Expressive compounds in German

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Abstract

German adjectival and nominal compounds like ratten + scharf (‘rat sharp’)
sau + schlecht, (‘sow bad’) Hammer + auftritt (‘hammer performance’), Arsch + gesicht
(‘arse face’) contain meliorative or pejorative elements as part of their structure. The
left-hand evaluative members of these compounds are usually considered as so-called
semi-prefixes. Contrary to recent approaches within constructional morphology (Booij
2009, 2010), I will argue that these elements are still lexemes, but that they have
undergone metaphorical extension. Evidence stems from the consideration of right-
hand members like Kommunisten + schwein (‘communist pig’), which have never been
considered as semi-suffixes in a similar way. The metaphorical meaning of these
heads and non-heads is systematically connected with expressive meaning. It will be
shown that the criteria for expressive meaning proposed by Potts (2007) by and large
apply. Furthermore, I will argue against a possible analysis in terms of conventional
implicature, as proposed by Williamson (2009, 2010) with respect to the meanings of
ethnical slur terms like spic.

Werner brüllte, tobte, schäumte; schleuderte mit Worten wie Kerl, Dreck,
Schwein und Scheiße nur so um sich, wir verstanden ihn nicht, doch es war
klar, daß der Professor nicht gut dabei weggam; der Professor hörte zu; den
Moment, da der Inspektor nach Luft japste, nutzte er und sprach ruhig, leise,
doch verständlich und mit Würde, beinahe feierlich: Ich lehre Goethes Deutsch,
Herr Inspektor. Ich lehre nicht Schweinedeutsch.
Josef Škvorecký, Das Baßsaxophon (1967)

I. Introduction

While there is, under the label of ‘evaluative morphology’, some research on
diminutives and augmentatives, pejorative and meliorative morphology appears to
have been neglected. According to Bauer (1997: 537–538), the core areas of evaluative
morphology are diminutivisation and augmentativisation; moreover, the term evaluative morphology

... seems also to allow for a wider reading than simply markers of size or negative emotional affect, including such things as intensification and politeness or modesty, which in some languages use the same affixes as diminutives and/or augmentatives.

However, there is a class of morphological elements in German that is directly associated with pejoration and amelioration, and thus may serve as data for research into evaluative meaning. For example, the left-hand and right-hand elements in compounds such as Arsch- in Arschgesicht (‘arse face’) or -scheiße in Reformscheiße (‘reform shit’) certainly convey pejorative meaning. To call a person an Arschgesicht will count as a heavy insult, and someone who comments on certain political processes with Reformscheiße (‘reform shit’) conveys the attitude that he despises or even hates these enterprises.

Quite typically, some of the pejorative elements belong to the taboo language (Allan & Burridge 1991, Culpeper 2011). In particular, this holds for those elements denoting excrements and body parts connected with sexuality. A quick look at computer-mediated communication shows that the use of ‘dirty’ language is widespread. In that sense, violating taboos is a mass phenomenon. But there are differences in the degree of pejorative meaning that have to be taken into account. For instance, cunt is far more offensive for the British population than arse (rank 1 versus 20 according to a study cited by Culpeper 2011: 143). Similarly, German -scheiße (‘shit’) is far more offensive than -mist (‘dung’).

From a morphological point of view, the respective left-hand evaluative elements have been classified as so-called prefixoids or semi-prefixes (Ascoop 2005, Decroos & Leuschner 2008, Elsen 2009, Leuschner 2010). There is a long-standing debate in the German literature whether this is a clear-cut category at all, at least when synchrony is considered. As put forward most forcefully by Schmidt (1986), a morpheme should be either classified as an affix or as a lexeme; mixed categories like semi-affix or affixoid blur the necessary distinction between compounding and derivation. As a consequence of this view, Fleischer & Barz (1995: 37) classify -wesen and -werk in compounds like Verkehrswesen (traffic essence, ‘transportation’) and Blattwerk (leaf work, ‘foliage’) as suffixes, although they are traced back easily to the lexemes Wesen und Werk by native speakers.

The anti-semi-affix view, however, convincing as it is at first sight, neglects two aspects of morphological reasoning. Firstly, this view tends to neglect the fact that the grammaticalisation of lexemes as suffixes is well attested in language history and that an encompassing morphological theory should be able to account for morphological change. After all, it is a well-known fact that German suffixes such as -heit, -keit, -schaft, and -tum are former lexemes that lost their status as free morphemes, and gained a new status as suffixes. And similar processes of grammaticalisation could very well be going on in the present (Stevens 2005).
Secondly, while the anti-semi-affix view has the advantage of providing clear-cut linguistic categories, it is not particularly interested in explaining the effects of semantic change and chain formation (‘Reihenbildung’) typically connected with so-called semi-affixes. An exception is Olsen (1986), drawing on previous work of Vögeding (1981) but taking a lexicalist perspective, who argued that the semi-affix character of elements like -voll (‘full’) and -frei (‘free’) may be traced back to their lexical entries that show a relational meaning component, thus providing an explanatory perspective towards productivity and ‘Reihenbildung’ (cf. Bauer 2001). Motsch (1996) portrayed some semi-affix candidates like -mäßig, -fähig, or -gerecht as elements that intrude into the functional domains of other suffixes, thus seeking a semantic solution to the activity of some putative suffixoids in specific domains of word formation.

More recently, Booij (2009, 2010) claimed that the in-between status of Dutch affixoids may be best accounted for by positioning them in the framework of construction grammar, constructions being conceived of as form-meaning pairings that are not altogether determined by morphological rules. According to Booij (2009: 209), the mere postulation of a category of semi-affixes or affixoids ‘... is just a convenient description of the fact that the boundary between compounding and derivation is blurred’, while the constructional analysis is a step forward towards explaining this phenomenon.

For instance, (1b) shows a constructional idiom that is a ‘partially lexically specified productive pattern’ (Booij 2009: 209) motivating the construction in (1a).

(1) (a) man ‘man’ bladen-man (lit. ‘magazines-man’) ‘magazine seller’
(b) [[x]N[man]N]N ‘trader in X’

Similarly, pejorative prefixoid formations such as Nl. kanker-school ‘bloody school’ with the prefixoid Nl. kanker ‘cancer’ or meliorative prefixoid formations like Nl. wereld-vrouw ‘fantastic woman’ with the prefixoid Nl. wereld ‘world’ might be analysed as constructional idioms. Hence the gist of this approach is to ‘formally express the affixoid nature of these compound-initial lexemes by specifying them in constructional idioms’ (Booij 2010: 57) of a certain pattern, as in (1b).

While I agree that a constructional morphology approach towards many morphological phenomena might be attractive, I will argue that in the case of prefixoids, as far as German expressive compounds are concerned, this is definitely not the case. Since, according to my analysis, these putative prefixoids are ordinary lexemes used metaphorically, there is no need to appeal to a constructional analysis. Metaphors are quite routinely parts of compounds.

In the present paper, I will concentrate on a number of elements that are candidates for the status as ‘semi-affix’, as showing up in N+N-compounds and A+N-compounds. These items share the property of contributing to a pejorative or meliorative meaning of the whole compound. The non-head may be pejorative (2a), or meliorative (2b), and the head may be pejorative (2c) or meliorative (2d). Moreover, there are pejorative heads that are proper names or nouns denoting relatives
(see below). Note that the glosses given are literal. (For instance, German Er ist ein Hammertyp (‘He is a hammer type’) means something like He is a cool dude in English. Hopefully, readers will be able to reconstruct an adequate correlate according to their dialect and current fashion, since dictionaries will not always be helpful in this respect.)

(2) (a) Non-head is pejorative
   arsch- ‘arse’
   Arschgesicht ‘arse face’, arschkalt ‘arse cold’
(b) Non-head is meliorative
   hammer- ‘hammer’
   Hammersauftritt ‘hammer performance, hammerhart ‘hammer hard’
(c) Head is pejorative
   -dreck ‘filth’
   Evaluationsdreck ‘evaluation filth’
(d) Head is meliorative
   -gott ‘god’
   Fußballgott ‘soccer god’

Throughout this paper, I will concentrate on evaluative non-heads, because here the connection between expressivity and putative semi-affix status is most salient. In particular, I will argue that these elements are not affixoids but lexemes, and that they possess a metaphorical as well as an expressive meaning. This argument extends to heads as well. Thus, there is no need for invoking a constructional approach with respect to these cases.

The outline of the paper is as follows. In section 2, I will present some arguments against the ‘affixoid’ status of the expressive elements under investigation. In section 3, I will argue that these elements are normal lexemes, albeit ones that underwent metaphorical extension. This process leads to an expressive meaning, and so I go on to discuss in section 4 whether the list of criteria for expressive meaning presented by Potts (2007) applies. Since, according to Williamson (2009, 2010), expressive meaning is connected with conventional implicatures in the case of ethnic slur terms like boche, I reject this proposal with respect to expressive compounds in section 5. Finally, section 6 contains the conclusions.¹

2. Expressive compounds in German – data and first observations

A more comprehensive taxonomy of expressive compounds in German will comprise at least the following elements. All examples given are attestable by a quick Google-search:

(3) Non-head is pejorative
   arsch- (Arschgesicht, arschkalt) (‘arse face’, ‘arse cold’)

1
drecks- (Dreckskerl, drecksschwu¨l) (‘filth guy’, ‘filth humid’)
grotten- (Grottensaison, grottenschlecht) (‘cave season’, ‘cave bad’)
hunds- (Hundsehrer, hundsgemein) (‘dog teacher’, ‘dog mean’)
mist- (Mistwetter, mistkalt) (‘dung weather’, ‘dung cold’)
sau- (Saupreusse, sauschlecht) (‘sow Prussian’, ‘sow bad’)
scheiß- (Scheißreform, scheißegal) (‘shit reform’, ‘shit + it doesn’t matter’)
schrott- (Schrottyt, schrottdumm) (‘dung type’, ‘dung stupid’)
schweine- (Schweinestaat, schweineteuer) (‘pig state’, ‘pig expensive’)

(4) Non-head is meliorative
arsch- (arschgut) (‘arse good’)
hammer- (Hammerauftritt, hammerhart) (‘hammer performance’, ‘hammer hard’)
killer- (Killerauftritt, killergut) (‘killer performance’, ‘killer good’)
mist- (misigut) (‘dung good’)
ratten- (rattenscharf) (‘rat sharp’)
sau- (saugut) (‘sow good’)
scheiß- (scheißgut) (‘shit good’)

(5) Head is pejorative
-arsch (Politischer) (‘politician arse’)
dreck (Evaluationsdreck) (‘evaluation filth’)
fotze (Lehrerfotze) (‘teacher cunt’)
fuzzi (Filmsvisa) (‘film flack’)
-kacke (Comedykacke) (‘comedy shit’)
junkie (Esoterikscha) (‘New age junkie’)
mist (Unimist) (‘university dung’)
pups (Nazipups) (‘Nazi fart’)
ratte (Zuhälteratte) (‘pimp rat’)
sack (Elitesack) (‘elite scrotum’)
sau (Lehrsau) (‘teacher sow’)
scheiße (Reformscheiße) (‘reform shit’)
schrott (Demokratieschrott) (‘democracy dung’)
schwein (Komunisteschwein) (‘communist pig’)
tussi/-tusse/-tuss (Discotussi) (‘disco bimbo’)

(6) Head is pejorative: Proper names
(a) -august, -fritz(e), -gustav, -hans, -heini, -matz, -maxe, -michel, -peter,
-philipp; -liese, -suse, -trine;
(b) -berger, -meier, -huber, -müller

(7) Head is pejorative: Names denoting relatives
-bruder, -schwester, -onkel, -tante, -opa, -oma

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Let me point out some initial observations with respect to this classification. First, the evaluative elements occur as lexemes and thus are not prototypical affixes. A hard and fast affix should be bound in all contexts. It is predictable, then, that the compounds are ambiguous, for example:

(9) Kommunistenschwein (‘communist pig’)  
1. ‘person being mean by virtue of being a communist’  
2. ‘a certain pig belonging to a communist’

Second, while the compounds are of the determinative type, some elements are possible as non-head as well as heads, e.g. Politikersau (‘politician sow’) versus Saupolitiker (‘sow politician’). Moreover, a combination of two or more expressive elements such as Arschsau (‘arse sow’), Arschdrecksauf (‘arse mud sow’), Drecksack (‘mud sack’), Scheißdreck (‘shit mud’) is possible.

(10) Gute Idee, der Majo die ARSCHDRECKSAU kann dann gleich vorbeikommen und uns schöen unsere Kiste ausgeben, dann fahrn wir mimm Zug nach Neuhof fressen Schnitzel und drinken mal wieder e9n Erdinger und pennen dann alle beim Majo (2002488.hompepagemodules.de/topic.php?board...id...1)  
‘Good idea, the Majo the ARSE MUD SOW can then straightaway come along […]’

Third, linking elements (Germ. ‘Fugenelemente’) connected with the non-head element occur, e.g. Drecks +s + kerl, Kommunist +en + schwein, grotte + n + schlecht.  
Fourth, coinages containing the expressive elements in (3)–(6) are easily possible. For a relatively new item like ratten–, we find rattscharf, ratengeil, Rattenarsch, Rattensau. There are elements like sau– that occur (probably because of their intensifying meaning) with pejorative as well with meliorative meaning, e.g. saublod, saugut. This raises the question whether there is a connection between melioration/pejoration on the one hand, and intensification on the other (see Kammerer 2001).  
Fifth, there are more pejorative elements than meliorative elements. Many evaluative elements in the nominal domain refer to persons, although abstract entities are not excluded (Scheißdemokratie, Scheißliebe). Whereas an element like arsch– may be used melioratively if combined with a positive adjective like gut, the same effect is not available when the head of the compound is a noun, e.g. Arschtyp *‘type who is positively evaluated’.
3. The left hand-members are not semi-prefixes

As Booij (2009: 208) defines,

... the terms ‘affixoid’ and ‘semi-affix’ have been introduced to denote morphemes which look like parts of compounds, and do occur as lexemes, but have a specific and more restricted meaning when used as part of a compound.

More precisely, the following properties of affixoids which are well-suited to bona fide prefixoids like Riesen- and Spitzen- or suffixoids like -voll and -frei have been proposed (Motsch 1996, Stevens 2005, Heymann 2006):

(11) Typical properties of affixoids

(a) Affixoids have a lexeme counterpart with the same form.
(b) There exists an etymological connection between the affixoid and its lexeme counterpart, and this connection is transparent to speakers.
(c) Affixoids do not possess the same meaning as their lexeme counterparts (‘semantic change’).²
(d) Affixoids are productive, i.e. there are sets of compounds containing the affixoid, and coining of affixoidal compounds is easy, thus giving rise to series of compounds (‘Reihenbildung’).
(e) Some affixoids are interchangeable with genuine affixes without any change in meaning. For instance, in the case of intensifying prefixoids, Mordsparty (‘murder party’) and Megaparty (‘mega party’), or Supergewinn (‘super prize’) and Riesengewinn (‘giant prize’) are synonymous. Therefore we have evidence for the integration of affixoids into the system of affixes.

Note that according to this definition, affixes like Haupt- or the adverbial suffix -weise should be classified as affixoids. There certainly is a partly transparent relation to the nouns (das) Haupt (‘head’) and (die) Weise (‘way’); moreover, these elements have developed a more abstract meaning and they participate in ‘Reihenbildung’. Yet these elements are usually classified as affixes, cf. Fleischer & Barz (1995). Thus, the checklist of criteria is not as concise as one would wish. However, there are serious arguments against positing the affixoid status in the case of our expressive elements.

First, and most importantly, genuine prefixes never contain linking elements as they show up in many German compounds, for example Kind + er + garten (Nübling & Szczepaniak 2008). There simply are no derivations like *Ur + s + wald. But some expressive non-heads have linking elements (Dreck + s + kerl, grotte + n + schlecht), so that one may conclude that, at least in this respect, so-called prefixoids behave more like lexemes than like prefixes.³

Second, while it may be artificial to assume a suffixoid -statt on the basis of only three examples, as in the case of Heim + statt, Werk + statt, Wohn + statt, it is
obvious that ‘Reihenbildung’ (say, more than three items) also routinely occurs with common lexemes, be it as heads or as non-heads. For example, there are numerous compounds with *haus* (‘house’) as left-hand or right-hand element, but *haus* has never been argued to constitute a prefixoid or suffixoid. Hence this criterion draws attention to the requirement that semi-affixes should follow a (weakly) productive pattern, but purely as such it may be inadequate for the proper identification of semi-affixes.

Third, although expressive head elements are usually not considered as candidates for suffixoid status, there is an intersection between the set of expressive heads and non-heads, e.g. *arsch, sau, scheiß(e)*. But normal prefixes do not have an overlap with suffixes. Only combining forms like *phil* may occur as initial combining form and final combining form alike, e.g. *Phil+hellene* (‘lover of the Greeks’) versus *homo+phil* (‘homosexual’). But this is typically non-native, Latin-, Greek-, or English-based morphology, while our ‘affixoids’ are native elements.

Fourth, the criterion of interchangeability, as explained in (11c) above, does not work in the case of evaluative affixoids. For one, there are no clear-cut evaluative prefixes that could be substituted for evaluative prefixoids in order to prove interchangeability and hence integration into the system of prefixes. All I can think of is a pair like *Un+mensch* and *Scheiß+mensch*, but I would argue that here the semantic contributions of the left-hand parts are different, even though the referent of these lexemes is evaluated negatively: Whereas *un-* has a clear-cut negative meaning, *scheiß-* has a clear-cut pejorative meaning. In the case of suffixoids, all I can imagine is something like *Tugend+bold* and *Tugend+arsch*, both expressions referring to a goody-goody or Pharisee. According to Fleischer & Barz (1995: 197), the element *-bold* is a suffix isolated from proper names like *Dietbold* and used pejoratively for reference to persons, e.g. *Witzbold* (‘buffoon’), *Lügenbold* (‘liar’), *Saufbold* (‘alcoholic’), *Raufbold* (‘ruffian’), etc. But again, interchangeability does not work here, for it seems senseless, for instance, to refer to a (disrespected) witty person by *Witzarsch* instead of *Witzbold*. The same holds for the other words ending with the suffix *-bold*.

Fifth, some putative prefixoids (see 12c) have adjectival counterparts that result from a noun-to-adjective conversion, e.g. *spitze, scheiße, hammer* in (12a) (predicative use) and (12b) (attributive use) (cf. Grzega 2004, Pittner & Berman 2006).

(12) (a) Der Typ ist spitzeₐ/scheibeₐ/hammerₐ.
‘The type is top/shit/hammer.’
(b) Er ist ein spitzeₐ/scheibeₐ/hammerₐ Typ.
‘He is a top/shit/hammer type.’
(c) Er ist ein Spitzentypₙ/Scheißtypₙ/Hammertypₙ.
‘He is a top type/shit type/hammer type.’

However, genuine prefixes that have adjectival counterparts are not known in German.

In conclusion, while there are certainly expressive elements in the head and non-head position of German compounds, we find strong arguments against their status as affixoids. This is not to deny the possibility of affixoids altogether (although that would
be a welcome result for synchrony as well), but simply to state that the given criteria for affixoids do not apply. They have no explanatory force for the expressive meaning of the elements under investigation.

4. The left-hand members are metaphors

Metaphors, so much is clear, are quite normal as heads or non-heads of compounds (Benczes 2006):

(13) Paket + lösung ‘parcel solution’
    Paket + antrag ‘parcel application’

(14) Feinkost + paradies ‘delicatessen paradise’
    Spiele + paradies ‘play paradise’

For instance, there are numerous word formations with the heads -korsett, -land, -park, -schraube, -spirale (‘corset’, ‘land’, ‘park’, ‘screw’, ‘spiral’) which are metaphorical in nature (cf. Hämmer 2002). Thus, while it is obvious that we have metaphors as parts of compounds (and of derivations, too, see Panther & Thornburg 2002), these metaphors have never been analysed as semi-affixes. In short, not all elements that show the properties of ‘Reihenbildung’ and semantic change are good candidates for the status as semi-affixes.

Any dictionary will reveal that elements like scheiß(e) are already established as metaphors. For instance, Wahrig-Burfeind (2006: 1283) distinguishes between the following lexemes: Female die Scheiße (‘shit’, ‘bullshit’), and masculine der Scheiß (‘bullshit’).

(15) (a) So ein Scheiß! Lass mich in Ruhe mit deinem Scheiß! Red keinen Scheiß! ‘Such bullshit! Let me in peace with your bullshit! Don’t talk bullshit!’

(b) So eine Scheiße! Das ist doch alles Scheiße! Jetzt sitzt du echt in der Scheiße!
    Die Scheiße steht mir bis zum Hals.
    ‘Such shit! That is MP all shit! Now you are sitting really in the shit! The shit stands me up to the neck.’ [MP = modal particle]

It is reasonable to assume that the metaphorical ‘bullshit’ readings stem from the literal meaning ‘shit’. Note, however, that der Scheiß does not have anymore a literal reading, so that we may speak of a conventionalised metaphor here; this being nicely reflected in the gender change.6

As a matter of fact, it is not easy to judge whether the left-hand element in ein Scheißtyp is related to die Scheiße or der Scheiß, because dropping of the schwa is otherwise well attested.7

Apparently, the status of a metaphorical element is different with respect to its status as head versus non-head, as well as its occurrence in nominal versus adjectival composition.
First, consider metaphor as head versus non-head. At first glance, it is not easy to
tell what the difference is between Arschpauker (‘arse crammer’) on the one hand, and
Paukerarsch (‘crammer arse’) on the other. Since the metaphors are nouns, they can
show up in N+N-compounds as heads as well as non-heads. Their functions are the
usual ones. The head denotes the intended category (–arsch relates to persons evaluated
negatively), whereas the non-head has a modifying function, that is persons are
classified as being in some relation with a property expressed as –arsch. Hence, we
have only one metaphor arsch, but this metaphor functions in a different way according
to its status as head or non-head.

Second, consider nominal versus adjectival composition. Here, all the determinative
elements are nominal. In nouns, some of them may show up in head and in non-head
positions, while others may have specialised in the non-head or head slot. The question
arises whether adjectival compounds may have an evaluative head. This seems indeed
to be the case in the following examples, where we have adjectives derived from
particules as heads, and nominal non-heads modifying them. 8

(16) schreib in den nächsten tagen zwei SCHEISSBESCHISSEN schwere Prüfungen.
Hab trotzdem was Kleines gebastelt. mood: sick Songs: Tamar – Transcend
(acoustic) . . . (forum.harrypotter-xperts.de/search.php?searchid = 1466489)
‘[I] write in the next days two SHIT ROTTEN hard exams. Nevertheless, (I) have
made something little […]’

(17) wieso müssen die Politiker das immer so ARSCHBESCHEUERT umschreiben:
“eklatante Modifizierung der Reform” erst Zahlen wir jedesmal 10 Euro drauf
dann . . . (www.shortnews.de/start.cfm?id=528019)
‘Why must politicians always circumscribe that so ARSE CRACKED: striking
modification of the reform first we pay every time 10 Euro extra then . . .’

(18) also wenn man die Preise von € auf DM umrechnet, denn darf man heute
nix mehr kaufen so ARSCHVERFICKT teuer alles heutzutage geworden
ist. . . . (www.freesoft-board.to/1395456-post306.html)
Now if the prices are converted from € into DM then today nothing new can be
bought, so ARSE FUCKED expensive everything has become nowadays.

As for the relevant metaphorical domains, several types of metaphors may be
distinguished:9

(19) Negative evaluation


Body parts: Arsch, Fotze (‘arse’, ‘cunt’)

Materials: Dreck, Kacke, Mist, Scheiße, Schrott

Proper names: Heini, Tussi, . . .

Names for relatives: Onkel, Tante, . . . (‘uncle’, ‘aunt’, . . .)
I assume then that all expressive elements are metaphors derived from nouns, with the exception of *grotten-*, *-fuzzi*, *-tussi* that are opaque to a certain degree. How the source domain relates to the target domain in the case of metaphorical proper names and names for relatives is by no means easy to say (cf. Sánchez Hernández 2009). I assume that the source domain relates to a class of bearers of these names to whom stereotypical properties are ascribed. For example, in present German *Uschi* and *Horst* are proper names that are used pejoratively, seemingly because bearers of these names are considered as old-fashioned, uncool, etc. by those speakers who use these names in the context of insults (e.g. *Du Vollhorst*! ‘You full Horst!’).

The metaphors are conventional, that is they are not *ad hoc* constructed (cf. the process of *ad hoc* concept formation in Carston 2000). Because they are expressive, as I will show in the next section, they do not contribute to truth conditions (this being the case for most researchers anyway, but see Stern (2008) for an alternative view). Besides the patterns non-head $\text{MET} + \text{head}$ and non-head $+ \text{head}_{\text{MET}}$ we also find compounds displaying the pattern non-head$_{\text{MET}} + \text{head}_{\text{MET}}$, as in *Arschsau* (‘arse sow’) or *Sauarsch* (‘sow arse’).

For the element *arsch* in nominal compounds we get:

(20) (a) Politikerarsch ‘arse$_{\text{MET}}$ in virtue of being politician’
(b) Arschpolitiker ‘politician having to do with arse$_{\text{MET}}$’

What is negatively associated with the literal source *arsch* becomes projected on the target category of a person in (20a). In (20b), *Arsch*– is a modifier of the semantic head *politiker*. The literal meaning of *arsch* is not conveyed (while there is, of course, ambiguity, see the above example *Kommunistenschwein* in (9)). One interpretation is that the politician behaves like an *arsch$_{\text{MET}}$* (this it not to say that these words are comparisons, cf. Thurmair 2000).

Then we find adjectival compounds like in (21), where the element *arsch*, being applicable in positive as well as negative domains denoted by the head, appears to work not so much as a meliorative or pejorative element, but as a pure intensifier.

(21) arschkalt, arschbeschissen, arschklein (‘arse cold’, ‘arse rotten’, ‘arse little’)
     arschheiß, arschcool, arschklar (‘arse hot’, ‘arse cool’, ‘arse clear’)

I will argue that these elements are nevertheless metaphors. The intensifying meaning arising when the head denotes something evaluated as positive, e.g. in *arschcool*, is best analysed as a conversational implicature.

Because the combination of a head denoting something which is positively evaluated with a determiner non-head expressing metaphorically something negative does amount to a contradiction (thus violating the Maxim of Quality requiring that the speaker tries to make a true contribution, see Grice (1989: 27), Meibauer (2009)), an implicature of intensification arises.
Two observations support this point. First, in German we have constructions like *schrecklich interessant* (‘awfully interesting’), *furchtbar nett* (‘dreadfully nice’), *unheimlich stark* (‘uncannily strong’), *wahnsinnig gut* (‘madly good’), where an ‘emphasis of horror’ (Hentschel 1998) takes place. In these constructions, the modifying adverb expresses something negative, while the modified adjective expresses something positive. Why should one say *schrecklich interessant*, when there is a neutral alternative *sehr interessant* (‘very interesting’)? My answer is that, because of the apparent contradiction, the former draws more attention to itself than the latter with its conventional intensifying adverb.

Second, if so, one would suspect that there are contexts where the pejorative (metaphorical) meaning is active and others where the intensifying meaning (albeit metaphor-based) is active, compare (22) with (23):

(22) *ja klar, ihr habt die weisheit mit löffeln gefressen und seid so SCHEISSCOOL, dass es beinahe schon weh tut. logisch. kommt mal wieder runter. . . .* (jetzt.sueddeutsche.de/kommentare/476785/-1)
‘Yeah, you are an Einstein and you are so SHIT COOL that it hurts. Cool down.’

‘As SHIT COOL as you are, you have absolutely gained my respect. Way to go, both of you! [ . . .]’

Third, Google-searches yield interesting differences between certain items (search conducted on 03/30/11). There are items like *arschcool* (17.000), *arschgeil* (140.000), *rattenscharf* (659.000), *rattengeil* (23.800), which have, partly because of sexual connotations or contexts, many Google-hits. Other possible combinations show quite different results.

It is not altogether clear what to conclude from these results. I take them as a hint towards different degrees of conventionalisation or productivity (cf. Bauer 2001). Maybe there are directions of developments that could be traced here, for example *scheißschlecht* (104 hits) is in an earlier state of conventionalisation (compared with *scheißgut*, 1.080 hits), while *rattengut* (103 hits) is in an earlier state (compared with *rattenschlecht*, 1.020 hits); but this must remain a speculation at the moment.

5. **The metaphorical elements are expressive**

Although there has been talk of ‘expressive’ morphology ever since the seminal paper of Zwicky & Pullum (1987), the topic seems not to have been seriously pursued (cf. Dressler & Merlinski Barbaresi 1997, Kiefer 1998, Dressler 2000, Meibauer 2007). Here I would like to start from a notion of expressivity as developed in (multidimensional) semantics and ask whether it might apply to morphological meaning as well.
I have argued that the metaphorical elements may gain an intensifying effect, and portrayed this effect as a conversational implicature. In this section I want to discuss in what sense these items are ‘expressive’, this obviously having to do with their suitability to be used in insults or compliments (cf. Havryliv 2003, 2009, Neu 2008). If I want to insult a politician, there are several constructions or expressions I could use:10

(24) (a) Dieser Politikerarsch!
    ‘This politician arse!’
(b) Dieser Arsch von einem Politiker!
    ‘This arse of a politician!’
(c) Dieser Arschpolitiker!
    ‘This arse politician!’
(d) Dieser verdammte Politiker!
    ‘This damn politician!’

In a recent paper, Potts (2007) sets out to sketch a heuristics for expressive meaning. According to him, expressive meaning has six essential properties. Let us check whether expressive compounds are expressive according to Potts’ heuristics. Potts, in accordance with other scholars, draws a general distinction between descriptive content and expressive content of an utterance.

1. Independence. According to Potts, the expressive content of an utterance contributes a dimension of meaning that is separate from the regular descriptive content. The independence criterion requires that ‘we can change or remove the expressive content of a phrase without affecting its descriptive content’ (Potts 2007: 168). For instance, like in Potts’ example That bastard Kresge is famous with the descriptive content ‘Kresge is famous’ and the expressive content ‘Kresge is a {bastard/bad in the speaker’s opinion}’, we may distinguish between the descriptive and the expressive content of Kommunistenschwein along the following lines:

(25) (a) Fritz ist ein Kommunistenschwein.
    ‘Fritz is a communist pig.’
(b) Descriptive: ‘Fritz is a communist.’
(c) Expressive: ‘Fritz is {a pig/mean person because of being a communist}.’

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>gut</th>
<th>-bequem</th>
<th>cool</th>
<th>-schlecht</th>
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<td>556</td>
<td>17.000</td>
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<td>105</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19.312</td>
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<td>1.080</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>2.669</td>
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<td>ratten-rat</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.020</td>
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<td>1.282</td>
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2. **Nondisplaceability**: According to Potts, expressives predicate something of the utterance situation, more specifically:

‘Expressives cannot (outside of direct quotation) be used to report on past events, attitudes, or emotions, nor can they express mere possibilities, conjectures, or suppositions. They always tell us something about the utterance situation itself.’

(Potts 2007: 169)

Thus, the second utterance in (26a) is implausible in that context because the positive evaluation of Fritz is in contradiction to the expressive head -schwein as part of the compound Kommunistenschwein. But note that perspectivisation seems possible to a certain extent, see (26b). This example, however, would be better (for an average speaker, not for a committed Nazi) if the item Kommunistenschwein was scare-quoted.

(26) (a) Das Kommunistenschwein Fritz hat die Wand beschmiert. (Er ist ein netter Kerl.)
    ‘The communist pig Fritz has smeared all over the wall. He is a nice guy.’
(b) Heute wurde bekannt, dass das Kommunistenschwein Fritz aktiv im Widerstand gegen die Nazis war.
    ‘Today we learned that the communist pig Fritz was active in the resistance against the Nazis.’

3. **Perspective dependence**: According to Potts, expressive content is evaluated from a particular perspective. In general, the perspective is the speaker’s, but there can be deviations if conditions are right. I think this is also illustrated by cases like (26b).

4. **Descriptive ineffability**: According to Potts, speakers are never fully satisfied when they paraphrase expressive content using descriptive, nonexpressive terms. For instance, attempts at describing the contents of ein rattenscharfes Kleid (‘a rat sharp dress’) in purely descriptive terms are bound to fail because descriptions cannot exhaust expressive content. A paraphrase like ‘dress that is sharp like a rat’ is not convincing. However, the same problem exists with respect to metaphors in general.

5. **Immediacy**: According to Potts, expressives, like performatives, achieve their intended act simply by being uttered; they do not simply offer content, but inflict it. Hence, if someone insults someone by using a pejorative compound, or if someone praises someone by using a meliorative compound, the opposite attitudes can not be attached correctly without contradiction.

(27) (a) Fritz ist ein Drecksarsch, ich bewundere ihn seit langem.
    ‘Fritz is a mud arse, I have admired him for a long time.’
(b) Das Kleid ist rattenscharf, total langweilig.
    ‘That dress is rat sharp, totally boring.’
6. Repeatibility: Finally, Potts mentions that if a speaker repeatedly uses an expressive item, the effect is generally one of strengthening the emotive content, rather than one of redundancy, emphasising that regular descriptive content behaves in a different way.

(28) (a) Verdammt, ich habe meine verdammten Schlüssel in meinem verdammten Wagen gelassen!
   ‘Damn, I left my damn keys in my damn car!’

(b) Ich bin sauer. Ich habe meine Schlüssel vergessen. Ich bin sauer. Sie sind im Wagen. Ich bin sauer.
   ‘I am sour. I forgot my keys. I am sour. They are in the car. I am sour.’

Like intensifying prefixes like mega-, super-, expressive metaphors may be repeated:

(29) Wetter ist halt schlecht, im Winter Sausaukalt, im Sommer drecksschwül und großstadtheiß halt
   (thomas-in-la.blogspot.com/2004_04_01_archive.html)
   ‘weather is MP bad, in winter SOW SOW COLD, in summer mud humid and big city hot MP.’

(30) ankunft spät am freitag abend, grade passend zu kosheen auf die ich mich sehr gefreut hatte! man muss zugeben: von der qualität her ein hammerhammerauftritt . . .
    (technoforum.dyndns.org/.../ultimatebb.php?)
   ‘arrival late on Friday evening, just fitting to kosheen to whom I looked forward. You have to admit: by way of quality a HAMMER HAMMER PERFORMANCE’

It is, however, not clear, what the relation to other (more or less descriptive) alternatives is:

(31) Im Winter ist es sehr kalt, sehr kalt. (‘very cold, very cold’)
    Im Winter ist es sehr, sehr kalt. (‘very very cold’)
    Im Winter ist es megamegakalt. (‘mega mega cold’)
    Im Winter ist es schrecklich kalt. (‘awfully cold’)

In the case of Schscheiß, mentioned by Nübling & Vogel (2004), a descriptive paraphrase is not convincing:

(32) (a) Schscheißpolitiker!
    ‘shhit politician’

(b) Der Politiker ist scheiße. Der Politiker ist scheiße.
    ‘The politician is shit. The politician is shit.’
I would like to add to this list another property of expressive items, namely degree of expressivity.

7. Degree of expressivity: Expressive items differ in degree of expressivity. For instance, scheiß– is more powerful than grotten–, and –arsch is more powerful than –heini.

In summary, there is evidence that pejorative and meliorative metaphors are expressive, according to Pott’s criteria for expressive meaning. Hence we should ask what the relation between metaphor and expressivity is.

6. The left-hand members are not bearers of conventional implicatures

Recently, expressive meaning has been discussed with respect to ethnic slur terms (ethnophaulisms), for instance Engl. kraut (vegetable > German) or Germ. Spaghetti (pasta > Italian). While these examples suggest that slur terms may have a metaphorical or metonymical basis, this is not necessarily so (Faust 1969, Winkler 1994, Markefka 1999). Nevertheless, ethnic slur terms are lexemes that are typically connected with expressive meaning. With pejorative expressions like Politikerarsch they share an inherent negative, insulting or “hate speech attitude”.

How can this expressive meaning, built into the complex word and being realised as a metaphor, be captured in the semantics/pragmatics interface? Somewhat simplified, there are (a) approaches holding that a sentence like Dr. Werner ist ein Scheißpolitiker (‘Dr Werner is a shit politician’) is neither true nor false, and (b) approaches saying that such a sentence is true in one respect, and false in another respect.

The first approach is taken by Saka (2007: 122). He holds that utterances like Nietzsche was a Kraut are neither true nor false, because they are essentially expressive. This expressive meaning is attitudinal, because the speaker expresses his attitude against Germans. According to Saka, expressive meaning cannot be captured in a truth-conditional semantics.

(33) (a) Nietzsche was a Kraut.
(b) As a member of the Anglophone community, S thinks “Nietzsche was a Kraut”.
(c) For any member S of the Anglophone community, S thinks “Nietzsche was a Kraut” = [i] S thinks that Nietzsche was German and [ii] S disdains German as a class.

Hence for Saka, the analysis of pejorative utterances does not have sentences like (33a) as its proper object, but attitudinal sentences like (33b). The semantic analysis of (33b) then has the general form of (33c).

Similarly, Richard (2008: 33–37) argues that sentences like (33a) are neither true nor false. In particular, he refers to the common sense observation that one cannot assent to sentences like (33a) without buying the (unacceptable) thought that Germans are despicable as a class (Richard 2008: 37). However, the special perspective of the
hate speaker has to be taken into account (Richard 2008: 40): this perspective cannot
be refuted by the simple negation of a sentence like (33a), but only by rejection of
the anti-German prejudice that it presupposes. If only negated, the hate attitude is
preserved as in a presupposition.

The second approach is taken by Williamson (2009: 149). He argues that English
speakers judge both sentences under (34) as true:

(34) Lessing was a German.
Lessing was a Boche.

Hence boche has a meaning component ‘is German’. The additional, denigrating
meaning of the type, Germans are cruel, etc.’ is considered as a conventional
implicature. And in fact, if something is not really part of the truth-conditional
meaning on the one hand, and not a conversational implicature on the other hand, then
the category of ‘conventional implicature’ lends itself for application (see Potts 2008).

But how far will this take us? Saka (2007: 136) objects to this approach because for
him, conventional implicature is only a questionable label for expressive meaning.
And Richard (2008: 40) does not want to exclude that, in the case of pejoratives,
conventional aspects of meaning indeed exist, but he denies ‘that it is by appeal to this
fact that we best explain our reluctance to say (when the slur is aimed at its target) what
is said is true.’

Let us finally discuss the item Scheißpolitiker. If a speaker S utters (35a), then it
follows that (35b) and (35c) are true.

(35) (a) Dr. Werner ist ein Scheißpolitiker.
‘Dr Werner is a shit politician.’
(b) S denkt, dass Dr. Werner ein Politiker ist.
‘S thinks that Dr Werner is a politician.’
(c) S verachtet Dr. Werner als einen Politiker.
‘S disdains Dr Werner as a politician.

Then my proposal predicts that the metaphorical meaning of Scheiß- cannot easily be
cancelled, and behaves like bona fide cases of conventional implicature (but, therefore,
etc.):

(36) *Dr. Werner ist ein Scheißpolitiker, aber ich bewundere ihn als Politiker.
‘Dr Werner is a shit politician, but I admire him as a politician.’

But this is by no means an argument for the status as a conventional implicature. The
expressive meaning comes about because of a negative attitude of a group of speakers
against the referent of Scheiß (in its literal meaning). Thus, the expressivity has to do
with the stereotypical evaluation of the source domain.
Because this expressive meaning is not cancellable, it does not qualify for the status as a conversational implicature, either (except in very strong ironical contexts; note that even the N-word may be used ironically). It is not part of the literal meaning of the complex word, and thus does not contribute to the truth conditions of the sentence in which it occurs. Note that in the Gricean tradition, metaphors are violations of the Maxim of Quality.

I conclude, then, that there is no need to invoke conventional implicatures here, as some scholars have done in the case of ethnic slur terms. Elements like scheiß– are expressive because of their metaphorical nature which has to do with a negatively evaluated source domain.

7. Conclusions

Throughout this paper, I have argued that the left-hand members of expressive compounds like Arschgesicht (‘arse face’) are not semi-affixes (prefixoids), as suggested in a number of approaches. Instead, I have analysed these elements as metaphors. Thus, there is no need either to assume a synchronically suspicious word formation process of ‘semi-affixation’ with respect to these cases, or to appeal to a constructional idiom analysis (as in Booij 2009, 2010). Metaphors, so much is clear, may show up as parts of compounds without thereby forcing us to give up a well-established approach to compounding. The metaphorical approach also extends to metaphorical heads, for which suffixoid analyses are less common. What is interesting about these expressive compounds is that expressive meaning is integrated on the level of word structure. I do not think that this must lead to a multidimensional word semantics along the lines of Potts (2005), or to the assumption that expressive meaning is connected with conventional implicatures (Williamson 2009, 2010); rather, I assume that it is the expressive meaning connected to the evaluation of the source domain of the respective metaphors that brings in the expressive meaning. Hopefully, I have shown that expressive compounding deserves a place on the morphopragmatic research agenda.

Notes

1. This paper developed from a talk given to the DSWI conference, Rome 2010. I am grateful to the audience and to three anonymous reviewers of this journal for their very helpful comments.
2. Semantic change may include weakening (often referred to as ‘bleaching’) or strengthening of a certain meaning (Traugott & König 1991).
3. Similarly, with intensifying left-hand members of compounds like Spitze + n-, Riese + n-, Mord + s-, where the linking elements are not compatible with the predicted status as future prefixes.
4. The interchangeability criterion is also used in Van Goethem (2008: 33) where pairs like nl. oud-leerling ‘former pupil’ versus ex-leerling ‘ex-pupil’ and nieuw-realisme ‘New realism’ versus neo-realisme (Neorealism) are given. A future scenario would be then that the elements oud- and nieuw-, at least with one of their meanings, are prefixes on a par with the wll-establishe prefixes ex- and neo-.

But the idea of strictly synonymous prefixes is
questionable, not only because the effectiveness of the contrast principle or elsewhere condition (Giegerich 2001), but also because ex- and neo- are non-native and thus to a certain extent autonomous vis-à-vis the native system (Scherer & Meibauer 2008).

5. There are degrees of pragmatic productivity here. For example, der/ein scheiß Typ has only four Google hits and there may be a blocking effect stemming from the alternative der/ein Scheißtyp. Nevertheless, there are such occurrences, and, what matters more, they can be predicted.

6. An anonymous reviewer suggests that das Arsch (neuter) might be a similar case, for example in (marginally) attested cases like (i):

   (erdgeschossrechts.de/blog/2007/02/?paged = 55)
   . . . Rosita, THE OLD ARSE, has cooked cuitlacoche . . .

   It is not clear to me, however, how far the analogy goes, since I suspect das Arsch to be shortened from das Arschloch.

7. As pointed out above, there are also predicative uses as in Der Typ ist scheiße and der scheiße Typ, der scheiß Typ, where scheiße(s) is used as an attributive, uninflected adjective. Similar processes of noun-to-adjective conversion occur with spitze, cf. Grzega (2004).

8. Attributive and predicative uses may be easily provided, too, so there is no special syntactic restriction at work.

9. Note that animal metaphors are widespread. Braun (1997: 123-125) provides a list of more than 100 nouns denoting persons whose heads literally refer to animals. However, the focus here is only on those nouns from the source domain of animals that are associated with negative attitudes.

10. An anonymous reviewer draws my attention to Hohenhaus (1996: 295-296) who points out that compounds ending in -heini, -fritze and -quatsch, -scheiße, -blödsinn often appear in constructions like diese(r) (ganze) ___ (‘(all) this/that ___’). It goes without saying that the syntactic context of expressive compounds, as well as their syntactic rivals, deserves closer inspection. As for the frame Du X!, for instance in Du Idiot! (Swedish: Din Idiot!, English: You idiot!), see d’Avis & Meibauer (2013).

References


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