

An exoskeletal study of loanwords in Brazilian Portuguese

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Different theoretical models compete to explain the word formation process in Generative Theory. Both Distributed Morphology (DM) (Marantz, 1997) and the Exoskeletal Model (XSM) (Borer, 2003) disagree about how the word categorization process occurs. In Marantz's (2007) approach, the roots must receive a category once they enter the derivational process. In this sense, all words in a language are composed of a root plus a categorizer head. Even though it seems morphologically simple, the word "cat" would be decomposed as [n Ø [VCAT]]. On the other hand, in Borer's (2014) approach, once the root enters the derivation, it becomes noun or verb-equivalent depending on the syntactic structure. In this sense, there is no need to postulate null categorizers. Also, the XSM conception of grammar leads to the understanding that the insertion of semantic content may be later than in DM, which claims the words may receive arbitrary meaning until the insertion of the second categorizer. Pederneira, Aquino, and Lemle (2021) conducted a study which set out to analyse and present how English words and syntactic constructions are integrated into the grammar of Brazilian Portuguese speakers, taking into account the DM approach. The authors explored the data in three parts: analysis of simple words, compound words and native syntactic creations containing a loan. Their hypothesis was that an analysis based on roots that concatenate to morphemes provides more precise tools for the incorporation of loanword analysis. The results obtained from the data analysis indicate that the syntactic contexts of words from the source language, once integrated into the root in the target language, can change freely to the point where they become starting points for new syntactic constructions based on Portuguese grammar. These results for English loanwords incorporation into Portuguese confirmed the word formation hypothesis of DM. Our investigation aims to review the outcomes of Pederneira, Aquino, and Lemle (2021) study and expand the dataset in light of the XSM. We contrast the behaviour of brand-new loanwords in DM and XSM and objective to understand what the loanwords reveal about the grammar structure and their components. Drawing on a qualitative analysis based on introspection, we found that the Exoskeletal Model provides formal analytical tools which enable root categorization to be understood without considering semantic or phonological interfaces. Loanword data from Brazilian Portuguese confirms the uniformity in word formation across languages, as predicted by the XSM.

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