The glass ceiling effect of workspaces: locality and agreement in Dutch ANN-compounds

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Main data

Adjectival inflection inside Dutch ANN-compounds

1) oud-e-heren-club 
   old-agr-gentlemen-club
   ‘old gentlemen’s club’

Main observation

Adjectival inflection inside the left hand [AN]-constituent is sensitive to functional material belonging to the head of the compound.

This is unexpected from the lexicalist viewpoint which assumes that morphological structures are opaque for syntax (Di Sciullo & Williams 1987).

Main claims:

- **Compounding**
  Compounds are built in syntax (morphology = syntax) and their transparency follows from regular syntactic principles.

- **Methodology**
  An online survey with a large number of respondents helps theoretical linguists to deal with vague judgments about certain constructions. These vague judgments may point us to syntactically underspecified and rare domains (such as a workspace which is not a phase) and different strategies to deal with a certain construction.

Overview

1. Core data
2. Online survey
3. Prerequisites for the analysis
4. Analysis
5. Conclusion
1. Core data

[[AN]N]-compounds in Dutch are productive. The non-head can be either singular or plural.

2) a. kaal-e-kat-adoptie  
   hairless-AGR-cat-adoptie  
   ‘adoption of hairless cats’

   b. kaal-e-kat-en-adoptie  
   hairless-AGR-cat-PL-adoptie  
   ‘adoption of hairless cats’

A D-layer is consistently lacking (see Borer 2009, Harley 2009).

3) * een de-kaal-e-kat-adoptie
   a the-hairless-AGR-cat-adoption

Adjectives in the Dutch DP inflect:
-∅: neuter, singular and indefinite
-e: elsewhere

4) een bruin-∅ paardNEUTER  [neuter, sg, indef]
   a brown-AGR horse
   ‘a brown horse’

5) a. het bruin-e paard  [neuter, sg, def]
   the brown-AGR horse
   ‘the brown horse’

   b. bruin-e paard-en  [neuter, pl, indef]
   brown-AGR horse-PL
   ‘brown horses’

   c. een bruin-e hondCOMMON  [common, sg, indef]
   a brown-AGR dog
   ‘a brown dog’

The adjective inside ANN-compounds may inflect as well:

6) a. kaal-e-kat-adoptie  
   hairless-AGR-cat-adoption  
   ‘adoption of hairless cats’

   b. kaal-e-kat-en-adoptie  
   hairless-AGR-cat-PL-adoption  
   ‘adoption of hairless cats’
2. Online survey

2.1 Design of the questionnaire

- General set up:
  - questionnaire via Survey Monkey
  - 2 parts
  - speakers could choose to select more than one option
  - there were options which are irrelevant for the present purpose

- Distribution:
  posted via Taalpost (mailing list with popular scientific and cultural facts on Dutch, mostly read by speakers from the Netherlands)

- Respondents:
  part 1: 689 respondents
  part 2: 673 respondents

- Fillers:
  part 1: 20 fillers / 20 relevant questions,
  part 2: 10 fillers / 16 relevant questions

- Variables
  - singular description, plural description, mass nouns
  - idiomatic and non-idiomatic combinations
  - gender of the N in the left hand part, gender of the head (neuter vs. common)

Empirical question: So, what happens with inflection in AN\_neuter\_N compounds?

If only somebody had done an online survey!
Example question 1:

The zoo created a house in which children can learn about how animals were used during the Ottoman empire. The organizers aim to emphasize on the fact that many exotic animals were important to society in that empire. They decide to call the empire ‘fabulous’ (Dutch: tof). They still need a name for the house. They find it important the new name sounds well. How should they call the house?

- een tofrijkshuis  ‘a fabulous-empire-house’
- een tofferijkenhuis  ‘a fabulous-empires-house’
- een tofferijkshuis  ‘a fabulous-empire-s-house’
- een tofrijkshuis  ‘a fabulous-empire-s-house’
- de bovenstaande  ‘all the above possibilities sound odd’
mogelijkheden klinken allemaal vreemd

Example question 2:

The zoo trimmed a horse as if it lived in Bruges in the 14th century. Bruges was very rich at that time. As such, visitors discover how the trimming of a horse was influenced by wealth in a city.

The zoo still needs a name for the horse. They find it important the new name sounds well. How should they call the horse?

- een rijkestadpaard  ‘a rich-city-horse’
- een rijkstadpaard  ‘a rich-city-horse’
- een rijkestedenpaard  ‘a rich-cities-horse’
- een rijkstedenpaard  ‘a rich-cities-horse’
- een rijkestadspaard  ‘a rich-city-s-horse’
- een rijkstadspaard  ‘a rich-city-s-horse’
- de bovenstaande  ‘all the above possibilities sound odd’
mogelijkheden klinken allemaal vreemd

2.2 Results

Results for non-idiomatic ANN-compounds with a singular description:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>ANneutralN neut</th>
<th>ANneutralN com</th>
<th>ANcommonN neut</th>
<th>ANcommonN com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% N</td>
<td>% N</td>
<td>% N</td>
<td>% N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>e-affix on A</td>
<td>33 257</td>
<td>34 229</td>
<td>72 474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bare A</td>
<td>29 197</td>
<td>30 196</td>
<td>4 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>36 240</td>
<td>38 256</td>
<td>13 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>e-affix on A</td>
<td>25 169</td>
<td>28 191</td>
<td>64 428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bare A</td>
<td>45 309</td>
<td>39 265</td>
<td>6 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>33 227</td>
<td>36 250</td>
<td>24 158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% / N of informants that select [affix/no affix/neither OK] for an [[AN][N]]s with a specific gender specification depending on definiteness
2.3 Four main generalizations

1. The e-affix is always an option.

Recall that indefinite, singular, neuter DPs select $\emptyset$ as an inflectional marker. We therefore do not immediately expect the schwa on neuter nouns, yet some speakers have it in this context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{neut}}N_{\text{neut}}$</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{neut}}N_{\text{com}}$</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{com}}N_{\text{neut}}$</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{com}}N_{\text{com}}$</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bare A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The bare adjective occurs more often in indefinite N.SG contexts than in any other context.

Bare As are most frequently chosen when the left hand noun is neuter (italics). This preference is clearest for indefinite DPs (italics & bold).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{neut}}N_{\text{neut}}$</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{neut}}N_{\text{com}}$</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{com}}N_{\text{neut}}$</th>
<th>$AN_{\text{com}}N_{\text{com}}$</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Speakers do not converge on one strategy.

For common left hand nouns informants have a preference for an e-affix (bold numbers). Such a clear preference is not attested for neuter left hand nouns (grey area).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;neutN&lt;sub&gt;neut</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;neutN&lt;sub&gt;com</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;comN&lt;sub&gt;neut</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;comN&lt;sub&gt;com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definite</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-affix on A</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bare A</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indefinite</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-affix on A</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bare A</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Neuter nouns in the left hand part increase ungrammaticality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;neutN&lt;sub&gt;neut</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;neutN&lt;sub&gt;com</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;comN&lt;sub&gt;neut</th>
<th>AN&lt;sub&gt;comN&lt;sub&gt;com</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definite</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>e-affix on A</td>
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<td>neither OK</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indefinite</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither OK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The empirical generalizations are the explananda of the talk:
1. Why is the e-affix always an option?
2. Why is the bare adjective more popular in indefinite N.SG contexts than in any other context?
3. Why do speakers not converge on AN<sub>neut</sub>N?
4. Why do neuter nouns in the left hand part increase ungrammaticality?

3. Prerequisites for the analysis

3.1 Are we dealing with compounds in the case of [[AN]N]-structures?
Phrasal compounds are opaque to movement just like regular compounds:

7) jacht-hond
    hunt-dog
    ‘hunting dog/hound’
8)  *  Jacht-  is  het  een  hond.
    hunt  is  it  a  dog

9)  kale-katten-adoptie
    hairless-cats-adoption
    ‘adoption of hairless cats’

10)  *  Kale-katten-  is  het  adoptie.
     hairless-cats  is  it  adoption

The right hand noun in phrasal compounds determines the properties of the compound, just as in regular compounds:

11)  de  hut
     the_com  hut

12)  het  rijk
     the_neut  empire

13)  de_com/*het_neut  toffe-rijk-hut
     the_com/the_neut  cool-empire_neut-hut_com
     ‘the hut of a cool empire’

The left hand part of phrasal compounds cannot be referred to, just as in regular compounds:

14)  *  We  hebben  een  jacht-hond.  Morgen  is  er  één.
     we  have  a  hunt-dog  tomorrow  is  there  one
     Intended: ‘We have got a hunting dog. Tomorrow there is a hunt.’

15)  *  Ze  organiseert  de  kale-katten-adoptie.
     she  organizes  the  hairless-cats-adoption
     Ik  heb  er  twee  geaaid.
     I  have  there  two  petted
     Intended: ‘She organizes the adoption of hairless cats. I have petted two hairless cats.’

Phrasal compounds are atomic:

16)  *  Jacht-zwarte-hond.
     hunting-black-dog
     Intended: black hunting dog/hound

17)  *  Kale-katten-vrijwillige-adoptie
     hairless-cat-voluntary-adoptie
     Intended: voluntary adoption of hairless cats
But, phrasal compounds have a different stress pattern than regular compounds:

18) a. HOOG-seizoen
   high-season
   ‘high season’

   b. kaal-e-KAT-en-adoptie
   hairless-AGR-cat-PL-adoptie
   ‘adoptions of hairless cats’

And the adjective in the left hand part of phrasal compounds can be modified by a degree modifier, in contrast to the adjective in the left hand part of regular compounds:

19) a. * erg-hoog-seizoen
   very-high-season
   ‘adoption of very hairless cats’

b. erg-kaal-e-kat-en-adoptie
   very-hairless-AGR-cat-PL-adoptie
   ‘adoption of very hairless cats’

In sum: Phrasal compounds are compounds, but with a different a different stress pattern and more structure in their left hand part than primary compounds.

### 3.2 The analysis of (phrasal) compounds

We adopt the root hypothesis (Halle & Marantz 1993, Borer 2005a,b; 2013)

Roots merge with nominal inflectional markers like gender and number (Lowenstamm 2007, Kramer 2012)

Compounds are formed in syntax (following Harley 2009, Borer 2009, 2013).

The left hand part of an [[AN]N]-compound is a partial NP with functional material (such as gender and number marking), but without a D-layer, see (5).

It is built in a separate workspace (Johnson 2002):

20) toffe rijk
   cool empire
   ‘cool empire’

   FP
   AP
   ArtP
   Art
   genP
   gen:neuter
   √rijk

...and merged with the head noun of the compound:

21) de toffe-rijk-hut
    the cool-empire-hut
    ‘the hut of a cool empire’
In sum, compounding is Merge below functional material.

### 3.3 The analysis of adjectival agreement
Recall that there are two adjectival endings in Dutch: a default e-affix and a 0-affix.

**Assumption:** 0-affix = [n. sg. indef.], e-affix = the elsewhere affix (see also Sauerland 1996)

**Assumption:** Adjectives enter the derivation with unvalued gender, number and definiteness features and value these features in the course of the derivation.

**Assumption:** Adjectives are adjuncts to DP (see also Svenonius 1994)

**Assumption:** There is an additional projection ArtP (see Roehrs 2009) below adjectives and above the root that hosts an unvalued definiteness feature (see also Cornilescu & Nicolae 2011).

22) het toffe rijk
    the cool empire
    ‘the cool empire’

23) het toffe rijk
    [DP [D_{[uD, uΦ]}] [FP [AP [A_{[uD, uΦ]}] [ArtP [Art_{[uD, uΦ]}] [GenP [Gen_{iΦ}] √root]]]]]

### 4. Analysis

#### The empirical generalizations are the explananda of the talk:
1. Why is the e-affix always an option?
2. Why is the bare adjective more popular in indefinite N.SG contexts than in any other context?
3. Why do speakers not converge on AN_{n,0} N??
4. Why do neuter nouns in the left hand part increase ungrammaticality?

#### 4.1 Two strategies to get adjectival inflection in [[AN]N] compounds
Definiteness is encoded on D → the left hand AN-constituent lacks the definiteness information since it lacks D altogether.

This means that it cannot check this feature within its own workspace.
Two strategies to deal with this:

**Strategy 1**: The [udef]-feature on the adjective does not get valued and a default spell out obtains (see Preminger 2011), resulting in an elsewhere affix on the adjective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type of compound</th>
<th>predicted adjectival inflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;N&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;N&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;N&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;N&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indef [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;N&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
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<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategy 2**: The [udef]-feature on the adjective gets valued by the [idef]-feature of the containing DP outside its own workspace.

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;SG&lt;/sub&gt;]&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
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<td>def [[AN&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>indef [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;SG&lt;/sub&gt;]&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-0 [neut. sg. indef.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indef [[AN&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-0 [neut. sg. indef.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>indef [[AN&lt;sub&gt;COM&lt;/sub,N&lt;sub&gt;NEUT&lt;/sub&gt;]]</td>
<td>-e elsewhere affix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26) een snelle kale-katten-adoptie
   a quick hairless-cat-adoption
   'a quick adoption of hairless cats'
1: sharing \([uD,u\Phi]\) kale and \([uD,i\Phi]\) kitten, leading to valuation of \(u\Phi\) of kale.
2: sharing \([u\Phi]\) of Art with \([i\Phi]\) of Gen, leading to valuation of \(u\Phi\) of Art
3: sharing \([uD]\) of Art with \([uD]\) of kale
4: sharing \([uD,u\Phi]\) snelle and \([uD,i\Phi]\) Art, leading to valuation of \(u\Phi\) of snelle.
5: sharing \([iD,u\Phi]\) D and \([uD,i\Phi]\) of snelle, leading to valuation of \(u\Phi\) of D and all uDs linked to each other via feature sharing.

This is what we will call the glass ceiling effect of workspaces: nothing can move out of FP as it is a separate workspace (see Johnson 2002), but you can look into it.

4.2 Why are bare As so popular for indefinite AN_nearlNs? (Generalization 2)

The adjective in these compounds carries the 0-affix with the feature specification \([N.SG.INDEF]\).

The only way to get this feature specification on the A in an ANN-compounds is by having a \([N.SG]\)-noun within the \([AN]\)-constituent and by letting the adjective agree with the indefinite feature of the containing DP via feature sharing.
This adjectival agreement is a direct result of the glass ceiling effect. The glass ceiling effect results from syntactic principles, hence compounding (i.e. morphology) obeys syntactic operations, hence morphology is syntax.

### 4.3 Why is the e-affix always an option? (Generalization 1)

Two options to select the e-affix: one with and one without checking the uD within the [AN] (see section 4.1).

(i) Spell out obtains before merge of [AN] with [N] (see section 4.1: strategy 1). There is no feature sharing with the containing DP. In this case, the e-affix realizes a defective feature set, namely a set that contains an unvalued feature (Preminger 2011).

(ii) The e-affix spells out a fully valued set of features resulting from feature sharing between the adjectival Probe and the definiteness of the containing DP (just like the 0-affix) (see section 4.1: strategy 2)

Now, why do not all speakers have feature sharing with the containing DP, i.e. why do some speakers spell out before merge?

We claim that a situation where a workspace is not a phase (like the left hand [AN]-constituent that lacks the phase head D) is so rare that speakers did not acquire a standard strategy to deal with them.

As a result speakers differ in how they treat them.

Some speakers send the left hand [AN]-constituent to PF when it is merged.

They treat workspaces as spell-out domains. This then leads to selection of the default, i.e. elsewhere, affix or a crashing derivation (see section 4.4 below).

Others do not spell them out. In that case the adjectival probe can be part of the agree relations in the containing structure.

### 4.4 Why do neuter nouns in the left hand part increase ungrammaticality? (Generalization 4)

The key to answering this question is how an adjective with the feature specification [N. SG. uDEF] is treated.

Note that this situation only arises if the adjectival probe does not partake in feature sharing with the containing DP (i.e. spell out before merge, section 4.1: strategy 1).

The feature specification is incomplete: one feature does not get a value.
Some speakers do not hesitate to pair this with the elsewhere affix (-e), for others it leads to a crash because the set \([N.SG.]\) is a subset of the set which is matched by the more specific 0-affix \([N.SG.INDEF]\) and they remain undecided.

\(AN_{com}\)Ns with the feature set \([COM, SG, UDEF]\) do not have this problem since \([COM.SG]\) is not a subset of the more specific set leading to the 0-affix, i.e. \([N.SG.INDEF]\).

4.6 Why do speakers not converge on \(AN_{neut}/N\)? (Generalization 3)

The workspace is not a phase. Speakers deal with non-phasic workspaces in different ways.

Option 1a: Spell it out and use the default affix (leading to e-affix)
Option 1b: Spell it out and crash the derivation (leading to ungrammaticality)
Option 2: Don’t spell it out. The unvalued feature can partake in the feature checking processes of the containing DP (leading to the 0-affix)

5. Conclusion

Vague judgments

Methodological result on vague judgments:
vague judgments may indicate speaker variation

Theoretical result on vague judgments:
vague judgments may point to syntactically underspecified and rare domains (such as a workspace which is not a phase)

vague judgments may point to different strategies to deal with a certain construction

Compounding

Compounds are built in syntax: morphology is syntax below the functional domain.

The agreement properties of phrasal compounds follow from the glass ceiling effect. The glass ceiling effect results from syntactic principles, hence compounding (i.e. morphology) obeys syntactic operations, hence morphology is syntax.
References


Halle & Marantz (1993)


