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# Romance and Latin approaches to word structure features

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**Abstract:** The interest in morphology and its interaction with the other grammatical components has increased in the last twenty years, with new approaches coming into stage so as to get more accurate analyses of the processes involved in morphological construal. This special issue is a valuable contribution to this field of study. It gathers a selection of five papers from the *Morphology and Syntax* workshop (University of Girona, July 2017) which, on the basis of Romance and Latin phenomena, discuss word structure and its decomposition into hierarchies of features. Even though the papers share a compositional view of lexical items, they adopt different formal theoretical approaches to the lexicon-syntax interface, thus showing the benefit of bearing in mind the possibilities that each framework provides. This introductory paper serves as a guide for the readers of this special collection and offers an overview of the topics dealt with in each contribution.

**Keywords:** features; Latin; lexicon-syntax interface; Romance; word structure

## 1 Introduction

In the last two decades the literature on morphology has shown an increasing interest in determining the interactions generated between word structure and the different grammatical components. Nevertheless, crucial questions concerning morphological knowledge and its organization still remain unsolved. In particular, researchers keep asking themselves (1) whether the processes that regulate word formation are different from those used in the creation of phrases, and (2) if the features that structure meaning are to be found in lexical items (maybe organized in rich sublexical structures) or in the configurations generated by syntax. This is so because there is no agreement on where the boundaries between morphology,

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syntax, and lexical semantics are to be placed, hence the increasing literature on the interfaces of morphology (Ackema and Neeleman 2004; Amiot et al. 2014; Härtl 2013; Galani et al. 2011; Ramchand and Reiss 2007).

Within Generative Grammar, these two questions have been approached from two theoretical strands: the lexicalist perspective and the neoconstructionist one. Lexicalist theories assume that morphological operations are independent from syntax, and that the former take place in a rich and structured lexicon (Aronoff 1976; Chomsky 1970; Di Sciullo and Williams 1987; Halle 1973; Lapointe 1980; Lieber 1980; Scalise 1984; Williams 2007; among others). By contrast, neoconstructionist theories state that word structure is governed by syntax, which is the only generative engine in grammar (Borer 2005a, 2005b, 2013; Embick and Noyer 2001; Halle and Marantz 1993; Harley and Noyer 2000; Marantz 1997; Starke 2009, 2014; among others).

This special issue seeks to demonstrate the benefit of taking into account the different possibilities that each theoretical perspective provides. To do so, we bring together a selection of papers presented in the *Morphology and Syntax* workshop held at the University of Girona in July 2017 that delve into the internal structure of lexical items. The selected papers, couched on theories of the lexicon-syntax interface, assume that lexical items can be decomposed into hierarchical structures of features, even though not all of them agree on whether these features are of lexical or syntactic nature. Besides, all of them share a Romance or Latin vision of the data, an area that has received little attention in contrast to the predominant study of English morphology. Hence, the volume includes the analysis of data from Latin (Acedo-Matellán; Mateu), Spanish (Batiukova; Arche, Fábregas, and Marín; Mare), Catalan, and French (Mateu).

## 2 Content overview

We have organized the contributions to this special issue on the basis of the theoretical framework used and the pieces of data analyzed. The first paper contains a general discussion of the nature of morphological and syntactic processes from the standpoint of a lexicalist perspective. The following three papers deal with the internal structure of derived predicates (deadjectival nominalizations, verbs containing preverbs, and complex denominal verbs) from a syntactic approach to word formation. The last paper provides a structural (syntax-based) account of three understudied morphosyntactic phenomena that involve plurality and syncretism.

## 2.1 (Sub)Lexical composition and its interplay with syntax and morphology

The first article, by **Olga Batiukova**, focuses on how morphological and syntactic processes access the lexical-semantic information codified in a lexical entry. It adopts a lexicalist approach framed within the Generative Lexicon theory (Pustejovsky 1995, 2013), and accordingly starts from the idea that lexical composition precedes morphological processes (which regulate word formation) and syntactic ones (which generate phrases and sentences). In particular, it is assumed that the sublexical features of a lexical entry, organized in a four-level representation called *Qualia* Structure, are accessed in different ways by morphology and syntax. This is illustrated by analyzing syntactic composition in noun-modifier combinations and predicates headed by verbs, and morphological derivation in Spanish non-evaluative suffixation.

It is shown that both syntactic and morphological heads can access the basic *qualia* feature (i.e., the formal role) of the selected component (an argument in syntax and a lexical base in morphology) in a similar way, but that non-head *qualia* features are accessed by means of different mechanisms in syntax and morphology. In the former case, in order that the selecting predicate can exploit non-head *qualia* of the selected argument, a coercion mechanism is required which allows the argument to meet the selectional constraints of the predicate. In the latter case, non-head *qualia* of the morphological base can be directly exploited by the suffix, thus allowing the derived word to inherit these sublexical features. As far as syntactic and morphological processes are claimed to involve different sublexical mechanisms, it is concluded that they cannot be assimilated.

## 2.2 Syntactic approaches to word formation

**María J. Arche**, **Antonio Fábregas**, and **Rafael Marín** examine the internal structure of deadjectival nominalizations and present a more fine-grained classification of these constructions than standard ones. Hence, in addition to the bipartite distinction of deadjectival nouns between those that denote qualities (*beauty*) and those that denote states (*sadness*) (Roy 2010), they distinguish a third group, derived from dispositional evaluative adjectives, which refers to occurrences of events (*imprudence*). A structural analysis is provided, based on Spanish data, according to which the behaviour of the different types of deadjectival nominalizations depends on the functional features available in the structure of origin.

In particular, and following Ramchand's (2018) hierarchical approach to the verb phrase, the claim is made that dispositional deadjectival nominalizations involve an event description (cf. their ability to act as complements of action-denoting verbs, among other properties: *Han cometido varias injusticias* 'They committed several injustices') that corresponds to a Process subevent embedded below an Initiation Phrase. Such an event description is not introduced within the functional spine, but as the specifier that identifies the subject of predication of the base adjective, which is in accordance with Stowell's (1991) observation that dispositional adjectives can be predicated of events (cf. *Hacer esa pregunta fue cruel* 'Asking this question was cruel') and, in addition, explains why these predicates do not take verbal inflection despite containing subeventive features.

**Víctor Acedo-Matellán** explores the features of preverbs from a Spanning approach to the syntax-lexicon interface that assumes lexical items to spell out spans of morphosyntactic nodes (Bye and Svenonius 2012; Ramchand 2018). The basis of his study is the analysis of p-datives in Latin, that is, Latin datives interpreted as grounds with respect to a prepositional prefix attached to a verb (i.e., a preverb). The starting point is the observation that, whereas location, goal, and source preverbs license p-datives, preverbs with a pure route interpretation (*per*- 'through', *praeter*- 'past, beyond', *tra[ns]*- 'across, over', and, in certain contexts, *circum*- 'around') are incompatible with them. The paper offers a structural account that naturally derives the observed asymmetry from the morphosyntactic features lexicalized by each type of preverb.

Founded on Pantcheva's (2011) decomposition of directional expressions, Acedo-Matellán develops a hierarchical configuration of spatial relations according to which locations, goals, and sources contain a Place feature, but routes do not. He further states that the Appl(icative)P licensing the spatial dative merges above PlaceP to relate the dative argument with a possessed location. This rightly predicts that only those preverbs specified for Place (i.e., preverbs encoding location, goal, or source) are compatible with p-datives. Route preverbs just encode path and hence lack the Place feature, which prevents the ApplP (and so the p-dative) to appear.

The contribution by **Jaume Mateu** provides a syntactic account of the creation of complex denominal verbs in Latin and Romance. He pays special attention to prefixed denominal verbs with locative semantics, among which two basic classes can be distinguished: location verbs, which contain a noun expressing a location, and *locatum* verbs, which contain a noun expressing the located object. The core proposal is that the two basic classes of locative prefixed verbs distinguished involve two different syntactic processes in Latin, but not in Romance. The study also offers a structural account for the necessary telicity of prefixed verbs in Latin in contrast to what occurs in Romance.

In Latin, prefixed location verbs (e.g., *exterminare* ‘to drive out of boundaries’; cf. *ex* ‘out’ and *terminus* ‘boundary’) are formed via Incorporation (or Internal Merge), whereas prefixed locatum ones (e.g., *inflammare* ‘to put fire in’; cf. *in* ‘in’ and *flamma* ‘flame’) are formed by means of a Conflation (or External Merge) process (cf. Hale and Keyser 2002; Haugen 2008). Unprefixed locative verbs are also addressed, which are shown to only allow the locatum interpretation for their lacking the resultative prefix, and which, unlike prefixed locatum verbs, are analyzed as involving incorporation rather than conflation. In Romance, all locative verbs (prefixed location verbs and [un]prefixed locatum ones) are assumed to be formed via incorporation, a fact that is linked to the different typological nature of Latin (a satellite-framed language with a conflation pattern) and Romance (a verb-framed system for which conflation processes are not available) (Talmy 2000; Acedo-Matellán and Mateu 2013). As for the telicity of prefixed verbs in Latin as opposed to Romance, it is structurally derived from the projection of a Result feature (Ramchand 2008) identified by the Latin prefix.

### 2.3 Syncretism, plurality, and agreement morphology

The last paper, written by **María Mare**, adopts the Distributed Morphology framework (Halle and Marantz 1993) and examines how person and number features are materialized in non-standard North-Patagonian Spanish. She delves into an understudied syncretism observed in this Spanish variety between first and third person plural (1PL/3PL), the so-called *ele jota* pattern, which consists in the use of the 3PL clitic *los* ‘them’ instead of the 1PL clitic *nos* ‘us’. Her study is supported by the analysis of two other phenomena that involve plurality and syncretism: the subject-verb unagreement exemplified in cases where a 3PL DP subject combines with a verb inflected in 1PL (e.g., *Los investigadores estamos en contra del recorte* ‘we researchers are against the cutting’); and a special kind of mesoclysis in imperatives, as in *hagámos-lo-n* ‘let’s do it’, with verbal agreement morphology of 3PL (-n) coappearing with 1PL agreement (-mos).

Mare departs from other proposals within Distributed Morphology that treat similar cases of syncretism (e.g., the widely discussed syncretism between 2PL and 3PL in Latin American Spanish) as the result of a post-syntactic Impoverishment rule that interacts with Underspecification. Instead, she states that lexical items are specified for all the relevant features at the moment of insertion, even though these features can be neutralized. She also revisits the properties of the vocabulary items involved and shows that the studied phenomena exhibit an \*ABA effect (Caha 2009), since 1PL/3PL syncretism only occurs in varieties that also present 2PL/3PL syncretism.

### 3 Conclusion

The papers in this special issue broaden the scope of the studies published up to this moment on word structure in general and on Romance and Latin morphology in particular. This is so because they analyze data specially understudied (e.g., Arche, Fábregas, and Marín; Mare), because they provide evidence of the interactions established between morphology and syntax at the word level (e.g., Batiukova; Acedo-Matellán; Mateu), and because they address classical morphological and syntactic issues from new perspectives. For that reason, the papers included in this volume are an important contribution to the research on morphology in Romance languages and Latin, both in terms of the methodologies and the theoretical frameworks used, as well as the data analyzed and the conclusions reached.

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