

Re: Why does English have so few compound words?

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  - *Date:* Sat, 18 Nov 2006 00:00:12 +0100
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Brian M. Scott skreiv:

On Thu, 16 Nov 2006 19:31:01 +0100, Trond Engen  
<[trondnet@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:trondnet@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote in  
<[news:zOSdnaW8buD-M8HYRVnzvO@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:zOSdnaW8buD-M8HYRVnzvO@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> in sci.lang:

Then the final d got lost in most dialects. One remnant is the pronunciation of /rd/ as a retroflex l in the eastern -- sandhi -- dialects.

That's what I've seen described as the <tjukk/tykk l>?

Yes, 'tjukk l' "thick (or fat) l" is a retroflex flap, being used in eastern Norwegian and middle and northern Swedish for where the written language has internal or final <l> or <rd>, except after <i>, <y>, and diphthongs ending in them. If I for once could remember anything correctly.

We also have retroflex n, d, t, and s. Generally they are caused by assimilation of r or l. Such assimilation crosses morphem and word boundaries.

The actual situation is less systematic, due to the traditional lack of retroflex sounds in the upper registers of both Norwegian and Swedish, and to Danish (in Norway) and cross-dialect loans. My 7-year-old son seems to prefer retroflex sounds. My 4-year-old daughter uses them at home but apparently she tries to avoid them when playing with her friends.

A curious example of the sociolinguistics involved (retold as I heard it, there may be flaws): Some time in the first half of the 20th century the official Swedish spelling of the (unrelated) word 'fjord' "the previous year" was changed to <fjol> because virtually everyone pronounced it with a 'tjukk l', or maybe because it was an internal borrowing from a retroflex dialect. Today the standard pronunciation is [fjo:l].

In Norway OTOH the word is written without d and now usually pronounced [fjo:r].

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Trond Engen

- Is there a qualified Norwegian linguist in the audience?

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