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Analysis Of Endocentric Compound In Greta Thunberg's Speech School Strike For Climate

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ABSTRACT: The formation of new lexical items through the combination of two or more lexemes is referred to as compounding, a significant process within the field of morphology. As noted by O'Grady (1996), compound words are typically categorized into two types: endocentric and exocentric compounds. Katamba (1994:320) emphasizes that endocentric compounds exhibit greater productivity compared to their exocentric counterparts. This study aims to examine the morphological structures of endocentric compound words found in a specific object—namely, the speech text School Strike for Climate. Employing a qualitative-descriptive method, the research analyzes and interprets the semantic classification of the identified compounds. The speech transcript reveals 26 occurrences of endocentric compounds, all of which function as compound nouns and consist of nominal components.

Keywords: compounding, endocentric, compound noun, speech

1. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a crucial means of communication and is fundamental to human interaction. For individuals learning a language, it is important to develop a strong grasp of key components such as vocabulary, sentence formation, and grammar. A central concept in language study is the morpheme, which refers to the smallest unit that carries meaning (Lim Kiat Boey, 1975). Morphemes are classified into two types: free morphemes, which can function independently and have meaning (e.g., *book*, *kind*), and bound morphemes, which must be attached to a free morpheme to convey meaning (e.g., *-ly*, *-er*, *-s*) (Katamba, 1994).

Morphology, a subfield of linguistics, focuses on the internal structure of words and examines the processes involved in their formation, particularly how word forms can shift depending on contextual factors (Lieber & Štekauer, 2014). It distinguishes between open-class categories—such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—and closed-class categories, which include elements like articles, prepositions, and conjunctions (Akmajian et al., 2017). Additionally, morphological analysis explores processes such as compounding, wherein two or more meaningful morphemes combine to create new lexical items, referred to as compound words (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011).).

Compounding can be categorized into endocentric and exocentric types. Endocentric compounds, where the head determines the meaning (e.g., *toothbrush*), are common in English,

while exocentric compounds lack a clear head (e.g., *pickpocket*) (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010; Booij, 2007). O'Grady (1996:43) explains that compounding involves the integration of lexical categories, such as nouns, adjectives, verbs, or prepositions—into a single, more complex lexical unit.

Language plays a pivotal role in communication, particularly in delivering persuasive messages within activist discourse, such as global climate discussions. Greta Thunberg's TED Talk, *School Strike for Climate*, exemplifies how linguistic structures can raise awareness about environmental issues. Morphology, a subfield of linguistics, examines word formation, including compounding, where two or more morphemes combine to create new words with distinct meanings (Lieber & Štekauer, 2014; Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). Compound words, such as *climate crisis* or *carbon emissions*, are especially significant in shaping persuasive discourse.

While compounding has been studied in literary and conversational contexts, its application in climate activism speeches is less examined. This study focuses on endocentric compounds in the transcript of Thunberg's *School Strike for Climate*, as preliminary analysis suggests these are prevalent compared to exocentric compounds. This can be attributed to the higher productivity of endocentric constructions compared to exocentric ones in the formation of new lexical items. As noted by Bauer (as cited in Katamba, 1993: 69), a word-formation process is considered productive when it is broadly applicable, influences a wide range of forms, and results in the creation of numerous new words. Furthermore, Bloomfield (as cited in Benczes, 2004: 43) observes that the majority of English compound words are endocentric. This predominance is reflected in linguistic literature, which tends to marginalize exocentric constructions and often characterizes them as semantically opaque. Additionally, Katamba (1994: 320) points out that exocentric compounding plays a limited role in the generation of new vocabulary.

By analyzing the structure and function of endocentric compounds, this study aims to elucidate how word formation supports environmental messaging. It also explores whether these compounds enhance clarity, emphasize urgency, or evoke emotional responses. Limited to the speech transcript, the research contributes to morphology and discourse analysis, offering new insights into the role of language in social movements, particularly climate activism.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Morphology, a core subfield of linguistics, focuses on the structure, formation, and classification of words within a language (Lieber & Štekauer, 2014). It examines how words are constructed from smaller units, known as morphemes, which are the smallest meaningful elements in language (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). According to Booij (as cited in Noumianty, 2016, p. 3), words can be simple, consisting of a single morpheme (e.g., *tree*), or complex, comprising multiple morphemes (e.g., *trees* or *toothbrush*). A key process within morphology is word formation, which encompasses various mechanisms through which new words are created to convey specific meanings or functions.

Yule (2010, as cited in Rahayu, 2010, p. 1) identifies several word formation processes in English, including derivation, back-formation, coinage, compounding, blending, acronyms, conversion, and borrowing. Among these, compounding is particularly relevant to this study due to its prevalence in persuasive discourse, where combined words create nuanced or impactful expressions. This research focuses specifically on compounding, as it plays a significant role in shaping the linguistic strategies observed in activist speeches.

Compounding is a morphological process that entails the integration of two or more lexemes to generate a new lexical item with a unique semantic interpretation (Matthew, as cited in Noumianty, 2016, p. 3). For instance, the compound *policewoman* results from the combination of *police* and *woman*, signifying a particular occupational role, whereas *bitter-sweet* fuses *bitter* and *sweet* to convey a complex emotional state. In general, compounds are classified into two principal types: endocentric and exocentric.

Endocentric compounds are those in which the head of the compound determines its syntactic category and meaning (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). The head, typically one of the constituent words, is modified by the other component. For instance, in *toothbrush*, *brush* is the head, indicating the general category, while *tooth* specifies its function. The meaning of endocentric compounds is usually transparent, as it can be inferred from the meanings of their parts. These compounds are prevalent in English and are frequently utilized to enhance clarity and specificity, especially within technical discourse or persuasive contexts.

In contrast, exocentric compounds lack a clear head within their structure, and their meaning cannot be directly deduced from their constituents (Booij, 2007). For example, *pickpocket* does not refer to a type of pocket or picking but to a person who steals from pockets. Exocentric compounds are less predictable in meaning and may belong to various syntactic categories, such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. Given the preliminary observation that Thunberg's *School Strike for Climate* transcript contains primarily endocentric compounds, this study focuses on their structure and function.

3. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, as the issues under investigation required in-depth observation. The researcher examined the linguistic phenomena through verbal descriptions rather than numerical data. This aligns with Mahsun (2007:256), who emphasizes that qualitative research focuses on interpreting meaning and presenting data within its contextual framework, typically utilizing words instead of numbers. Similarly, Lofland and Lofland, as cited in Moleong (2007:157), assert that qualitative research data consist of words, actions, and various supplementary sources.

For this analysis, the data was taken from the speech text titled "School Strike for Climate" delivered by Greta Thunberg. In this study, 26 words were selected to be categorized into endocentric compounds.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze endocentric compounds in the speech text entitled "School Strike for Climate." For the analysis of endocentric compounds, the researcher adopts Booij's (2007) theory, which posits that endocentric compounds are characterized by the presence of a lexical head. Thus, an endocentric compound is distinguished by containing a head or hyponym within one of its elements.

Endocentric Compound Noun

Data 1

"You would never read or hear about anything else as if there was a **world war** going on." One endocentric compound noun is identified: "world war." This compound consists of two nouns, "world" (modifier) and "war" (head). The head "war" denotes a conflict, while the modifier "world" specifies its global scale, retaining the semantic category of "war." As an endocentric compound, "world war" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 2

"But no one ever talked about it. If burning **fossil fuels** was so bad that it threatened our very existence, how could we just continue like before?"

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "fossil fuels." This compound consists of two nouns, "fossil" (modifier) and "fuels" (head). The head "fuels" denotes a source of energy, while the modifier "fossil" specifies its origin from fossilized remains, retaining the semantic

category of "fuels." As an endocentric compound, "fossil fuels" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 3

"Later on, I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, OCD and selective mutism."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "selective mutism." This compound consists of an adjective ("selective") and a noun ("mutism"), with "mutism" as the head and "selective" as the modifier. The head "mutism" denotes the condition of being unable or unwilling to speak, while the modifier "selective" specifies that the condition occurs only in certain situations, retaining the semantic category of "mutism." As an endocentric compound, "selective mutism" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 4

"We aren't very good at lying and we usually don't enjoy participating in the **social game** that the rest of you seem so fond of."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "social game." This compound consists of an adjective ("social") and a noun ("game"), with "game" as the head and "social" as the modifier. The head "game" denotes an activity or interaction, while the modifier "social" specifies that it involves social interactions, retaining the semantic category of "game." As an endocentric compound, "social game" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 5

"I think in many ways that we autistic are the normal ones and the rest of the people are pretty strange, especially when it comes to the **sustainability crisis** where everyone keeps saying that climate change is an **existential threat** and the most."

Two endocentric compound nouns are identified: "sustainability crisis" and "existential threat," as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Endocentric Compound Nouns in Data 5

Compound Noun	Structure	Head	Modifier	Explanation
sustainability crisis	Noun + Noun	crisis	sustainability	The head "crisis" denotes a critical situation, modified by "sustainability" to specify a crisis related to environmental or resource concerns.

existential threat	Adjective + Noun	threat	existential	The head "threat" indicates a danger, modified by "existential" to describe a threat to existence, often used in global issue contexts.
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The compound "sustainability crisis" consists of two nouns, with "crisis" as the head and "sustainability" as the modifier, specifying a crisis concerning environmental or resource sustainability. Similarly, "existential threat" combines an adjective ("existential") and a noun ("threat"), with "threat" as the head and "existential" as the modifier, indicating a danger to existence. Both compounds are endocentric, as their meanings remain within the semantic category of the head, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework.

Data 6

"There are no **gray areas** when it comes to survival. Either we go on as a civilization or we don't."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "gray areas." This compound consists of an adjective ("gray") and a noun ("areas"), with "areas" as the head and "gray" as the modifier. The head "areas" denotes a region or concept, while the modifier "gray" indicates ambiguity, referring to unclear situations between clear opposites (e.g., black and white). As an endocentric compound, "gray areas" retains the semantic category of the head, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework.

Data 7

"Yet as the IPCC have recently demonstrated, aiming instead for 1.5 degrees Celsius would significantly reduced the **climate impacts**, but we can only imagine what that means for reducing emissions."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "climate impacts." This compound consists of two nouns, "climate" (modifier) and "impacts" (head). The head "impacts" denotes effects or consequences, while the modifier "climate" specifies that these effects are related to climatic conditions, retaining the semantic category of "impacts." As an endocentric compound, "climate impacts" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 8

"Nor does anyone ever mention the **greenhouse gases** already locked in the system, nor that **air pollution** is hiding a warming so that when we stop burning fossil fuels, we already have an extra level of warming, perhaps as high as 0.5 to 1.1 degrees Celsius."

Two endocentric compound nouns are identified: "greenhouse gases" and "air pollution," as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Endocentric Compound Nouns in Data 8

Compound Noun	Structure	Head	Modifier	Explanation
0	Noun + Noun	gases	greenhouse	The head "gases" denotes gaseous substances, modified by "greenhouse" to specify gases that trap heat, resembling the effect in a greenhouse.
air pollution	Noun + Noun	pollution	air	The head "pollution" indicates contamination, modified by "air" to specify contamination of the atmosphere.

The compound "greenhouse gases" consists of two nouns, with "gases" as the head and "greenhouse" as the modifier, specifying gases that trap heat, similar to a greenhouse effect, retaining the semantic category of "gases." Similarly, "air pollution" combines two nouns, with "pollution" as the head and "air" as the modifier, indicating contamination specific to the atmosphere, within the semantic category of "pollution." Both compounds are endocentric, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 9

"Furthermore, does hardly anyone speak about the fact that we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction with up to 200 species going extinct every single day."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "mass extinction." This compound consists of an adjective ("mass") and a noun ("extinction"), with "extinction" as the head and "mass" as the modifier. The head "extinction" denotes the process of species disappearance, while the modifier "mass" specifies its large-scale nature, retaining the semantic category of "extinction." As an endocentric compound, "mass extinction" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 10

"That the **extinction rate** is today between 1000 and 10,000 times higher than what is seen as normal."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "extinction rate." This compound consists of two nouns, "extinction" (modifier) and "rate" (head). The head "rate" denotes a measure of frequency, while the modifier "extinction" specifies that it measures the frequency of species disappearance, retaining the semantic category of "rate." As an endocentric compound, "extinction rate" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 11

"Nor does hardly anyone ever speak about the aspect of equity or **climate justice** clearly stated everywhere in the Paris Agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on a **global scale**."

Two endocentric compound nouns are identified: "climate justice" and "global scale," as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Endocentric Compound Nouns in Data 11

Compound Noun	Structure	Head	Modifier	Explanation
climate justice	Noun + Noun	justice	climate	The head "justice" denotes fairness or moral rightness, modified by "climate" to specify justice related to environmental issues.
global scale	Adjective + Noun	scale	global	The head "scale" indicates scope or extent, modified by "global" to specify a worldwide scope.

The compound "climate justice" consists of two nouns, with "justice" as the head and "climate" as the modifier, specifying fairness related to environmental issues, retaining the semantic category of "justice." Similarly, "global scale" combines an adjective ("global") and a noun ("scale"), with "scale" as the head and "global" as the modifier, indicating a worldwide scope, within the semantic category of "scale." Both compounds are endocentric, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 12

"That means that rich countries need to get down to **zero emissions** within six to 12 years with today's emission speed."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "zero emissions." This compound consists of an adjective ("zero") and a noun ("emissions"), with "emissions" as the head and "zero" as the modifier. The head "emissions" denotes the release of pollutants, while the modifier "zero" specifies a complete absence of such releases, retaining the semantic category of "emissions." As an endocentric compound, "zero emissions" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 13

"There are no **emergency meetings**, no headlines, no **breaking news**. No one is acting as if we were in a crisis."

Two endocentric compound nouns are identified: "emergency meetings" and "breaking news," as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Endocentric Compound Nouns in Data 13

Compound Noun	Structure	Head	Modifier	Explanation
emergency meetings	Noun + Noun	meetings	emergency	The head "meetings" denotes gatherings, modified by "emergency" to specify urgent gatherings in response to a crisis.
breaking news	Adjective + Noun	news	breaking	The head "news" indicates information, modified by "breaking" to specify current or latest information, often urgent or significant.

The compound "emergency meetings" consists of two nouns, with "meetings" as the head and "emergency" as the modifier, specifying urgent gatherings in response to a crisis, retaining the semantic category of "meetings." Similarly, "breaking news" combines an adjective ("breaking") and a noun ("news"), with "news" as the head and "breaking" as the modifier, indicating current or latest information, within the semantic category of "news." Both compounds are endocentric, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 14

"Even most **climate scientists** or **green politicians** keep on flying around the world, eating meat and dairy."

Two endocentric compound nouns are identified: "climate scientists" and "green politicians," as summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Endocentric Compound Nouns in Data 14

Compound Noun	Structure	Head	Modifier	Explanation
climate scientists	Noun + Noun	scientists	climate	The head "scientists" denotes individuals engaged in scientific study, modified by "climate" to specify those studying climatic phenomena.
green politicians	Adjective + Noun	politicians	green	The head "politicians" indicates individuals in politics, modified by "green" to specify those focused on environmental issues.

The compound "climate scientists" consists of two nouns, with "scientists" as the head and "climate" as the modifier, specifying individuals who study climatic phenomena, retaining the semantic category of "scientists." Similarly, "green politicians" combines an adjective ("green") and a noun ("politicians"), with "politicians" as the head and "green" as the modifier, indicating politicians focused on environmental issues, within the semantic category of "politicians." Both compounds are endocentric, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 15

"By then I will, in the **best case**, not even have lived half of my life."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "best case." This compound consists of an adjective ("best") and a noun ("case"), with "case" as the head and "best" as the modifier. The head "case" denotes a situation or scenario, while the modifier "best" specifies an optimal or most favorable scenario, retaining the semantic category of "case." As an endocentric compound, "best case" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 16

"I **school striked** for the climate. Some people say that I should be in school instead."

This compound consists of two nouns, "school" (modifier) and "strike" (head). The head "strike" denotes a form of protest or work stoppage, while the modifier "school" specifies that the protest involves students or is conducted in a school context, retaining the semantic

category of "strike." As an endocentric compound, "school strike" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 17

"And what is the point of learning facts in the **school system** when the most important facts given by the finest science of that same school system clearly means nothing to our politicians and our society?"

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "school system." This compound consists of two nouns, "school" (modifier) and "system" (head). The head "system" denotes an organized structure or framework, while the modifier "school" specifies that it pertains to educational institutions, retaining the semantic category of "system." As an endocentric compound, "school system" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic.

Data 18

"Now we're almost at the end of my talk and this is where people usually starts talking about hope, solar panels, wind power, circular economy, and so on."

Three endocentric compound nouns are identified: "solar panels," "wind power," and "circular economy," as summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Endocentric Compound Nouns in Data 18

Compound Noun	Structure	Head	Modifier	Explanation
solar panels	Noun + Noun	panels	solar	The head "panels" denotes flat structures, modified by "solar" to specify panels that harness solar energy.
wind power	Noun + Noun	power	wind	The head "power" indicates energy, modified by "wind" to specify energy derived from wind sources.
circular economy	Adjective + Noun	economy	circular	The head "economy" denotes a system of resource use, modified by "circular" to specify a system focused on recycling and sustainability.

The compound "solar panels" consists of two nouns, with "panels" as the head and "solar" as the modifier, specifying panels that harness solar energy, retaining the semantic category of "panels." Similarly, "wind power" combines two nouns, with "power" as the head and "wind"

as the modifier, indicating energy derived from wind, within the semantic category of "power." The compound "circular economy" consists of an adjective ("circular") and a noun ("economy"), with "economy" as the head and "circular" as the modifier, specifying a sustainable resource system, retaining the semantic category of "economy." All three compounds are endocentric, aligning with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

Data 19

"We've had 30 years of **pep talking** and selling positive ideas."

One endocentric compound noun is identified: "pep talking." This compound consists of a noun ("pep") and a gerund/noun ("talking"), with "talking" as the head and "pep" as the modifier. The head "talking" denotes the act of speaking or conversation, while the modifier "pep" specifies a motivational or energizing quality, retaining the semantic category of "talking." As an endocentric compound, "pep talking" aligns with Booij's (2007) framework, where the head determines the compound's syntactic and semantic category.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, a total of 26 endocentric compound words were identified. All of these compounds fall under the category of compound nouns, exhibiting two distinct structural patterns: 15 instances were formed through the combination of a noun + noun, while 11 instances followed the adjective + noun structure. Notably, the analysis revealed no occurrences of exocentric compounds within the speech text. These results indicate that the predominant type of semantic relation employed in Greta Thunberg's speech "School Strike for Climate" is the endocentric compound, with the noun + noun construction emerging as the most frequently used pattern.

This study provides valuable insights into the usage patterns of compound words within speech texts, an area that has received comparatively less attention than written forms such as novels and news reports. The results may serve as a foundation for future research examining the correlation between compound word types and rhetorical strategies, audience engagement, and communicative contexts. Furthermore, the observed variation in compound word distribution underscores the significance of deliberate word choice in enhancing message clarity and effectiveness in formal speech settings.

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