NEOLOGISMS AT THE BOUNDARIES OF PREFIXATION, COMPOSITION AND SYNTAGMATIC COMPOSITION IN CATALAN: CONTROVERSIAL AND OPEN QUESTIONS¹

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Resumo: *Este artigo visa mostrar como algumas palavras novas têm dificuldade em se adaptar aos paradigmas gramaticais tradicionais. Explora também como certos tipos de palavras novas poderiam incentivar uma mudança de paradigma. Focalizamos a dificuldade dos neologismos que estão entre prefixação e composição e entre unidades compostas ou sintagmáticas. O ponto mais conflitivo é representado por substantivos com a estrutura NN, onde o segundo elemento funciona como subcategorizador que dá a esses substantivos uma função similar a palavras formadas por construção sintagmática. O segundo ponto de controvérsia é visto em unidades formadas por um segmento que formalmente coincide com a forma clássica, mas semanticamente herda o significado da palavra a partir da truncação clássica. Mostramos a dificuldade que algumas palavras novas apresentam em se adaptar aos paradigmas gramaticais e como certos tipos de palavras novas em catalão estimulariam uma mudança de paradigma.*

Palavras-chave: *morfologia, neologia, composição, composição própria.*

INTRODUCTION

All modern languages create many lexical neologisms each day. Neologisms are new words speakers of a language create and use to name new concepts (denominative neology) or to give concepts new names due to diverse connotation reasons (expressive neology). Languages have different mechanisms for incorporating new words, and Romance languages have basically two: words are formed with their own resources, or borrowed from other languages. A language's own resources can be of different types: phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic. In this way, *pim-pam-pum* has been formed through a phonological resource, *pingüinari* 'a place where the polar habitat of penguins is recreated' (*indoor penguin habitat*) through a morphological one, *aixeta* 'spigot' is a semantic neologism in *Creieu que l'aixeta del fons europeu es tancarà per Espanya?* 'Do you think that the European Fund spigot will be closed for Spain?', and *comerç solidari* 'fair trade' is a noun phrase which has become lexicalized. However, the classification of neologisms does not always have such easy and clear results. The goal of this article is to show the difficulty some new words present in adapting into the traditional grammatical paradigms and how certain types of new words could foster a paradigm change. Our study has been based on data from the Observatori de Neologia (OBNEO) of Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). OBNEO, led by Dr. M. Teresa Cabré, is a publicly-funded consolidated group with a main objective: to analyze the phenomenon of the appearance of new words, or neologisms in usage, both for Catalan and Spanish. OBNEO places at the society's disposal a series of linguistic resources: a work platform, database searchers, lexicons

¹ My sincere gratitude to Natalia Saghezzi and Chelo Vargas for the paper translation from Catalan.

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and neologic mailboxes (<http://www.iula.upf.edu/obneo/obpresuk.htm>). Over the last twenty years OBNEO has been dedicated to the analysis of the neology phenomenon in the media. OBNEO collects new words that appear in oral and written texts from the Catalan mass media which are not included in the general dictionaries of reference. The data from OBNEO can be consulted in the BOBNEO database (<http://obneo.iula.upf.edu/bobneo/index.php>). The work methodology followed by OBNEO is available on <http://www.iula.upf.edu/04mon008.htm>.

EXPOSITION OF THE PROBLEM

According to the typology criteria applied by OBNEO there are new words which are classified as vernacular compounds mainly on the basis of morphosyntactic elements. However, if we gave priority to the semantic and functional aspects of the components of these words we would realize that they are border-line words in that they belong to diverse formation resources and could be classified in a different way. More specifically, there are two controversial issues that we would like to deal with in this article. Following OBNEO criteria:

a) we find a group of words which are Catalan compounds but semantically they behave as the type of words with a syntagmatic structure in which the second element categorizes the first one ([N] N]_{NP})²:

- (1) *autobús llançadora* 'shuttle bus', *blau petroli* 'petrol blue', *efecte dominó* 'domino effect', *escot banyera* 'off-the shoulder neckline', *hoquei gel* 'ice-hockey', *mare baieta* 'traditional housewife'

In this way, within the same category, we find together the former words and others such as (2), which have a different morphosyntactic behaviour.

- (2) *buscavides* 'hustler', *pelapatates* 'potato peeler', *salvapantalles* 'screen saver'

b) we have a group of words classified as classical compounds which could be classified, again taking into account the semantic and functional aspect, as Catalan compounds or even as prefixed words such as (3):

- (3) *teleadicte* 'telly addict', *eurodiputat* 'MEP' (Member of the European Parliament), *ecoturisme* 'ecotourism'

In both of the previous questions the subcategorization function of one of the nouns plays a key role: in the first case the subcategorizing element is to the right of the subcategorized noun and in the second case the subcategorizing element is found to the left. Let us analyze these two questions step by step.

THE LIMITS BETWEEN CATALAN OR VERNACULAR COMPOSITION AND SYNTAGMATIC COMPOSITION

Endocentric compounds with the structure [N] N]_{NP} in which one of the nouns, generally the first one, is the semantic nucleus of the unit and the other, normally the second noun, has a categorizing value, specifier of the other noun, are located in the borderline of compounds and, as a matter of fact, share many characteristics with the words formed by syntagmatic composition. Gràcia (2002) calls them apposition compounds because the second element is in apposition to the first one. These kinds of compounds could be paraphrased as "it is a N characterized by functioning through, transmitting on/ through, etc. N".

For some authors such as Corbin (1992) or Cabré (1994), these compounds have been created in the morphological component because in Catalan syntax the grammatical category

² Acronyms: N: Noun, NP: Noun Phrase, A: Adjective, PP: Prepositional Phrase.

which subcategorizes a noun is the adjective and not another noun. Therefore, the fact that they are two nouns, even though one of them acts as an adjective, is what at first sight seems to transgress the syntactic rules of Catalan; thus, it can be considered that those are words born in the morphological component of the language. In other languages such as English or German, in which the apposition of nouns is a genuine syntactic structure, such structure would be syntagmatic (LIEBER 1983). However, from the semantic point of view in Catalan as well as in English these compounds function in exactly the same way as syntagmatic words (lexicalised noun phrases) with structure N + A or N + NPP.

Another characteristic of endocentric compounds with the structure $[[N] N]_N$ is that they build hyponymic series from their hyperonym, which is the first noun, in the same way an adjective does from N in the structure NA. In this case it is even more difficult to treat them differently; we could say, according to the prototype theory, that they have family resemblance with words having NA structure, even though they were born within the morphological component as the rest of vernacular compounds. Consequently, it is the semantic and subcategorizing behaviour of the second noun which brings them closer to the syntagmatic neologisms. Owing to this reason we could consider them to be syntagmatic or, at least, to be in the boundary between syntagmatic composition and composition, distant from what are considered the prototypical vernacular compounds.

Within this group of compounds there are some new compounds in which the second element is semantically more relevant, as in the case of *cotxe bomba* 'car bomb'. Feliu *et al.* (2000) classify this kind as A_B compounds of the adjectival subgroup of the same type of *emissora pirata* 'pirate broadcast' and *mot clau* 'key word'. However, we do not agree with their opinion, on the one hand because these three compounds do not share a semantic nucleus and, on the other hand, because the second component of *cotxe bomba* does not have a figurative reading like *mot clau* or *emissora pirata*; in fact the car is a bomb.

We have documented a series of neologisms with the structure $[N] N]_{NP}$ which have as the second component the word *bomba* 'bomb':

- (4) *paquet bomba* 'parcel bomb', *camió bomba* 'truck bomb', *cotxe bomba* 'car bomb', *motxilla bomba* 'backpack bomb', *carmanyola bomba* 'lunch box bomb', *moto bomba* 'motorcycle bomb', *carta bomba* 'letter bomb' and now also *home bomba* 'suicide bomber'.

In principle we could say that in all the cases both nouns have an equal semantic relationship and we could classify them as agglutinative compounds, such as (5):

- 5) a *camió bomba* 'truck bomb' is a *camió* 'truck' and it is also a *bomba* 'bomb', or a *carta bomba* 'letter bomb' is a *carta* 'letter' and it is also a *bomba* 'bomb'.

However, we do not believe the functioning of these compounds to be so simple, but rather we are inclined to think that the real semantic nucleus of these neologisms is the second noun, while the first only indicates the medium by which the second noun is presented, since we are talking about *kinds of bombs* and not about *kinds of lorries, letters or people*.

It is possible that in these cases some of the semantic traits of the first noun are cancelled and the only active trait is that of the container, in this case the container of a bomb. Therefore, this series of compounds would have a function similar to the compounds of the second group and also similar to the syntagmatic lexical units formed by a noun and a complement, as has been pointed out by Feliu *et al.* (2000); though not as A_B as they proposed but rather as B_A . In this case we notice that these neologisms, which had been paraphrased as 'A which also has the function of being B', if they were part of a typological categorization, could be candidates to be units in which the semantic nucleus were element B because what really matters is that it is a B, e.g. that it is a bomb. Actually, they have a similar behaviour to cohyponymic series with the structure NA and a hyperonym that is N. In the same way that we have types of bombs documented in general language dictionaries with structure NA such as (6), in which the second element subcategorizes the first one by specifying the material the first element is made of, we

have a series of bombs (though not documented in dictionaries) in which A subcategorizes B by indicating the place where B is placed.

- (6) *bomba atòmica* 'atomic bomb', *bomba química* 'chemical bomb', *bomba nuclear* 'nuclear bomb', *bomba termonuclear* 'thermonuclear bomb'

In the first case it would be a compound of the type A_B and a compound of the B_A type in the second. These kinds of examples open an argumentative line for the treatment of agglutinative compounds, which can be paraphrased as “A which has the function of being also B”, because a moment comes that B becomes the real semantic nucleus and A is only the medium or form of expression. Other neologisms that would follow the same behaviour pattern could be:

- (7) *llibre-catàleg* 'catalogue book', *mur pantalla* 'screen wall', *avió presó* 'prison plane', *cap-trofeu* 'trophy head'

The case of the neologism *bomba lapa* 'limpet bomb' is different: it is a *bomb* but not a 'limpet'. *Bomba lapa* is a compound in apposition and the result is a type of bomb. In these cases, however, the semantic nucleus is the first component, which the second one subcategorizes: it is a bomb that is attached to a surface as if it were a limpet, so the meaning contribution of the second element is figurative-analogical ('as if it were'). In this case it specifies how it is placed; thus, it is a compound of the type A_B .

THE LIMITS BETWEEN CLASSICAL WORD COMPOSITION, PREFIXATION AND VERNACULAR COMPOSITION

What kind of complex words are *teleadicte* 'telly addict', *bibliobus* 'library bus', *radioaficionat* 'radio amateur', *ecoturisme* 'ecotourism'? Are these compounds built from two radicals? Are they composed by a classical root and a radical? Are they composed by a *prefixoid*? Are they derived words with a new prefix? Are they learned compounds, vernacular compounds or prefixed compounds?

At OBNEO all the previous examples are classified as learned neologisms because it seems as if they were formed by a Latin or Greek root word, since formally the first component tends to coincide with a classical segment, even though it may not be so. Examples of this kind are words containing units such as *agro-*, *biblio-*, *ciber-*, *drogo-*, *euro-*, *eco-*, *foto-*, *narco-*, *psico-*, *radio-*, *tele-*, *video-*:

- (8) *eco-pacifista* 'ecopacifist', *ecoagricultura* 'ecoagriculture', *ecosocialista* 'ecosocialist', *ecotaxa* 'eco-tax', *bibliobebè* 'a space for babies in a library', *ciberespai* 'cyberspace', *eurozona* 'euro-zone', *narcosala* 'safe injection room', *teleporqueria* 'junk TV', *teleadicte* 'telly addict', *telenotícies* 'telenews', *fotobotiga* 'photo shop', *fotomuntatge* 'photomontage', *bioalimentació* 'bio feed', *narcotràfic* 'drug trafficking', *radiofreqüència* 'radio frequency', *radioaficionat* 'radio amateur', *radiopirata* 'radiopirate'.

However, we do not find this a satisfactory solution. No doubt the answer is neither simple nor unique. The limit between one word composition process and another is not always clear, as is very often shown by the treatment of the different types of phenomena in the grammar. In the *Gramàtica del Català Contemporani* (SOLÀ *et al.* 2002), the most recent and complete work for the Catalan language, unstressed prefixes are treated within derivation and stressed ones within composition, as compounds with a stressed prefix, while prefixoids are not dealt with in either of the chapters. Different authors, such as Peytard (1975), Skulkey-Sulhan (1978), Tuggy (1992) and Vallès (2004), refer to them as false forms or prefixoids: they coincide formally with a classical formant but their meaning comes from the shortening of a learned compound. Thus, it could be considered that the result is the union of two Catalan words, the first one of which has been clipped. However, the fact that they are highly productive segments, and give place to a series of derivatives similar to the ones generated by the rest of the prefixes in the language,

poses the doubt as to whether they represent new prefixes of the Catalan language, grammaticalized from the shortening of a learned compound.

The proliferation of these prefixoids in Catalan, as well as in the rest of Romance and Germanic languages, is a contemporary manifestation of the capacity of languages for the creation of rules. Peytard (1975) signalled the importance of the phenomenon, since then different scholars have become interested and over the last thirty years many descriptive works have been published in different languages about one or a series of prefixoids (ROMERO, 1976; PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ, 1985; PÉREZ LAGOS, 1985; CORREIA, 1989; JOSEPH, 1992; TUGGY, 1992 and AGOSTINO, 1994). For the Catalan language the most exhaustive and innovative work we have is the doctoral dissertation by Vallès (2004) who, based on the data from OBNEO, applied a theoretical framework based on a functional and cognitive use that allows the establishment of semantic networks between those types of words which blur the boundaries between composition and prefixation.

Vallès makes a clear difference between classical prefixed forms with Greek or Latin word roots employed in terminology, modern prefixed forms created in the fields of speciality of modern languages as an imitation of the classical ones and prefixoids: prefixed forms resulting from the clipping of a word which follow the natural language tendency to truncate complex words in the second syllable. As Vallès (2004) states, 'those are transparent words because, from the phonological point of view, they are invariable and identical to the segmented part and, from the semantic point of view, they have the same meaning of the original complex word, as it happens in the first stages of grammaticalization'.

According to Iacobini (1991), prefixoids present all the traits that characterize prefixes: they have initial position, combining capacity and modifier-nucleus relationship between the constituents and they form words from words, as well as endocentric words with the nucleus to the right, they are not free forms and do not have a syntactic category. The only aspect in which these segments differ from prefixes is the semantic content, a trait that brings them closer to prefixed forms, which do not have a relational-functional meaning but a lexical one. In this way, on the one hand prefixoids are similar to stressed prefixes and, as stated by Vallès (2004), 'are functionally equivalent to prefixes'. On the other hand, what differentiates a prefixoid from its truncated word is the modifier function in an initial position: *radionovel·la* 'radio soap opera' (prefixed word: a soap opera broadcast on the radio) and *radiodespertador* 'radio alarm clock' (compound word: a device which is a radio and an alarm clock at the same time). In brief, prefixoids present the following characteristics:

1. they are formed by two syllables
2. they are identical to the fragment of the truncated word they establish a modifier-nucleus semantic relationship between the constituents
3. they have a semantic content typical of nouns or adjectives

Owing to all these reasons, these types of words raise the question of the limits of composition in relation to prefixation. Besides, recursivity to form new words with these truncated segments is so elevated that we might think of them as a new class of Catalan prefixes; actually they are usually called prefixoids. As Vallès (2004) states, 'to recognize the existence of a category such as prefixoids — half prefixes, half prefixed forms, sometimes synonyms of truncated words — is a way of not forcing the data and to admit that our desire to establish clear limits among the categories conceived by linguists often does not match language reality'.

However, despite the fact that we argue against the existence of absolute limits between derivation and composition, we wonder if we can consider new prefixes the highly productive prefixoids or, in other words, if we can consider them as prefixes in spite of semantics. These are open questions also expressed in Vallès doctoral dissertation. The only reticence some authors show to designate them prefixes and prefer to continue calling them prefixoids is that the recursivity of these new forms is not yet as large as that of classical prefixes, and their meaning is exactly the same as that of a main lexical unit (VALLÈS, 2004).

The data from OBNEO in relation to these units over a decade (1995-2005) show that forms generated from Greek or Latin elements are scarcely productive and in most cases give rise to only one neologism, from which the prefixoid is truncated afterwards; on the contrary, neologisms formed from prefixoids are much more recurrent and sometimes even more productive, as is the case, for instance, of *euro-* or *eco-*. Figure 1 shows the productivity of the prefixoids that form part of the neologisms of the database BOBNEO over the last decade:

Prefixoids	With repetition	Without repetition
Agro	77	7
Auto	1205 ³	491
Biblio	9	9
Bio	177	81
Brico-	3	2
Ciber	93	51
Cine	3	3
Euro	541	170
Eco	531	110
Foto	47	30
Moto	3	2
Narco	60	21
Petro	4	4
Psico	75	38
Radio	55	28
Tele	235	105
Tecno	39	24
Video	134	51

Fig.1: Prefixoids frequency in BOBNEO

We have consulted the *Diccionari de la Llengua Catalana* of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (DIEC) (The Catalan Language Academia) in order to see how these segments were considered. We could find that their treatment in the dictionary is not homogeneous: from the 18 segments above there are 2 that are not registered in the DIEC: *ciber* and *tecno* (probably the newest semantically speaking). For half of the remaining cases the dictionary distinguishes two meanings: the first one resulting from a Greek or Latin prefixed form and a second meaning which is a prefixed form of a Catalan word that inherits the meaning of this Catalan word: *eco-*, *radio-*, *tele-*, *video-*, *auto-*, *moto-*, *petro-*, *cine-*. The other 8 segments are simply treated as Greek or Latin prefixed forms with their classical meaning, without any mention of the second possible meaning resulting from the truncation of a Catalan word. At no time does the reference dictionary make use of concepts such as prefixoid, pseudoprefix or prefix to refer to these apparently classical units.

Vallès (2004) establishes networks of semantic derivation for some of these prefixoids (*euro-*, *eco-*, *tele-*, *radio-*, *foto*); these networks also include those words formed by the Greek or Latin element and by the word from which it has been truncated, as well as all the newly derived words. It seems to us that these networks can have a relevant interest in the description of the language because they allow the genealogical correlation of the meaning with the word formation processes and their productivity.

We have decided to build one of these radial networks taking as the starting point one of the segments registered in the neologisms of the Observatori. We have chosen *biblio-*, we have looked for the whole family of new words documented over a decade at BOBNEO and we have represented them in a relational semantic network following the model proposed by Vallès. In this way, from a cognitive and functional perspective, the analysis of the words that contain

³ In this case the figure is not significant because many of the neologisms are words formed by the classical prefixed form *auto-* meaning 'by oneself'.

biblio, and can be related to radial categories, is as follows: We have found 13 different units which were somehow related to this segment. From the point of view of the formation resource 2 are learned compounds, 1 is a hybrid compound, 2 are vernacular compounds, 1 is a syntagmatic word and 7 correspond to words formed with the prefixoid *biblio*. Semantically, 3 of the neologisms are related to the Greek form *biblíon*, which means ‘book’ and, on the other hand, 13 are related to the meaning ‘library’.

More specifically, the Greek formant generated the learned compound *biblioteca* ‘library’ and more recently it has originated neologisms such as *bibliodiversitat* ‘bibliodiversity’ (hybrid learned compound) or *bibliòfil* and *bibliòfila* ‘bibliophile’ (learned compounds). The word *biblioteca* is found to be the first element of the neologisms formed by vernacular composition *biblioteca-mediateca* ‘library-mediatheque’ and *biblioteca-museu* ‘museum library’ and the syntagmatic neologisms *biblioteca virtual* ‘virtual library’ or *biblioteca digital* ‘digital library’. At the same time, the learned compound *biblioteca* has created a new word via truncation, *biblio*, which has the same meaning as the word from which it has been truncated: ‘biblioteca’. Finally, we have a series of six neologisms which have as their first component the truncated segment *biblio* ‘biblioteca’ and as the second component a place noun: *bibliopiscina* ‘swimmingpool library’, *biblioplaça* ‘square library’, *biblioparc* ‘park library’, *biblioterrassa* ‘terrace library’, *bibliojardí* ‘garden library’ and *biblioplatja* ‘beach library’; a series of two neologisms which also have as the first component the segment *biblio* ‘biblioteca’ and as the second component a personal collective noun: *biblionadons* and *bibliobebès* ‘babies library’⁴²; and one new word which also has as the first component the segment *biblio* ‘biblioteca’, but as second component something to do with it: *bibliomezmarzar* ‘breakfast library’. Owing to its functional characteristics and productivity we could think that this truncated word which forms part of the last seven neologisms could have started a gramaticalization process; i.e. a way of leading it to become a new Catalan prefix.

In the graphic on the next page we have represented the radial lexico-semantic structure. If this genealogic route is true, it would have diverse applied consequences. A first consequence would be of a lexicographic nature, due to the fact that the entry of *biblio* in the dictionaries is poorly treated; for instance in the DIEC it is not fully correct because it offers as an example of *biblio-* *bibliobus* ‘bus library’ with the same meaning as *bibliocleptòman* ‘book kleptomaniac’. *Bibliobus*, however, is not simply a bus of books but a bus that functions as a library, inside which there is a library with the same main functions any library has. The two examples represent not just one but rather two different meanings and two different formation processes: **biblio-** Prefixed form from the Greek word *biblíon*, ‘book’. E.g. *bibliobús*, *bibliocleptòman*.

A bolder consequence would be that of describing these elements in Catalan grammar as new prefixes of the language and, therefore, postulating a movement in the current grammatical paradigm. The figure 2 shows all this lexical structure.

⁴ In the Observatori we have also documented *bebeteca* (*babytheque*), which we think is an ill-formed word because a *bebeteca* should have the meaning of ‘a collection of babies’ but instead, in practice, it refers to the space reserved for babies in a library.

Fig. 2: Semantic Structure of neologismes with *biblio*

RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSIONS

We have presented the topic on the establishment of limits between the word formation resources of the Catalan language. We have seen that the limits between processes are not always discontinuous and that it is not a unanimous question but rather it is subject to controversy and a plurality of opinions. As a matter of fact, it is a dynamic question with consequences on the functioning of the grammar of a language. The most conflictive points are represented by nouns with the structure NN (a very productive structure) in which the second element functions as subcategorizer, a fact that causes these nouns to have a function very similar to that of words formed by syntagmatic construction.

The second point of controversy is originated by the units formed by a segment which formally coincides with a classical form but which semantically inherits the meaning of the word from classical truncation. In these cases we have seen how the truncated segment is very productive and generates many new units in contrast to the very few generated by the homonymous learned form. The high productivity and the fact of sharing most of the characteristics with the stressed prefixes of the Catalan language, and of all Neo-Latin languages, makes us postulate that we could possibly speak of some new prefixes in the Romance languages.

In order to conclude this work we have drawn on the example of *biblio* with the aim of illustrating, by means of a radial semantic structure, the neological complexity that can be generated from one unit. This example has also been useful to show how certain aspects of neology require a multiple theoretical treatment: lexicology, grammaticalization theory, radial categories and contrastive analysis among others, and also have a multiple applicability: in the field of lexicography, the construction of grammars, translation, language teaching or language planning.

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