

Contemporary theoretical approaches to word formation in Latin

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Word formation in Latin is a fascinating subject that has been approached from different theoretical perspectives in recent decades. In this area there are some prominent topics that have captured the attention of various researchers (see Fruyt 2011 for a descriptive overview). In the first place, the topic of preverbs has been addressed from different theoretical frameworks: Structural Semantics (e.g. García-Hernández 1980, 1989), Generative Linguistics (e.g. Oniga 2005, Bertocci 2011, Acedo-Matellán 2016, and Mare 2018), and Cognitive Linguistics (e.g. Brucale – Mocciaro 2016a and Revuelta-Puigdollers 2016).

Another relevant domain of word formation that has also been investigated from different descriptive and theoretical angles is nominal and verbal compounding (e.g. Oniga 1988, 1992, 2002, 2014, Lindner 1996, 2002, 2011-15, 2015, 2018, Fruyt 2001, 2002, Moussy 2005, Brucale 2012, Brucale – Mocciaro 2016b, Oniga – Re 2017).

As for denominal verb formation, it is worth pointing out that the topic of so-called ‘parasynthetic verbs’ has been particularly studied from different perspectives: e.g. see Oniga (1988: 108-111), who was the first researcher to apply Scalise’s (1986) theoretical insights to Latin, and also Crocco-Galèas – Iacobini (1993a, b) and Iacobini (2010) for relevant diachronic discussion; Fruyt’s (2017a, b) works constitute an updated and comprehensive account. Concerning the formation of denominal deponent verbs, see also Pinzin (2018), where it is claimed that the presence of the Middle morphology is syntactically justified. As for deverbal nouns, see the historical and descriptive works by Pultrová (2011) and Garzón (2018), i.a.

Finally, we can also mention the relevant theoretical debate in generative linguistics between lexicalist vs. syntactic approaches to word formation, with a clear bias for the latter view in recent formal works due to the emergence of syntactocentric theories like Lexical Syntax (Hale – Keyser 1993), Distributed Morphology (Marantz 1997), Nanosyntax (Starke 2009), and the Exo-Skeletal model (Borer 2013): for example, see the lexical-syntactic approach to Latin prefixed verbs put forward by Acedo-Matellán – Mateu (2013), and the DM-based analysis of transition verbs provided by Acedo-Matellán (2016), i.a. These syntactic works also provide a formal explanation of the so-called ‘satellite-framed’ nature of Latin prefixed verbs of motion, which was originally posited by Talmy (2000): Stolova (2015) also offers a detailed cognitive linguistic account of Latin motion verbs. Finally, see Mateu (2017) for a syntactic approach to the formation of prefixed and unprefixed *scō*-verbs, which were described in great detail by Haverling (2000, 2003, 2010).

It should be pointed out that the previous topics and approaches do not exhaust the theoretical literature on word formation in Latin but just constitute a relevant sample of the research that has been recently carried out in the area of Latin Linguistics.

Within the 20th *International Colloquium on Latin Linguistics*, held at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria on 17-21 June 2019, we organized a workshop to congregate researchers who are working on word formation in Latin from different theoretical perspectives. Our goal was to begin a free and informal exchange of ideas in order to promote a fruitful cross-theoretical debate.

Although we count on excellent works in this area, many theoretical accounts do not often consider rival theories but typically concentrate on the chosen theoretical perspective. From this a danger may arise: some researchers may be led to think that a good method consists in applying the most fashionable theoretical system, or one’s own personal variant of this system, simply ignoring the results obtained by other theoretical approaches, or worse polemicizing against them, in the

belief that there is only one method to reach good results, and all other attempts are intrinsically erroneous.

In order to palliate the possible consequent theoretical solipsism, we invited researchers to discuss their theoretical approaches to word formation in Latin from a broadminded stance. We gathered researchers belonging to different schools of thought, inviting each one to freely express their point of view, in a coherent and rigorous way, avoiding superficial syncretisms, but remaining open to other methods.

In this number of the journal we have collected a selection of the papers presented in the workshop. Each paper has been reviewed by two anonymous reviewers and we are very grateful to them for their efforts and help to improve the quality of the contributions. The papers offer different paths of argumentation and linguistic theorizing, which provide a substantial overview on the area of word formation in Latin today.

The first paper, by **Bertocci** and **Pinzin**, is placed in the theoretical framework of Nanosyntax, according to which morphological units are analyzed as phrase structures made up by abstract functional features. The authors' specific postulate is that, in the Latin verbs of second and third conjugation, the root would already express a verbal function. Conversely, in the first and fourth conjugation, the thematic vowels would express the verbal function, while the roots would only be modifiers. Hence, verbs like *dūc-e-re* and *laud-ā-re*, although superficially similar, would be radically different in their nanosyntactic structure. The further hypothesis that the incorporation of a nominal theme in a verbal derivation requires the modifier to be empty allows to explain why in root compounds (e.g. *pontifex*, *princeps*) the second member must not be a verb of the first or fourth conjugation, whose roots already fill the position of the modifier.

Furthermore, the agentive suffix *-tor* is productive in the verbs of all conjugations, because the element *-t-* creates a bridge to the nominal function from the verbal function, however the latter is realized. Conversely, the agentive nouns with no suffix are limited to a few verbs of the third conjugation (e.g. *dux*; *rēx*), because only some verbal roots

of this kind would be able to achieve not only the verbal function but also the nominal one. Finally, since the element *-t-* is a bridge between the verbal and the nominal function, it is considered an alternative to the incorporation of a theme, and this would explain why in root compounds the second member, although expressing agentive semantics, does not use the suffix *-tor*.

The contribution demonstrates the usefulness of using the tools of formal linguistics to elaborate new explanations of phenomena so far considered unclear. The introduction of abstract structures in the linguistic description allows to relate apparently different grammatical elements and, conversely, to distinguish apparently similar ones.

The second paper, by **Brucale** and **Mocciaro**, opens a section devoted to the study of single suffixes. Their contribution discusses the diminutive suffixes in archaic Latin using the tools of cognitive and morpho-pragmatic linguistics. The preliminary morphological analysis leads to identify the suffix in its most abstract form *-llus* (from the variants *-ellus*, *-illus*, *-ollus*, and *-ullus*). The pragmatic analysis then highlights that the suffix assumes the function of a pragmatic indicator with reference not only to the single word, but to the entire communicative situation, to express the interactional meanings of attenuation, affection, and irony.

The cognitive part of the study consists of a revision of the semantic field of the diminutive, starting from the model of radial categories proposed by Lakoff (1987) and Jurafksy (1996). An analysis of the occurrences of the diminutives in the language of Plautus leads to the elaboration of a new semantic map, in which the basic meaning is that of “small”, which introduces the properly diminutive values (e.g. *asellus*), and from which, through the meaning of “small sample”, the non-diminutive values arise, in order to express, in many ways, a generic relationship (e.g. *suillus*). In this study, it is possible to appreciate the fact that the formation of words is an extremely complex phenomenon, in which various factors come into play, not only morphological in the strict sense, but also pragmatic and semantic.

Garzón's paper provides a descriptive classification of Latin verbal nouns in *-tio*. According to her, there are five possible interpretations for the Latin verbal nouns examined in this paper: (i) nouns with an event reading (*dimicatio* "combat, conflict"), (ii) nouns that can be interpreted as denoting either events or results (*scariphatio* "scarification"), (iii) nouns with a result reading (*fatigatio* "weariness"), (iv) nouns that take on the reference from one of their base verbal arguments (*ambulatio* "a place for walking, walk", *emptio* "a purchase, an article purchased"), and (v) lexicalized nouns (*auctio* "auction"). Although only the first three groups follow regular patterns of derivation, the author shows that the definition of verbal nouns in *-tio* as *nomina actionis* needs to be broadened (e.g. they can refer to the result).

Following the classical aspectual typology put forward by Vendler (1957), which is revisited from Dik's (1997) functional theoretical perspective, the author also deals with the aspectual restrictions and argues that, in general, the duration and atelicity of verbal bases can be shown to determine the formation of their corresponding verbal nouns in *-tio* to a greater degree than other features like dynamism and control.

The paper by **Gibert-Sotelo** and **Pujol-Payet** is also devoted to the study of a single suffix, the verbalizing *-izāre* in its evolution from archaic to late Latin. The authors base their explanatory analysis on the framework of Nanosyntax and combine some theoretical proposals from Ramchand's (2008) syntactic theory of verb meaning with some descriptive insights from Talmy's (1985, 2000) typology of events.

Their analysis tries to explain why in archaic Latin the verbs formed by the suffix of Greek origin *-issāre/-izāre* tend to be intransitive, and their base typically expresses Manner (e.g. *rhētorissāre* "to speak rhetorically"), while in late Latin they tend to be transitive, and their base typically expresses Result (e.g. *eunūchizāre* "to make a eunuch"). This shift from Manner to Result is claimed to be related to the independently observed characteristic of satellite-framed languages such as Classical Latin, whose lexicon of Manner verbs is richer than in verb-framed languages like Romance languages. In particular, the

evolution from intransitive Manner verbs to transitive Result verbs finds an explanation in Ramchand's (2008) syntactic theory of event structure, where verbal meaning can be split into three subeventual layers: Initiation, Process, and Result. Manner intransitive verbs involve only Initiation and Process, whereas Result transitive verbs involve the three of them.

Their analysis shows, in an exemplary way, that sometimes the application of a theoretical model to an ancient language allows to explain a phenomenon in a simple, precise, and elegant way, without the need to introduce new *ad hoc* hypotheses, but simply by using the already existing instruments, proposed by theoretical linguists primarily for modern languages, but with the aspiration to grasp the existence of linguistic universals.

The contribution of **Litta, Passarotti, Budassi and Pappalepore** introduces the point of view of computational linguistics. The perspective of those who must find a way to allow the computer to explicitly represent the speaker's knowledge of word structure is an excellent test for linguistic theories. Firstly, the essential value of the concept of "word" is stressed, in order to work with computer programs on lexical databases. If word structure cannot be totally reduced to syntax, then we should perhaps reconsider the current theoretical debate between lexicalist vs. syntactic approaches to word formation, and give lexicalism the opportunity to re-evaluate some of its reasons.

Secondly, the history of some morphological analyzers for computers in recent decades shows an evolution similar to that which occurred in the history of morphological theories, with the transition from the Item-and-Arrangement model in the "Word Formation Latin" computer program, to the Word and Paradigm model in the new resource "LiLa: Linking Latin". The use of cells organized in multiple correspondence networks, instead of nodes in oriented graphs, allows LiLa to overcome some well-known problems of morphological analysis, such as backformations and possible but not existing words. Finally, it is interesting to note that LiLa produces the graphic representation of complex networks, which represent families of words

connected to each other from a morphological and semantic point of view, in a way that recalls the semantic maps elaborated by cognitive linguists.

The goal of **Mare**'s paper is to account for the connection between the prefix *com-* and plurality and to provide a syntactic analysis that explains the derivation of the constructions that involve what the author calls *The Comitative Puzzle*, i.e., some predicates satisfy plurality requirements for their arguments in two ways: either by a plural Determiner Phrase (DP) or by a singular DP in combination with a comitative (prepositional) phrase. The puzzle comes from the fact that the presence of a comitative phrase is compulsory only when there is not a non-singular DP satisfying the predicate's requirements.

The optionality of the comitative phrase is claimed to violate proposals which relate thematic roles with specific syntactic positions, such as Baker's (1988) *Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis* (UTAH), whereby identical thematic relations are associated with identical structural relations. Contra Baker's UTAH predictions, in the present case one finds the same theta role in two different structural positions at the same time.

Adopting Acedo-Matellán's (2016) syntactic theory of argument structure, which is couched in the theoretical framework of Distributed Morphology, the author argues that the preposition *cum* behaves as an argument introducer which is unable to assign a theta role on its own. The argument introduced by the comitative is then claimed to be interpreted with the same theta role as that borne by another argument in the structure.

The theoretical contributions discussed so far have mainly explored morphology from the point of view of syntax. **Ohannesian**'s paper appropriately explores the relationships between morphology and phonology. The long-standing puzzle of the so-called Latin apophony (or ablaut) is the subject of a study based on the framework of Optimality Theory (Prince – Smolensky 1993). Since the traditional concept of phonetic law has not been able to fully describe the phenomenon, if not at the cost of admitting a large number of

exceptions, Optimality Theory is considered to be more adequate, because it allows to give a formal representation to a system of forces in reciprocal conflict, where the prevalence of one or the other restriction depends on idiosyncrasies of the single word.

The analysis is limited to the most typical set of words in which the Latin apophony produces its effects, that is, those verbs with a short vowel in the first syllable, which is reduced to *-i-* as a consequence of the addition of a prefix (e.g. *facio/reficio*). The description of this phenomenon does not necessarily have to be based on the hypothesis of the mechanical action of a protosyllabic accent, but can find its motivation in the prominence of the initial syllable, strongly marked in Latin. The universal hierarchy whereby the most perceptible (open) vowels tend to precede the less perceptible (closed) vowels allows to formulate a series of restrictions on the phonological structure of words, when the initial syllable moves to occupy a less prominent position due to the addition of a prefix, and therefore reduces its perceptibility (e.g. *corripio*). This tendency is opposed by the opposite force, based on fidelity to the shape of the base word, which can lead to the outcome of non-apophonic derivatives (e.g. *comparo*).

Oniga's paper returns to the problem of the relationship between morphology and syntax in the structure of nominal compounds and reviews the analysis of English synthetic compounding (e.g. *truck driver*) proposed by Harley (2009) in the theoretical framework of Distributed Morphology. The application of this analysis to the corresponding Latin compounds (e.g. *agricola*) highlights the difficulty of assuming that the second member only contains a root capable of taking an argument and forming a root phrase without a functional structure.

An alternative analysis starts from the above mentioned theory of verbal meaning by Ramchand (2008) and assumes that the verbal root is inserted in a phrase structure containing the two projections of Initiator and Process. A further proposal is that a nominal predication is added to this structure, which absorbs the Initiator agent semantics, and derives a noun or an adjective from the verbal basis (*-cola* as

scrība). The difference between this type of derivation and that one by means of the suffix *-tor* can be due to the presence in the latter of an aspectual projection, which allows episodic readings of the event, while in the absence of the suffix only a non-episodic reading is possible, which expresses professional occupation.

Finally, the reference to “The Compounding Parameter” proposed by Snyder (2016) allows us to trace the diversity between the Latin compounds of the *agricola* type and the English ones of the *truck driver* type to a typological difference between Latin and Germanic languages. Only in the latter, in fact, compounds of this type can be interpreted as consisting of two nouns, consistently with the parameter that attributes the productivity of the endocentric NN composition to Germanic languages, while in Latin this typology is rare.

Palachi’s article offers a syntactic approach to the argument structure of Latin “break” verbs such as *rumpo* and *frango* and their prefixed variants. The unprefixed verbs are transitive and their direct internal argument is the entity that undergoes a change of state. When prefixed with */in/* and */ex/*, *frango* is shown to retain the basic meaning of a causative verb of change of state, whereas *rumpo* modifies its meaning and turns into an intransitive motion verb.

Adopting the Distributed Morphology framework, the author deals with the important distinction between the structural meaning associated to syntactic argument structures and the idiosyncratic meaning associated to the contents of roots (Acedo-Matellán – Mateu 2014) and concludes that the syntactic differences between the Latin “break” verbs come from the meanings of their roots. In particular, the hypothesis is explored that the meaning of motion is present in the root $\sqrt{\text{RUMP}}$, whereas the root $\sqrt{\text{FRANG}}$ falls under the set of those verbs that belong to the “destroy” class.

In conclusion, we can observe that Palachi’s paper, along with Bertocci – Pinzin’s, Gibert-Sotelo – Pujol-Payet’s, Mare’s, and Oniga’s, show the importance of syntax in many contemporary formal approaches to word formation. A non-trivial tenet of these generative approaches is that syntax is considered as the single computational

system of the faculty of language (e.g. see Marantz 1997 for relevant discussion), a point that still remains at the center of a lively debate today.

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