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Three Issues of Romance Morphology

EXTRACT

1. Introduction

'Die Tätigkeit des wissenschaftlichen Forschers besteht darin, Sätze oder Systeme von Sätzen aufzustellen und systematisch zu überprüfen; in den empirischen Wissenschaften sind es insbesondere Hypothesen, Theoriensysteme, die aufgestellt und an der Erfahrung durch Beobachtung und Experiment überprüft werden.' (Popper 1966[2]:3)

'A scientist, whether theorist or experimenter, puts forward statements or systems of statements, and tests them step by step. In the field of the empirical sciences, most particularly, he constructs hypotheses or systems of theories, and tests them against experience by observation and experiment.' (English translation 1959:3)

In composing my book, I was led more or less by Popper's perspective on empirical research. I consider linguistics as an empirical research topic. Therefore, I would expect that morphological research should construct theories as other empirical research does. What is a theory? Again, I cite Popper:

'In other words every rational theory, no matter whether scientific or philosophical, is *rational* in so far as it tries to *solve certain problems*. A theory is comprehensible and reasonable only in its relation to a given *problem-situation*, […].' (Popper 1969[3]:199; italics in the original)

Additionally, Popper requires that a theory must be testable:

'Some twenty-five years ago I proposed to distinguish empirical or scientific theories from non-empirical or non-scientific ones precisely by defining the empirical theories as the refutable ones and the non-empirical theories as the irrefutable ones. […] Every serious test of a theory is an attempt to refute it. Testability is therefore the same as refutability, or falsifiability. And since we should call "empirical" or "scientific" only such theories as can be empirically tested, we may conclude

that it is the possibility of an empirical refutation which distinguishes empirical or scientific theories.' (Popper 1969[3]:196-97)[1]

What is morphology theory about? Let us take Spencer 1991:4. According to Spencer, morphology theory tries to explain why native speakers do not put affixes and stems in the non-target like order. Or we could turn to Carstairs-McCarthy 1992. In chapter 9 'What morphology can contribute to general linguistic theory' he says on p. 253:

'The only way to answer this question is through wide-scale comparisons, looking for features which are common to many languages even though on the basis of learnability they may seem "peripheral".'

What, then, are the problems in morphological research that a theory could solve? According to Spencer it is the correct order of affixes with respect to stems and according to Carstairs-McCarthy it is the identification of common features across many languages. It seems, therefore, as if the problems of morphological research are rather descriptive.

For the following three chapters I selected some concepts and phenomena that represent prominent fields of morphological research, not restricted to Romance morphology. In the sense of Popper I want to test the range of their validity and their status as an empirical problem. In chapter 2, I test the concepts of productivity and blocking in affix competition in Spanish and Portuguese event nominalizations. Chapter 3 addresses conjugation classes in Romance and discusses their putative character as a morphome in Aronoff's 1994 sense. In chapter 4, I analyse the phenomenon of syncretism in some parts of the Italian and French verb system and its potential correlations with syntax. In the conclusion I evaluate the findings.

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1   I assume that this is what Chomsky repeatedly refers to in his work and his talks as 'normal science'. These standards of 'normal science' were generally accepted through the reception of Popper's criteria in physics.

2. Structure, distribution, and origin of modern European Portuguese and Spanish event nominalizations in {-ção/-ción} and {-mento/-miento} with class II and IV verb bases

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I contrast the modern European Portuguese and modern European Spanish deverbal nouns in {-mento/-miento} with those in {-ção/-ción}, further comparing them with their Latin ancestors in {-mentum} and {-tio}. In both languages, noun formation with suffixes is a very prominent area of the lexicon. Allen 1941 lists 95 Portuguese suffixes that form nouns against only 15 suffixes that form verbs. For Spanish, Lacuesta & Gisbert 1999 record 30 noun-forming suffixes, while Serrano-Dolader 1999 discusses only 8 verb-forming suffixes. These totals are used merely to illustrate the prominence of noun formation by suffixes in both languages, but cannot be compared since the authors use different methods for their classification of suffixes.[2] Among the suffixal nouns, the {-mento/-miento} and the {-ção/-ción} formations are both very profitable event nominalizations; other affixes such as {-dura}, for example, have far fewer derivatives.[3] My investigation concentrates on the Portuguese and Spanish formations from verbs

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[2]   For example, among the noun forming suffixes Lacuesta & Gisbert 1999 do not include avaliative suffixes, while Allen 1941 does.

[3]   See also Rainer 1993:434, 608. For modern European Portuguese, I found 36 formations in {-dura} with class II verb bases and 18 with class IV verb bases. For the affix {-dela} there are 18 formations with class II verb bases and 13 with class IV verb bases. The counting is based on the results of the Mordebe database. In the Lexesp database of modern European Spanish, {-dura} occurs in 4 formations with class IV verb bases and in 5 forms with class II verb bases. Compare this with Table 2.2 below for {-ção/-ción} and {-mento/-miento}.

of both the 2nd conjugation and the successor of the Latin 4th conjugation, as {-ção/-ción}-formations with these verb bases show the highest amount of stem allomorphy with respect to the verb base[4] (incidentally, these verb classes contain the majority of inflectionally irregular verbs; I will show that this is not correlated with the derivational idiosyncrasy mentioned above).[5]

Table 2.1: Event nominalization in {-ção/-ción} and {-mento/-miento}

	verb		{-ção/-ción}		{-mento/-miento}
Portuguese	induzir	'to induce'	indução	'induction'	induzimento
Spanish	inducir		inducción		inducimiento
Latin	inducere		inductio		*not attested*

I selected very prominent sub-sectors of the formation of nouns with suffixes to investigate the possible rivalry between the two types of formation. The question is whether the high degree of stem allomorphy in {-ção/-ción} formations has repercussions on their distribution in contrast to {-mento/-miento} formations. In morphological theory, stem allomorphy is typically covered by adjustment or readjustment rules: This topic is discussed in section 2.4. The central issues of rivalry in mor-

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4   In what follows, reference to {-ção/-ción} and {-mento/-miento} formations in modern Portuguese and Spanish means only formations related to a verb base of either class II or the successor of the Latin class IV, see chapter 3 this volume. Thus I do not refer to formations related to verb bases of the class I. Equally I do not consider formations which do not have an existing verb base in these languages.

5   In Table 2.1, Portuguese *induzir* is regular: it has no stem allomorphy across its inflection. Spanish *inducir* is irregular with stem allomorphy in the 1st singular present indicative (*induz[k]o*), all present subjunctive forms, all perfect indicative forms (*indu[x]e*) and all imperfect subjunctive forms. Here and below, I give the Latin verb forms in the infinitive in order to facilitate the comparison with the modern European Portuguese and Spanish verbs; that is, I do not maintain the traditional 1st singular present indicative citation form for Latin verbs (*induco*, compare the Latin online dictionaries at www.perseus.tufts.edu).

phology are blocking and productivity, and these are examined in section 2.5.

In the next section I will provide a general description of both formations. Section 2.3 describes the relation of {-ção/-ción} and {-mento/-miento} formations with their Latin origins. Section 2.6 sums up the conclusions.

2.2 General description

The modern European Portuguese and Spanish formations in {-mento/-miento} and {-ção/-ción} can be traced back to their Latin ancestors in {-mentum} and {-tio}. Perrot 1961:87 reports that the Latin {-tio} formation is far more profitable than the {-mentum} formation, with 370 attested derivatives in {-mentum} and 3300 in {-tio}.[6] Both formations predominantly denote the act or the effect of the verb meaning:

(1)   Lat. *addĭtāmentum* – 'addition' verb infinitive *addere* 3rd class, perfect participle *additus* – 'to add'
    Lat. *rētractĭo* – 'drawing back' verb infinitive *rētrăhere* 3rd class, perfect participle *tractus* – 'to draw back, withdraw'

For the most part, the modern Portuguese and Spanish suffixes {-ção/-ción} and {-mento/-miento} preserved the same meaning as the Latin forms. Table 2.2 illustrates the distribution of both formations with respect to the verb bases.

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6   These counts take account of formations on all verb bases, including verbs of class I.