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**Ways of formation of punning compound words in German and their translations into Russian**

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**ABSTRACT**

The article deals with the problem of punning word formation in the German language. In connection with the topicality of philological studies on reflection of national specifics in the language, as well as the comparative study of different national languages and their features, the interest in unique linguistic phenomena has been growing. For example, the frequency of composition as a word-forming method in European languages or the structural and semantic features of punning word formation are of interest. The relevance of the article is determined by the active use of puns in modern German, based on the model of complex words. The article aims to study punning complex words as one of the types of language game, as well as to consider word-formation patterns, on the basis of which puns are formed, and their translations into Russian. The main methods of research are the method of continuous sampling, the descriptive and comparative method, as well as the analysis of directly constituent components. For the completeness of the presentation of the features of a given linguistic phenomenon, the article covers the notions of composing, pun, word-formation model. The study identifies the most frequent and widespread models of punning formations and analyzes their translation equivalents in the Russian language. The punning compound words from the point of view of the structure correspond to the word-formation models characteristic of the German language, their specific feature is the semantic transformation that is based on the meaning change of one of the components of pun and influences the translation of the word.



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**Keywords:** linguistic analysis, cultural heritage, punning word formation, compound word, play of words, translation correspondence.



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The most vivid reflection of the world view of the national cultural heritage is through language in humor. For example, the Germans' humor directly depends on the situation, it is always specific. Most of the language jokes in this language are based on ambiguity or the so-called pun. Linguists so far have not arrived at a common view of understanding of the essence of the pun, which is mirrored in various terms to designate this device. Many foreign scholars - linguists (John Pollack, Paul Hemond, Patrick Higgs) differentiate between the notions of "pun" and "play of words" (Pollack, 2011, p. 9), giving arguments that the play of words is based on polysemy, and pun - on the consonance of words being different and similar in spelling and sounding. Russian linguists consider these concepts to be synonymous (G. B. Antrushina, A. V. Fedorova, S. I. Vlachova, S. P. Florina). Pun can be understood not only as "the play of words", but as "witticism", "double meaning", etc.

Pun is a word or a phrase "containing the play of words which is based on the use of words being similar in sounding but different in meaning or different meanings of one and the same word" (Efremova, 2006, p. 531), as well as on the reinterpreting of already existing units in the language. This formation has an effect of novelty, it strikes by its unusualness, based on the semantic reinterpretation of words and the syntactic arrangement of the words of the German language.

In this paper, there has been made an attempt of linguistic analysis of the punning compound words of the German language and their translations into the Russian language from the structural-semantic point of view to reveal their semantic and structural features in these linguistic systems. The term "composite" is used in this case to denote compound words without regard to distinguishing the specific features of compound words. It should be noted that the problem of distinguishing a compound word as a word-formation phenomenon has a long history and has not yet been completely solved. For example, the article by G.P.J. Wamelink-van Lint covers this



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phenomenon (Wamelink,1994, p. 657-659), it analyzes the features of composites in relation to European language systems.

The problem of differentiating between compound words and word combinations formed according to the model *noun + noun* is one of the main topics of discussion in English grammar studies. This is the so-called stone wall problem, mentioned in the works of Russian and foreign linguists: G. Marchand, 1960; A. Ball, 1971; O. Truevtseva, 1986. In German, the formation of compound words is a mass phenomenon, which indicates both the prevalence of this phenomenon and a heightened research interest in this topic in linguistics (Donalies,2002, p. 87). It should be noted that the problem of distinguishing between a compound word and a word combination, in particular those formed according to the model **noun + noun**, is relevant for many languages (Wamelink,1994, p. 658; Elisabeth,1982, p. 49). The connection between grammar and word formation is reflected in relation of the latter with the syntax, which is especially clearly traced in the field of word composing.

In modern word-production, a special interest is caused by occasional word-formative units, represented on the pages of modern publicistic works or in public speeches of public figures. Particularly diverse are these phenomena in the genres of a political feuilleton or a critical essay which analyze the topical events of cultural, political, scientific life. It is social and political journalism that possesses greater expressiveness of the communicated information, a tendency to humor, satire, ridicule. One of the linguistic features of journalism is linguistic economics, which ultimately results in the compression of conveyed information and the appearance of punning compound words, which are the object of linguistic analysis.

### 2.METHODS

As the experimental basis of the study, we have used German puns, selected by the method of continuous sampling from original sources (the texts of modern German journalism and the press, online media outlet of newspapers and magazines). To increase the reliability, each example was verified using the normative dictionaries of the German and the Russian languages, then a structural and semantic analysis of the



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directly composing elements of the punning formations of the German language was conducted and a translation into Russian was carried out. The descriptive characteristics of the punning units were also analyzed, which allowed of drawing general conclusions by the results of the study.

To carry out the comparison procedure, it is necessary to apply a single principle, which involves considering the objects being compared as functioning systems. As a comparison standard, the characteristics relevant for internal organization and functioning of these systems are selected. In case of analysis of punning compound words, their derivational model, the way of uniting components in unity, as well as the structure of semantic transformations were taken as the underlying criteria.

### 3. RESULTS

Let us analyze various ways of forming punning compound words that meet the standards of the word-formation models of the German language. From the point of view of structure, they, like compound words without additional connotations, can be formed by adding the stems of one part of speech and the stems of various parts of speech (Stepanova, 1953, p. 56). However, in our opinion, in the semantic sense, the inner valency of word-forming components often differs from the external valency of the punning compound word.

According to the data obtained in the course of analyzing, the most diverse are the punning compound words formed by adding the stems of one part of speech, namely according to the model “noun + noun (S + S)”, which are used to convey various meanings and connotations based on extralinguistic experience of people.

Consider the punning compound words with the first component “*Benzin* (gasoline)”: *Benzinmöwe*, *Benzintaube*, *Benzinpferd*. From the point of view of structure, the words under consideration are formed by adding together the stems of nouns, where both components in the semantic plan have not changed their valency, but have been idiomatized and can act as puns. For example, the compound word *Benzinmöwe* is translated into Russian as “самолет”/ “airplane”, where *Möwe* is “чайка” / “sea gull”, and the element *Benzin* – “бензин” / “gasoline”, that is, a word-for-word translation is



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“чайка, летающая на бензине” / “a sea gull that flies on gasoline”; or the word *Benzintaube* is also translated into Russian as “самолет” / “airplane”, where *Taube* is “голубь” / “pigeon”, and *Benzin* – “бензин” / “gasoline” (word-for-word: “голубь летающий на бензине” / “a pigeon that flies on gasoline”). In these cases, the elements *sea gull* and *pigeon* denote gear (they fly), running on fuel (gasoline). The similar structure is in the compound word *Benzinpfers* – “тягач” / “tractive vehicle”, where *Pferd* – “лошадь” / “horse”, and *Benzin* – “бензин” / “gasoline”. This example is built on the association with hauling force of the horse and its surface way of movement (to draw, to haul, not to fly).

The punning compound word *Zeiteisen* – “часы, хронометр” / “clock, chronometer”, is formed also according to the model S+S, where *Zeit* means “время” / “time”, and the second element *Eisen* – “железо” / “iron”, that is, a word-for-word translation – “железо, которое показывает время – железное время” / “iron that shows the hour – iron time”, which denotes “часы с очень точным ходом” / “the clock which keeps good time”, that is chronometer. This example is the case of metaphor, as the noun *Zeit* has preserved its semantics.

In the course of studying as productive models of puns, the compound words with the second component “*Kopf* (голова / head)” which has a negative connotation were drafted, for example: *Gipskopf* - coll. “глупый человек” / “stupid person”, where *Gips* – “гипс” / “plaster”, *Kopf* – “head (metonymic transfer)”, that is, “гипсовая голова” / “a plaster head”, as well as “непрошибаемый” / “thick”; *Knallkopf* is “простофиля” / “simpleton”, where the first component *Knall* is “треск” / “crack”, and the second is “голова” / “head” (word-for-word translation into Russian is “голова с треском” / “a head with crack” or “дырявая голова” / “a hollow head”); *Kaktuskopf* - (coll.) “неприятный человек с тяжелым характером” / “an unpleasant person with ill temper”, (*Kaktus* – “кактус” / “cactus”, literally – “голова с калючками” / “the head with prickles”). The analysis of use of the second component of the compound word allows of speaking about a change in the connotative meaning in the direction from the concrete to the evaluative.



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The processes registered in the lexical designations *Kraftstall* – “гараж” / “garage” where *Kraft* is “сила” / “power” and *Stall* – “хлев” / “shed”, that is, in this example, the garage room is compared with the shed, and vice versa, the shed is compared with the garage: *Milchgarage* – “хлев” / “cattle shed”, where *Milch* – “молоко” / “milk”, and *Garage* – “гараж” / “garage”, that is, “молочный гараж” / “milk garage” or “гараж для скота” / “garage for cattle”. In both cases, we can talk about the substitution of concepts.

By way of the example of the compound word *Erinnerungskonserve* (альбом для фотографий / an album for photographs), one can speak about a partial loss of valency, since *Erinnerung* is translated from German as “воспоминания” / “memories” and implies the perception of photography as a means to evoke memories, and *konserve* is “консервы” / “canned food”, that is, storage for a long term. In this case we are talking about a metaphor.

In punning compound words with the second component “*Wurst* (колбаса /sausage)”, this component partially lost its semantics and acts as a word-formant. During desemantization, the substitution of the concepts based on the form of the object took place: *Himmelswurst* – “аэростат” / “balloon”, where *Himmel* – “небо” / “heaven”, and *Wurst* “колбаса” / “sausage” (literally: “небесная колбаса” / “heavenly sausage”) – associations are built on the analogy with the elongated form of the balloon. The punning compound word *Tabakwurst* is used in the meaning of “cigarettes”, where *Tabak* is “табак” / “tobacco”, *Wurst* “колбаса” / “sausage” – “колбаса (форма), состоящая из табака” / “sausage (form), consisting of tobacco”, which also induces an association with prolate form like sausage.

The punning word formations *Wolkendroschke* – “самолёт” / “airplane”, where the first component *Wolken* – “облака” / “clouds”, preserved its semantics, and, based on the similarity of the concepts, acquired the meaning “небо” / “sky”, which in combination with the second component *Droschke* (“дрожки, пролетка, наемный экипаж; извозчик” / “droshky, open carriage, hackney carriage; cabby”) acquired the meaning “heavenly crew, the sky cabman”). An analogous metaphorical shift is observed in the



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compound word *Wolkenkutsche* – “civil aircraft”, where *Wolken* – “clouds, sky” and *Kutsche* – “coach” – “heavenly carriage”, that is, “carriage”, designed for transporting people across the sky.

The next most frequently used word formation is the formation of punning compound words according to the model “adjective + noun”. Rendition of their semantics and translation should proceed on the basis of reinterpretation of the adjective, for example, the adjective *schwarz* (“чёрный” / “black”) took root in different languages in the figurative meaning “незаконный”, “запрещённый” / “illegal”, “forbidden”. Therefore, in German, the compound word *Schwarzbauer* denotes “a peasant who uses illegally a ground area”, where *Bauer* is a “peasant” (literally: “черный крестьянин / крестьянин, работающий по-черному, то есть незаконно” / “a black peasant / a peasant working desperately, that is, illegally”); by analogy *Schwarzfahrer* – “человек, совершающий незаконную, неразрешённую поездку” / “a person committing an illegal, unauthorized trip”, where *Fahrer* is “человек, отправляющийся в поездку” / “a person who is about to make journey”.

The punning compound words are formed by the model “adjective + noun”, for example, *Schwachkopf* – “глупец” / “fool”, where *schwach* – “слабый” / “weak” (*Kopf* – “голова” / “head”, that is, “слабый на голову человек”); *Flachkopf* – “тупица” / “stupid”, where *flach* means “плоский” / “flat”; *Dummkopf* is “олух” / “blockhead”, where *dumm* is «тупой, глупый» / “dull, stupid”. The word *Vollprosten* also means a stupid person (“полный кретин” / “full cretin”, where *voll* is “полный” / “full”, and *Prosten* is “столб” / “pillar”). These examples illustrate a metaphorical shift in one or both components of the composite.

### 4. DISCUSSION

With regard to semantics, the punning compound words that are built on the play of words are composites from a structural point of view. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the specifics of their formation individually. The compounding has been the main and most productive method of word formation in the German language. According to famous linguist M.D. Stepanova, “word composition existed and played a





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significant role in the German language from the earliest historically attested periods of history” (Stepanova, 1953, p. 21). The study of word composing has begun since ancient times. A considerable number of works dealing with certain aspects of composition have been written, such as the works by domestic scholars (M. V. Lomonosov, A. A. Brasov, F. F. Fortunatov, I. A. Baudouin de Courtenay, E. A. Vasilevskaya, E. A. Zemskaya, M. Stepanova), and foreign linguists (W. Fleischer, H. Brinkmann, L. Weisgerber, P. Polenz, W. Motsch, E. Donalies, L. M. Eichinger, I. Barz). Word composition is actively and fruitfully studied in our time. The result of composing is a composite or a compound word, it is a combination of two or more words or stems into one, nominative whole. The most widespread among the composites are two-element compound words, the next most frequent are three-element ones. More complex units in their composition are relatively rare and are characteristic of academic vocabulary, where punning compound words act as terminological formations. Specificity of their use is also manifested in the occasional nature of these lexical units occurring in speech according to the intentions of the addressant and performing special functions in the texts of various genres.

The derivative stem of many derivative compound words or composites are the syntactic units or word combinations. In the opinion of a number of linguists, the processes of composing are a unique transformation of the word combination into one word, that is, the univerbalization of the word combination (Elisabeth, 1982, p. 54). The facts of the German composing are very significant in relation to the question of blurring the boundaries between a word and a syntactic group (Pavlov, 1985, p. 50; 8, p. 725). In this case, the Germanists register the cases of using and functioning of parallel constructions in German - a compound word or a phrase.

The punning compound words are used for conveying a humorous or satirical effect. From the point of view of semantics, they achieve a humorous effect via a two-dimensional nature of interpretation. The creation of a humorous effect is connected precisely with the play of words and is “a linguo-creative experiment of the author as an author and a creator” of punning compound words (Milovskaya, 2011, p. 23). Thus,



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punning compound words represent the interpretation of commonly used words and the formation of new lexical units on their basis through the semantic transformation of one of the components in the word-formation model. Consideration of the specifics of the formation of such phenomena allows of investigating the processes of the language nomination more profoundly depending on the historical and cultural conditionality of the development of the given language community (Jürgen Eichhoff, 2001, p. 37).

### **5. SUMMARY**

Thus, among the punning compounds, analyzed in the course of the study, the most common is their formation according to the traditional models that are characteristic of German word-formation - these are the models of compound words formed by combining the stems of two nouns or consisting of the stems of the adjective in combination with the noun. Transformation of the semantics of such compounds occurs by blending the components of the meaning of the directly constituent parts of the composites. Their translation into Russian is carried out in several stages: the analysis of the semantic structure of the original pun, the search for the presence of a correspondence or its substitution by a descriptive construction.

### **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Concluding, we can state the following: the formation of punning compound words in German occurs according to the widespread word-formation models that are characteristic of compound words of the given language. A distinctive feature of the punning compounds of the German language is the use, as a rule, of one component of the composite in a figurative meaning.

Revealing the regularities in the transformation of the semantics of one of the components, as well as the models of semantic shift, are of great research interest from the point of view of forecasting the trends of development of punning word formation and are worthy of special notice.

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