

INTRODUCTION

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Word-formation is the branch of linguistics that studies the nature and circumstances surrounding the coining of new complex lexemes. This field of research has been a source of fascination to scholars for centuries – descriptions regarding the mechanisms of lexical innovation of Classical Sanskrit existed already in the 4th century BCE. A number of controversial issues have traditionally underlain the discipline and, despite the efforts directed at solving them, many remain a matter of debate to the present day. As happened in other areas of linguistics, the 20th century witnessed a revolution in word-formation, thanks to Saussure’s writings and to monographs like Chomsky (1957), Dokulil (1962) and Marchand (1969). If one had to name a distinctive attribute of modern word-formation, it would probably be the non-predominance of a single linguistic theory. Despite the initial influence of generative grammar (Chomsky, 1957, 1970), the diversity of works dealing with word-formation today spreads out to several schools and approaches (for an overview, see e.g. Štekauer & Lieber 2005, Müller *et alii* forthcoming). This has made word-formation an attractive and eclectic area of study which, as discussed by Kastovsky (1977), can be approached from a variety of levels of language description. A proof of the current health of the discipline is the fact that first-line publications are regularly being brought out for many individual languages¹. Among the novel approaches to the discipline, corpus-based studies have become more and more common in the last twenty years, in the wake of pioneering works by Sinclair (1991) and Leech (1992). Another increasingly popular perspective is provided by contrastive or cross-linguistic approaches to word-formation. As the present volume demonstrates, a growing tendency is for scholars not to limit their investigations to one language, but to

¹ Among them, Motsch (1999/2004) and Eichinger (2000) for German; Grossmann & Rainer (2004) and Dardano (2009) for Italian; Fradin et al. 2009 for French; Szymanek (2010) for Polish; Bauer *et alii* (forthcoming) for English.

draw comparisons between two or more languages with respect to a particular linguistic feature.

This volume was conceived as a reflection of the current trends in word-formation, and has therefore tried to embrace a variety of theoretical frameworks, viewpoints and languages. Following this introduction, NIKOS KOUTSOUKOS and ANGELA RALLI look at grammaticalisation by focusing on *-idz(o)*, a formative from Griko, which is a Greek-based dialect spoken in Southern Italy, and their discussion surrounding this verbal suffix crucially brings up the blurry distinction between inflection and derivation.

Next, ANTONIETTA BISETTO offers an insight into the Italian adjective-creating suffix *-bile*. Even if a preliminary look at this suffix points towards transitive verbs as the main source for derivation, the study shows that the transitive vs. intransitive divide is not central to the matter. Rather, the author claims that the key is found in psychological verbs and their aspectual properties, and she sets off to delimit the scope of application of this suffix.

The following two contributions take a contrastive approach to word-formation. First, AKIKO NAGANO concentrates on the case of locative morphemes and compares various types and behaviours in Japanese and in English. The article uses a syntax-based view of word-formation to analyse complex lexemes derived through locative morphemes and discusses the phonological realisation of units formed by post-syntactic compounding.

The role of word-formation in translation is tackled by MARIE-AUDE LEFER and BRUNO CARTONI, who examine the English affixes *un-* and *-less* from a multilingual perspective. The authors analyse this prefix in the light of original English texts and English texts translated from French, Italian, Dutch and German which originate from the Europarl translation corpus of parliamentary debates. A breakdown of the morphological structure and the frequency figures allows them to make insightful generalisations on the characteristics of the word-formation rule.

In the following article, PIUS TEN HACKEN builds on Jackendoff's (2002) Parallel Architecture and its application to English. His research draws on the diminutives and plurals of Dutch nouns to review the fuzzy boundary between derivation and inflection. After examining the difficulties that these morphological categories present, the author questions the traditional division between inflection and derivation and argues for a different treatment of the plural and the diminutive forms of Dutch nouns.

Another set of articles revolves around the derivational morphology of English. The first of these, which is authored by ALEXANDRA BAGASHEVA and CHRISTO STAMENOV, focuses on the varying degree of playfulness in lexical creations. This is done by taking an onomasiological perspective to

word-formation, which tracks units from the moment they are nonce formations to their institutionalisation and lexicalisation. The concept of ludicity is here proposed as a crucial element that is claimed to be always present to some extent in the formation of new words.

Also directed at the English language, the next contribution, by VINCENT HUGOU, turns to the dichotomy between productivity and creativity by focusing on the constructional idiom ‘ANIMATE SUBJECT + *be* + BASE-*ed out*’ (e.g. *I’m all coffeed out*). The study makes use of two corpora to examine the morphosyntactic and semantic features of this construction and to observe a number of cases of genre-based variation.

In a similar vein, PIERRE J. L. ARNAUD looks at inventiveness in English word-formation by carrying out two investigations that aim to describe how inventiveness plays a role in synchronic word-formation. Given the scarcity of the research in this area, two groups of informants are exposed to a questionnaire of neologisms in order to assess their subjectivity. The study incorporates morphological processes like affixation, conversion and compounding and it discusses the role played by metaphor and metonymy in the interpretation of inventive lexical material.

In the closing article, GLORIA GUERRERO-RAMOS looks at the role of borrowing as one of the methods to fill lexical gaps in a language, with a focus on Spanish. In the Spanish linguistic tradition this phenomenon was remarked in Sebastián de Covarrubias’s illustrious *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611), a study which is here updated by reviewing the impact that loans have on contemporary Spanish. By way of a comparison between the loans in Covarrubias (1611) and those extracted by the author *ad hoc*, GUERRERO-RAMOS asserts the predominance of loanwords adopted from English and notes that a loan’s thematic field partially determines its origin in one or another language. She also points at the fact that the assimilation or “naturalization” of loans in a given language fluctuates depending on the formal and thematic features of each unit.

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