipient receptivity of the English language to foreign words.

Mª Ángeles Ruíz Moneva

University of Zaragoza

REFERENCES

Alexander, L. G. 1988: *Longman English Grammar.* Longman, London.

Baugh, A. & T. Cable. 1951: *A History of the English Language*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Brown, B. & B. Yule. 1983: *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Dik, S. C. 1978: *Functional Grammar.* Foris Publications, Dordrecht.

Dik, S. C. 1989: *The Theory of Functional Grammar*. *Part I*. *The Structure of the Clause*. Foris Publications, Dordrecht.

Downing, A. & P. Locke. 1992: *A University Course in English Grammar.* Prentice - Hall, Hertfordshire.

Drosdovski, G. 1984: *Duden*. *Die Grammatik*. Dudenverlag, Mannheim.

Fernández, F. 1982: *Historia de la Lengua Inglesa*. Gredos, Madrid.

García Arranz, A. 1986: *Manual de Gramática Inglesa Comparada*. Edi - 6, Madrid.

Halliday, M. A. K. 1985: *An Introduction to Functional Grammar.* Edward Arnold, London.

Martín Arista, J. 1994: *Estudios de Gramática Funcional*. Mira Editores, Zaragoza.

Needham, G. I. ed. 1966: *Ælfric's Lives of the English Saints*. Methuen, London.

Quirk, R. et al. 1985: *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman, London.

Quirk, R. et al. 1989: *A University Grammar of English*. Longman, London.

Seymour, M. C. 1974: *Translations from the Old English*. Econoprint, Ltd., Edinbourgh.

Sperber, D. & D. Wilson. 1995 (1986): *Relevance*. *Communication and Cognition*. Blackwell, London.

Skeat, Walter. ed.1966: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Sweet, H. 1976: *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo - Saxon*. The Clarendon Press, Oxford.

APPENDIX I

- LIST OF THE INSTANCES FOUND IN THE TEXT ANALYSED WHICH
  EXEMPLIFY EACH KIND OF COMPOUND FORMATION

ST. OSWALD

1. NOUN + SUFFIX, ADJECTIVE + SUFFIX

  - Yfelnysse, ecnysse, forhaefednysse, gesceadwisnysse, cynedom, wodnysse, godnysse, untrumnysse.

2. NOUN + NOUN

  - Englalande, Norphymbra, Scotlande, æftergengan (preposition + noun), wurpmynte, Almihtigan, Heofonfeld, pa heafodmenn, woruldcara, wipersaece, wealhstod, Easterdaege, Norphymbra land, Norphymbriscum, heofonan rice, uhtsange, hwilwend, hand-bredum, Romebyrig, bisceopstole, Dorcanceaster, Wintanceastre, Maserfelda, Myrcena folc, se hæpena cyning, Norphymbra rice, his bropor heafod, Bebbanbyrig, pa mynstermenn, for menniscum gedwylde, sunnbeam, wæter wanhalum, wealweode, maessepreost, Myrcena lande, Gleawceaster.

3. NOUN + NOUN IN APPOSITION

  - Eadwine his eam, Norphymbra cyning

  - Brytta cyninge, Cedwalla geciged

  - Sum bisceop fram Romebyrig, Birinus gehaten

  - Penda, Myrcena cyning

4. (DETERMINER) + ADJECTIVE + NOUN

  - Sum æpele cyning, pysne repan cyning, Oswold se eadiga, pone modigan feond, wip pysne repan cyning, pone walhreowan cyning,

pone modigan feond, haele rædinge, pam læwedum folce, pam lifigendan Gode, pam gesæligan cyninge, munuclicre drohtnunga, mid welwillendum mode, pam wipersæce, se geleaffulla cyning, mid blipum mode, pam læwedum folce, Aidanus se æpela bisceop, pes gebletsode swypra hand, se ælmihtiga Gode, pa hwilwedlican gepincpu, ealle Westsexena land, se geleaffulla Oswold, pam halgan Birine, pa Oswold cyning, pam halgan Birine, pam halgan Oswolde, Halig Sanct, Heofonlic leoht, healic sunnbeam, sum wegfarende mann, of pam halgan duste pæaere deorwurpan stowe, pæaet halige dust, pam hælende Criste, sum halig cyning, pæs halgan reliquium, on halig wæter, pam halgan treowe, halgum weorcum, alip Gode, pone halgan wer.

5. GENITIVE + NOUN

- Godes willan, pæs Papan raede, pæs Haelendes naman, Godes lof, his lifes geendunge, Oswoldes slege, Sancte Petres Mynstre, Godes aenglas.

6. PREFIX + NOUN

- Geferum

ST. EDMUND

1. NOUN + SUFFIX, ADJECTIVE + SUFFIX

- Gereccednysse, welwillendnysse, rihtwisnysse, waelhreownysse.

2. NOUN + NOUN

- Swurdbora, eadmod, Norphymbra lande, heafodmen, eadmod, Easenglum, mannudene, se ærendraca, wintersetl, goldhordas, ud-erkyning (Prep + noun), landleoda, flotmen, heretogan, Hælende Criste, se flothere, pæaet landfolc, pam gebædhuse, haligdome, Romebyrig, on folclicre spræce, God ælmihtig, on Domesdæge peowdome, Angelcynn, on Englalanda, ælmihtig God, pam Halgan Gaste.

3. NOUN + NOUN IN APPOSITION

- Eadmund se ædiga

- Eastengla cyning

- Hingwar, se arlease flotman

4. (DETERMINER) + ADJECTIVE + NOUN

- Sum swype gelæred munuc, Sancte Benedictes stowe, Dunstane aercebisceope, Eadmund se eadiga, mid æpelum peawum, pone ælmihtigan God, to bysmorfollum leahtrum, pa Deniscan leode, pe Westsexena cyning, pa unwittigan cild, pa fyrmestan heafodmen, beotlic ærende, pine digelan goldhordas, pam repan Hingware, for pam faerlican gelimpe, pas earman landleoda, ful cene, æfter minum leofum pegnum, for minum agenum earde, pinum repan hlaforde, haepenum heretogan, to Hælende Criste, pone waelhreowan Hinguar, pone geleaffullan cyning, to anum erpfæstum treowe, mid sopan geleafan, se anrædum geleafan, pæt heafod pæs halgan Eadmundes, pone halgan lichaman, pone heofonlican God, pæs ecan wuldres, se mildheorta God, ungesælige peofas, pam ar-wurpan halgan, yfelum deape, for pam wurpfullan halgan, on pone lifigendan Crist, his heofonlican Fæder.

5. GENITIVE + NOUN

- Eadmundes swurdbora, Sancte Benedictes stowe, on Æpelredes cyninges dæge, for pæs cyninges life, Cristes gebysnungum, heora hlafordes lic, purh Godes wissunge, Cristes peowdome, Drihtness halgena.

* † *