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Lezione 2

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Word Compounding

Compound Nouns

Compound nouns are common in the German language.

They are the combination of two or more words or parts of words to form a single block. Sometimes particles are combined with whole compound nouns. Be careful: there are no rules to tell you when to use one particle or another. The best way to learn how to put two words together is to look at examples. The following examples are from the first part of our piece.

All the dreams selected for *Traumleser* are between 200 and 600 words long. Pirandello's text has 600 words. 600 is divisible by three, which means that the Sicilian author's dream is divided into three parts of exactly 200 words each. In the first part, the first 200 words of our passage, we find the following compound words in German:

noun + noun (N+ N)

mountain — Berg Berg (mountain)

village — Dorf Dorf (village)

Bergdorf

Bergdorf (mountain village)

noun + -es- + noun (N+ es + N)

sea — Meer Meer (sea)

beach — Strand Strand (beach)

Meeresstrand

Meeresstrand (beach)

noun + -s- + noun (N+ s + N)

angel — Engel Engel (angel)

face — Gesicht Gesicht (face)

Engelsgesicht

Engelsgesicht (angel face)

noun + -n- + noun (N+ n + N)

big man — Riese Riese (giant)

ugly man — Kerl Kerl (very ugly man)

Riesenkerl

Riesenkerl (big and ugly)

adjective + noun + noun

six foot — zwei Meter zwei Meter (six foot)

man — Mann Mann (man)

Zweimetermann

Zweimetermann (six-foot giant)

In compounds with German nouns (such as *Engelsgesicht* above), the first N acts as a determinant with respect to the second N: the element *Engel* determines the element *Gesicht*, making it clear what kind of face we are talking about. The name *Engel* needs an *-s* to become the determinant of another N. An example is *angel's smile*. Translated into German: *Engelslächeln*.

Engelslächeln (angel's smile)

Good to know

There are two exercises at the end of the lesson.

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