The irksome nature of left members of German compounds

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The left-hand member of German compounds may consist of what appears to be a bare root (see (1), or it can contain one of a number of suffixes, traditionally termed linking morphemes (henceforth LKs), see (2). The precise nature of the various LKs has remained elusive, despite several comprehensive descriptive and/or diachronic accounts (e.g. Fuhrhop 1996, Nübling & Szczepaniak 2013, among others). Approaches have attempted to provide prosodically based analyses, as well as refutations of such. A number of the LKs appear to be identical to inflectional forms of the left members, while others are non-existent as words independent of their occurrence in a compound. The former are termed "paradigmatic" and the latter "non-paradigmatic" (e.g. Fuhrhop 1996). While a definitive novel account of all the LKs is well beyond the scope of this presentation, we have set the modest goal of revisiting a number of questions posed by both the bare root compounds as well as the ones contains an LK. Specifically, we will cast our questions within a syntactic framework, that is, an approach that does not postulate morphology as a separate module. We will restrict our discussion to (i) V-N compounds, and (ii) N-N compounds where the left member appears to be a plural form. We will furthermore focus on two generalisations: (i) in V-N compounds, minimal pairs where V is a bare root versus those which contain an instance of the so-called non-paradigmatic LK *–s* display subtle interpretive differences; see (3). We propose to analyse bare V-N compounds as ROOT-ROOT adjunctions, while those containing a LK as a structure dominating two *n*Ps. The LK in these cases constitutes a functional head that sets two phrases in a relationship that can be one of predication or modification. (ii) While a number of irregular plural forms are admissible in N-N compounds, the productive plural suffix –s is disallowed; see (2c) vs. (2d). This mirrors a well-known asymmetry in English compounds, which permit irregular plurals but resist productive inflectional suffixes (e.g. *mice infested* versus **rats infested*; see e.g. Harley 2008; Siddiqi 2009). The fact that the productive plural is barred suggest that the extended projections of compounds can include a low head that encodes number, but not a higher Number head, which hosts the productive plural morpheme (see Kilbourn-Ceron et al. 2016).

A. Compounds with bare root left-hand members (no LK)(n.b. category is tentative, presumably uncategorized roots):

(1) a. Buch-handel 'book trade' b. Miet-handy rent mobile ('cell phone for rent')

B. Compounds a left-hand member possessing a LK:
[[X_1 – LK] – X_2] (X_1 and X_2, respectively, can be complex)

(2) a. Rind-s-leber beef-LK-liver b. Hust-en-saft cough-EN-juice ('cough sirop')
c. Büch-er-regal book-PL_{irreg}-shelf' d. *Auto-s-händler car-$PL_{default}$-salesman

(3) a. Miet-haus
rent house
'a house for rent'

b. Miet-s-haus
rent-LK house
'an apartment building'

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