Parasynthetic verbs in Latin and Romance: A typological perspective

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In this talk I offer an analysis of so-called "parasynthetic verbs" in Latin and Romance languages, which combines a syntactic approach to word formation with a typological perspective.

Two basic types of prefixed denominal verbs can be distinguished in Latin: following Fruyt (2017a,b), the ones in (1) "agglutinate" a PP expressing location, whereas the ones in (2) contain a noun expressing the locatum object.

(1)   *exterminare* ('to drive out of boundaries'; cf. *e(x)* 'out' and *terminus* 'boundary'); *inhumare* 'to bury in the ground (cf. *in* 'in' and *humus* 'ground'), inhume'; *peragrare* 'to travel through (cf. *per* 'through' and *ager* 'field'), etc.

(2)   *inflammare* ('to put fire in'; cf. *in* 'in' and *flamma* 'flame'); *edentare* ('to render toothless'; cf. *e(x)* 'out' and *dens* 'tooth'); *exoculare* ('to deprive of the eyes or sight'; cf. *ex* 'out' and *oculus* 'eye'); *decorticare* ('to deprive of bark'; cf. *de* 'from' and *cortex* 'bark'), etc.

Assuming Haugen's (2008) syntactic distinction between Incorporation and Conflation in denominal verb formation (cf. Hale & Keyser (2002)), I claim that the prefixed location verbs in (1) are formed via *Incorporation* (i.e., Internal Merge), whereas the prefixed verbs in (2) are formed via *Conflation* (i.e., External Merge): in incorporation cases in (1), the nominal root *moves* from the innermost position (the complement of P, where it is interpreted as Ground), whereas in conflation cases in (2), the nominal root does not come from an inner complement position but is directly adjoined to the verb. Consider the following example with a complex locatum verb: *inflammare taedas ignibus* (Cic. *Verr.* 2, 4, 48). An important correlation can be established between (i) promoting the Ground argument to a direct object position (*taedas*$_{Acc}$ 'torches') and (ii) demoting the Figure argument, which appears as instrumental adjunct (*ignibus*$_{Abl}$ 'with fire(s)') and specifies the locatum noun (*flamma* 'flame') that is conflated with the verb. This conflation analysis is then compatible with Serbat's (1989, 2001) insightful claim that, despite appearances, the nominal root in complex locatum verbs like (2) is an adjunct.

As for unprefixed locative verbs (e.g, see (3)), an important generalization can be drawn from Fruyt's (2017) descriptive work: they can only be interpreted as locatum predicates (e.g., *terminare* is interpreted as a locatum verb ('to set bounds') rather than as a location one ('put in the limit')). Unlike the prefixed locatum verbs in (2), which are claimed to be formed via conflation (see above), the unprefixed ones in (3), which are analyzed as involving a possessive relation à la Hale & Keyser ([PROVIDE [X HAVE *termin-*]]), are formed via incorporation.

(3)   *terminare* ('to set bounds'); *animare* ('to fill with breath/air'); *crustare* ('to cover with a rind'), etc.

The present approach provides an explanation of why Romance locatum verbs, unlike location ones, are not necessarily prefixed (e.g., see Di Sciullo (1997) for French). It is also shown why unprefixed *and* prefixed locatum verbs in Romance are formed via incorporation rather than via conflation, its reason being related to the typological shift from the presence of a typical conflation pattern in satellite-framed Latin to a lack of it in verb-framed Romance languages (see Acedo-Matellán & Mateu (2013), i.a.).

Furthermore, I show that a parallelism can be established between prefixed denominal verbs like (1)-(2) and prefixed deadjectival ones like *emollire* 'to make completely soft' (cf. *e(x)* 'out' + *mollis* 'soft'): all these Latin verbs are telic and are claimed to project a ResultP in syntax. In contrast, this projection can be argued to be absent in unprefixed denominal verbs like (3) and unprefixed deadjectival ones like *mollire* 'to soften'. Following Ramchand (2008:89-91), the lack of ResP in unprefixed deadjectival verbs can be shown to account for their interpretation as degree achievements/indefinite change of state verbs. Crucially, unlike in Classical Latin, where the prefix in deadjectival verbs indicates telicity, in Romance languages prefixed change of state verbs can be atelic. As pointed out by Haverling (2010), this situation clearly holds for Classical Latin but becomes unstable in Late Latin, where prefixed deadjectival verbs can be atelic. I will show how this case is again related to the typological shift from satellite-framed Latin to verb-framed Romance discussed in Acedo-Matellán & Mateu (2013).

Selected references

Acedo-Matellán, V. & J. Mateu (2013). "Satellite-framed Latin vs. verb-framed Romance: A syntactic approach". Probus 25: 227-265.

Fruyt, M. (2017a). "Les verbes parasynthétiques en latin: les interprétations et le 1er type". De Lingua Latina, Revue de linguistique latine du Centre Alfred Ernout [online], 13. URL: http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/Numero-13-fevrier-2017.

Fruyt, M. (2017b). "Les verbes parasynthétiques en latin: les 2e et 3e types". De Lingua Latina, Revue de linguistique latine du Centre Alfred Ernout [online] 13. URL: http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/Numero-13-fevrier-2017.