

Rare and odd compounds

On the spelling of compounds in modern Danish

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This paper is concerned with the spelling of compound words in Danish. According to Danish grammar, a compound word should be written as one word, unlike in English, for example, where compound words can be written as two or more words. But many Danes incorrectly spell Danish compounds as two words. The purpose of the article is to explore the factors associated with incorrect two-word compounds. The most important result of our research is that the frequency of the compound is associated with compound errors: The lower the frequency of the compound, the higher the error rate. Other factors associated with compound errors are the source of the compound word data (with the lowest occurrence in newspaper articles and the highest occurrence in school papers from a technical college), the occurrence of proper names, abbreviations or numbers as compound parts (each of these being associated with increased error rate), the part of speech of the compound (with most compound errors occurring in nouns and adjectives), and the number of constituents of the compound (the error rate increasing with the number of constituents).