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Native vs. Borrowed Word Formation in Synchrony and Diachrony

5./6. Dezember 2025 | Raum 4

Österreichische Linguistiktagung

Workshop “Native vs. Borrowed Word Formation in Synchrony and Diachrony”

Convenors:

Marko Simonović, University of Graz
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Schedule & Book of Abstracts

Friday, Dec. 5		
Room (ÖLT system)	4	
Room (University system)	N.1.44 (48)	
	Author	Title
15-15:30	Convenors	Intro
15:30-16	Nino Amiridze, Rusudan Asatiani, Zurab Baratashvili	One Recipient, Three Donors: Verb Formation with Loan Roots in Some Varieties of Georgian
16-16_30	Coffee break	
16:30-17	Lina Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė, Danguolė Straizytė	From Borrowing to Word Formation: Hybrid Compounds in Lithuanian
17-17:30	Petra Sleeman	Borrowed word-formation in French: the suffix <i>-ing</i> as a root suffix
Saturday, Dec. 6		
Room (ÖLT system)	4	
Room (University system)	N.1.44 (48)	
	Author	Title
10-10:30	Nikolas Webster	Sino-Korean predicates on the nature of syntactic categorization
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11-11:30	Lina Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė	On the Integration of Hybrid Prefixed Derivatives in Lithuanian
11:30-12:00	Lior Laks, Maha Nassar	Losing transitivity boundaries? Verb formation based on loanwords in Palestinian Arabic
13:30-14:30	lunch break	
14:30-15	Emma Molloy	Beyond dialect: How perceived nativeness governs the German {-s} plural
15-15:30	Franz Rainer	Is 'neoclassical word-formation' a superfluous concept?
15:30-16	Sandra Birzer	A Corpus-Based Study of Loan Suffix Productivity: Exaptation and Competition of <i>-ist(a)</i> in Slavic Noun Formation
16-16:30	Coffee break	
16:30-17	Anthoula Revithiadou, Ilias Mittas, Giorgos Markopoulos	From <i>TikTok</i> to <i>Tiktóki</i> : Nativeness through inflection productivity and stress predictability
17-17:30	Gianina Iordăchioaia, Sergei Monakhov	Morphosyntactic properties of competing borrowed and native nominalizations in German: A large-scale corpus study
17:30-18	Marko Simonović, Predrag Kovačević, Joeri Vinke, Petra Mišmaš	<i>Nominalisatie</i> and <i>nominalizacija</i> walk into a pub, where <i>nominalisering</i> and <i>nominaliziranje</i> are already sitting: Latinate nominalisations in Germanic and Slavic

Abstracts

(alphabetically by first author)

One Recipient, Three Donors:

Verb Formation with Loan Roots in Some Varieties of Georgian

Nino Amiridze (Tbilisi State University)

Rusudan Asatiani (Tbilisi State University)

Zurab Baratashvili (Tbilisi State University/The Australian National University)

In this talk, we examine verb formation in varieties of Georgian that have been in contact with different donor languages: (i) the Imerkhebian dialect, in contact with Turkish since the 16th century; (ii) modern spoken Georgian, in contact with Russian from the middle of 19th century until the beginning of 1990s; and (iii) modern spoken Georgian, in contact with English since the late 1990s. This choice of contact situations considered for the comparison was motivated by the diversity of the donor languages and Georgian varieties, and the level of intensity of the contact (very long with Turkish, long with Russian, short

with English). Our analysis focuses on identifying which accommodation devices are significant in each variety and comparing them; determining the contact-setting-specific loan verb accommodation (LVA) techniques employed by these varieties; and placing preverb-based accommodation devices within the broader typology of LVA strategies. The accommodation techniques Georgian uses corresponds to two LVA strategies described by Wohlgemuth (2009): direct insertion and the light-verb strategy. The phenomenon we describe in this talk fits to direct insertion, but its behavior is quite specific:

(a) At the beginning of the contact period, Georgian uses the preverb *da-* (the most grammaticalized one among Georgian preverbs) as the sole means of loan verb accommodation.

(b) As the contact intensifies, other possible preverbs get activated.

In the talk, we will use several illustrative examples, which are also available online at <https://tinyurl.com/rznp76y3>. In our work, we used the Georgian Dialect Corpus (<http://www.corpora.co>) as well as various published sources, among them, (Chokharadze, 2013; Dzidziguri, 1956; Marr, 1911; Mikautadze, 2015; Putkaradze, 1993) for Georgian varieties in Turkey, (Mikiashvili, 2005) for Georgian-Russian language contact, and (Amiridze, 2018) for the contact situation of Georgian with English.

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A Corpus-Based Study of Loan Suffix Productivity: Exaptation and Competition of *-ist(a)* in Slavic Noun Formation

Sandra Birzer (University of Bamberg)

This case study examines the productivity of the Latinate suffix *-ist(a)* in Slavic noun formation, focusing on Polish (Western branch), Russian (Eastern branch), and Serbian (Southern branch). While Russian and Polish features only *-ist* and *-ista* respectively, in Serbian both *-ist* and *-ista* are acceptable (cf. Klajn 2005: 180). Our analysis is synchronic and based on web corpora, as they better capture everyday usage and thus provide a more accurate picture of actual productivity than normatively oriented text collections.

The study pursues two interrelated aims. First, it evaluates the degree of integration and productivity of the suffix in each language. A three-stage developmental pathway can be identified: (a) borrowed internationalisms, which represent instances of matter replication (Sakel 2007), e.g. RUS *ideal-ist* ‘idealist,’; (b) language-internal formations with borrowed bases, e.g. RUS *futbol-ist* ‘football player,’ *reklam-ist* ‘advertiser’; and (c) formations with genuinely Slavic bases, e.g. RUS *očerk-ist* ‘author of *očerki* (sketches, essays)’. Jiráček (1971: 114) refers to this progression as the “*obrusenie* [Russification]” of the suffix. While Russian and Polish show evidence of all three stages, Serbian does not exhibit stage (c).

Second, it addresses the competition between the Serbian suffix variants *-ist* and *-ista*. Currently, *-ista* formations clearly dominate in both type and token frequency, also in doublets such as *pijanista* vs. *pijanist* ‘pianist’. However, recent English borrowings such as *sajentist* ‘scientist’ or *sajklist* ‘cyclist’ occur exclusively with *-ist*. This raises the question of whether stage (b) in Russian and Polish, as well as the current trend toward *-ist* in Serbian, may be analyzed as a case of allogeous exaptation (cf. Gardani 2016), in which the suffix assumes the function of a loan marker, and how to account for the fact that in stage (c) the suffix becomes nativized, thereby losing its loan-marker status: possibly a case of de-exaptation?

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On the Integration of Hybrid Prefixed Derivatives in Lithuanian

Lina Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė (Vilnius University)

The study employs a synchronic approach to investigate the morphological structure of hybrid prefixed derivatives and their integration into the Lithuanian word formation system. Hybrid prefixed derivatives and their integration into the native word formation system have received some attention (Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė 2017; Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė & Stundžia 2015). This research raises the question: to what extent does the integration of hybrid prefixed derivatives resemble that of indigenous prefixed derivatives?

The investigation draws on data from three Lithuanian dictionaries (DCL, DL, DSL) and a corpus (CCLL). Several research methods have been applied in this study. One of these is the synchronic approach to word formation analysis, for which theoretical principles are formulated by Urbutis (2009: 165–166). In synchronic word formation analysis, genetic relations are not considered; the focus is instead on the current functional relations between formations and their base words (Urbutis 2009: 40; DLKG₄ 2006: 86). Additionally, the comparative method enables a systematic examination of the formation of hybrid prefixed and indigenous derivatives, highlighting both similarities and differences between them.

Prefixation in Lithuanian is one of the most important ways of forming nouns; however, in terms of the number of derivatives, it ranks last (DLKG₄ 2005: 145; LKG I 1965: 423). Hybrid prefixed derivatives are classified into two groups:

1. Derivatives formed from borrowed bases with indigenous prefixes.
2. Derivatives formed from indigenous bases with borrowed prefixes (Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė 2017: 124).

This study introduces the integration of hybrid prefixed derivatives into the native word formation system, distinguishing between two types:

1. Morphologically **integrated hybrid prefixed derivatives**, which do not differ from indigenous prefixed derivatives.
2. Morphologically **non-integrated hybrid prefixed derivatives**, which differ from indigenous prefixed derivatives.

I will also list the most frequent borrowed prefixes combined with indigenous stems and provide examples in which formations can be interpreted either as suffixed or prefixed derivatives, depending on the base words chosen. Although relatively rare in nouns, circumfixation also occurs in Lithuanian as a morphological process.

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From Borrowing to Word Formation: Hybrid Compounds in Lithuanian

Lina Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė (Vilnius University)

Danguolė Straičytė (Vilnius University)

The study employs a synchronic approach to investigate the morphological structure of compounds with borrowed constituents in Lithuanian and their integration into the native word formation system. In Lithuanian, hybrid compounds and their integration into the native word formation system have received some attention (Aleksaitė 2021; Mikelionienė 2020; Murmulaitytė 2019; Rutkienė 2019; Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė 2017; Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė 2015; Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė & Stundžia 2015). This research raises the question of the extent to which integration manifests in hybrid compounds.

The investigation draws on data from three Lithuanian dictionaries (DCL, DL, DSL) and a corpus (CCLL). The **comparative method** identifies similarities and differences among hybrid compounds. The descriptive method provides insights into their combinability properties, while the analytical method examines their internal morphological structure, allowing us to infer patterns of integration into the native word formation system.

A characteristic feature of Lithuanian compounding is the combination of two stems, mostly simplex, that function as free words (Stundžia 2016: 3091). For example, the native compound *žand-i-klaul-is* 'jawbone' combines two free stems, *žand-as* 'jaw' and *klaul-as* 'bone', both of which are independent words. In contrast, some borrowed stems are always bound, for instance, *-skopas* '-scope'. This distinction justifies classifying stems as either free or bound and motivates analysing hybrid compounds based on the relationship between free and bound stems. From this perspective, we introduce two types of hybrid compounds in Lithuanian, focusing on their morphonological integration into the native word formation system:

1. Compounds with a native first stem and a borrowed second stem or a borrowed first stem and a native second stem. Hybrid compounds of this type generally conform to the patterns of native compounds in the recipient language.
2. Compounds with the first bound stem. Compounds of this type generally show no morphonological accommodation or integration into the Lithuanian word formation system.

We will also examine the distribution of determinative and copulative hybrid compounds within Lithuanian.

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Morphosyntactic properties of competing borrowed and native nominalizations in German: A large-scale corpus study

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Sergei Monakhov (University of Graz)

Latinate nominalizations with the suffix *-ion* and its allomorphs (e.g., En. *decoration*, *inspiration*) are quite widespread across European languages. In German they are particularly interesting, as unlike in English the verb roots they are built on require the Latinate verbalizer *-ier-* before *-ung* or infinitive nominalizations can be formed: cf. *Dekoration* vs. *Dekor-*(ier)-ung/Dekor-*(ier)-en* ‘decoration’. Morphosyntactically, *-ier* is a clear indicator of verbal event meaning and possibly further event structure properties, following Grimshaw’s (1990) distinction between the later called Arg(ument) Str(ucture) N(ominals) and Res(ult) N(ominals). This means that we expect *-ung* and infinitive nominalizations to be more likely to exhibit ArgStrN properties than their *-ion* cognates. In addition, *-ung* is known to be less likely to form ArgStrNs than the infinitive, and the question is to what extent does the presence of the verbalizer *-ier-* and the availability of the *-ion* nominalization influence the ArgStrN behavior of *-ung* and infinitive nominalizations?

We present a large-scale corpus study comprising a total of 4390 *-ion*, *-ung* and infinitive nominalizations, for which we extracted frequency in plural (i.e., low frequency indicates high ArgStrN hood) and with inflectional and prepositional genitive phrases (i.e., high frequency indicates high ArgStrN-hood) from the German deTenTen23 corpus. We compare the ArgStrN-properties of three groups of competing nominalizations: 1) *-ion*, *-ung*, and infinitive nominalization built from the same verb root (e.g., *dekor-*); 2) *-ung* and infinitive nominalizations derived from Germanic verbs that do not show *-ion* nominals and contain no *-ier* verbalizer (e.g., *Abbildung/Abilden* ‘depiction’); 3) *-ung* and infinitive nominalizations derived from verbs that do not show *-ion* nominals but contain *-ier* (e.g., *Jodieren/Jodierung/*Jod(is)ation* ‘iodization’).

The results indicate that, besides the morphosyntactic structure of the nominalizations (with or without a verbalizer), the competition with other suffixes such as *-ion* plays a crucial role in the behavior of *-ung* native nominalizations in German.

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Losing transitivity boundaries? Verb formation based on loanwords in Palestinian Arabic

Lior Laks (Bar-Ilan University)
Maha Nassar (Bar-Ilan University)

The study examines doublets in verb formation in Palestinian Arabic (PA) based on loanwords, as demonstrated by the online examples below. Both verbs are derived from *malyo:n* ‘million’ and denote ‘become a millionaire’. While *malyan* (1) is formed in the *CaCCaC* pattern, *tmalyan* (2) is formed in *tCaCCaC*.

(1) *baʕref na:s malyana-t*

‘I know people became millionaires’

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AA%20>

(2) *tmalyan-et min il-ʔazme*

‘I became a millionaire from the crisis’

<https://twitter.com/DrBehbehaniAM/status/1393332301459857412>

Semitic morphology relies highly on non-concatenative formation, where verbs are formed in patterns. The patterns determine the phonological shape of verbs: vowels, prosodic structure and affixes (if any) (Berman 1978, Bolozky 1978, Schwarzwald 1981, McCarthy 1981, Ravid 1990, Bat-El 1994, Aronoff 1994, Benmamoun 2003). Many studies examined the criteria for pattern selection based on loanwords (Holes 1995, Younes 2000, Watson 2002, Henkin 2009, Versteegh 2009, Ouhalla 2014, among others). Out of ten existing patterns, only *CaCCaC* and *tCaCCaC* are productive. *CaCCaC* hosts mostly transitive verbs, while *tCaCCaC* hosts intransitive verbs.

Examination of new data based on web searches, reveals that the distinction between the patterns has become less stable, where transitivity boundaries are not clear. This results in doublets of intransitive verbs in two patterns, e.g. *hastar-thastar* ‘become hysterical’ and *banšar -tbanšar* ‘become punctured’ (see Pospíšil (2025) for native Arabic verbs). This phenomenon is subject to variation. However, some generalizations emerge.

- i. While *tCaCCaC* hosts only intransitive verbs, *CaCCaC* can host both types. This is also motivated by avoiding phonological complexity. *tCaCCaC* consists of an initial consonant cluster, which is partially avoided in some dialects.
- ii. Unification is possible only if there is no contrast between transitive/ intransitive verbs of the same concept. For example, *makyaj* (*CaCCaC*) ‘put makeup on X’ and *tmakyaj* (*tCaCCaC*) ‘put makeup on oneself’ differ in transitivity, and this is morphologically marked.

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Beyond dialect: How perceived nativeness governs the German {-s} plural

Emma Molloy (University of Copenhagen)

In German plural formation, native affixes compete with a borrowed {-s} – a natural test case for how borrowed morphology becomes part of speakers’ grammatical knowledge. The {-s} plural, often traced to French and Low German contact (e.g., Öhmann 1924), has been functionally described as a “default”, seemingly for what Wunderlich (1999) terms “untypical” nouns (e.g., borrowings, abbreviations). Prescriptive acceptance in the Duden has been increasing since the 1960s (Korte 1986). Yet it is also traditionally dubbed a “northernism”. This study uses synchronic experimental data to adjudicate between these two accounts. In a completion task, 219 native speakers from across the German-speaking region pluralised nouns with codified plural ending variation and nonce words designed to test phonological constraints. The results strongly support the functional account: {-s} was preferred for most codified tokens, many of them borrowings, and for vowel- and consonant-final nonce items – though some tokens exhibited competition with gender constraints. A spatial autocorrelation analysis (Moran’s $I=0.25$, $p=0.02$, 500km distance-based weights) revealed clustering inconsistent with a simple North–South split, instead showing no significant differences between High, Central and Low German dialect areas ($p>0.05$) and a lower usage spot in East-Central Germany. A binomial mixed-effects model indicates that variation is driven far more by token-level and speaker-level differences than dialect affiliation.

Building on Wiese (2009), I propose a three-level inflection model where {-s} functions as a word-level affix in the absence of a stored irregular or analogical pattern, when a noun is deemed phonologically or lexically “untypical”. This “typicality” effect – paralleling findings for the Polish genitive (Divjak et al. 2020) – suggests that speakers’ perceived nativeness guides affix choice, offering a principled account of how morphological productivity is conditioned.

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Is ‘neoclassical word-formation’ a superfluous concept?

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‘Neoclassical word-formation’, I would contend, is not a relevant part of anyone’s grammar. In synchrony, in fact, ‘neoclassical’ patterns do not constitute a homogeneous category. They can be grouped into a series of smaller patterns that show a certain internal homogeneity but show no trait(s) that would distinguish all of them with respect to ‘ordinary’ word-formation. The greatest lacuna from a synchronic point of view is the near absence of a realistic, sociolinguistic approach to issues such as the motivation and productivity of ‘neoclassical’ patterns.

In a diachronic approach, by contrast, it certainly makes sense to treat together the fate of all patterns taken over from Greek and Latin, directly or via other European languages. However, even in diachrony, there is nothing truly special about ‘neoclassical’ patterns: the mechanisms that bring about the changes are the same as in change in word formation in general. To the extent that the causes of differential outcomes in different languages can be ascertained at all, these normally have to do with cultural factors or with different degrees of vicinity to the donor languages, as will be shown by contrasting French with Italian. In diachronic research, the greatest lacuna concerns the neglect of modern Latin. Many loan translations from modern Latin have gone unnoticed, and among the words that have no modern Latin model, many, as will be shown, were formed on the basis of Greek or Latin word-formation by bilingual writers and then immediately adapted to the vernacular language. They must not be treated as formed on a vernacular basis. Until the 19th century, this was the normal way of forming ‘neoclassical’ neologisms, especially in the sciences. Only more recently speakers with an insufficient knowledge of Greek or Latin started gobbling together new words on the sole basis of neoclassical formations of the vernacular languages.

From TikTok to Tiktóki:

Nativeness through inflection productivity and stress predictability

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Native speakers exhibit strong intuitions about the well-formedness and nativeness of constructed words, such as pseudo-nouns, based not only on phonotactic constraints but also on their familiarity with nominal inflectional patterns (see Apostolouda & Soukalopoulou 2025 for Greek). This raises the broader question of how morphological “nativeness” is encoded in speakers’ grammars. We address this question by examining the assimilation of loanwords in Greek.

Traditional analyses recognize a binary distinction (e.g., Petrounias 1998; Papanastasiou 2001): loanwords enter the vocabulary either as unassimilated forms that preserve source-language phonotactics and morphology (e.g., *tanks* ‘tank(s), indeclinable’), or as fully assimilated words bearing Greek inflectional suffixes (e.g., *lórð-os* ‘lord-SG.NOM’, cf. PL.NOM *lórð-i*). However, recent loanwords in Greek reveal a previously undocumented pattern: established unassimilated forms (e.g., *tíktok* ‘TikTok, indeclinable’) coexist with emergent assimilated variants (*tiktók-i*, cf. PL *tiktók-ja*), revealing real-time dynamics of morphological integration.

Our analysis shows that, while certain morphosemantic criteria (e.g., ±human referent, grammatical gender in the source language) play a role in loanword adaptation (Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 1994), the choice of a particular inflection class for the integration of a loanword to the nominal system seems to be primarily determined by inflection class productivity (Christofidou 2003; Anastassiadis-Symeonidis 2012). For instance, the highly productive neuter *-i* class readily accepts loanwords like *tiktók-i*, while other neuter classes (e.g., *-o*: **tiktók-o*) are systematically excluded. This suggests that speakers encode nativeness not through phonotactic gatekeeping (foreign roots with illicit Greek phonotactics, e.g., word-final *k* in *tíktok*, do not trigger any specific phonological adaptations) but through *productivity-based class selection*. Furthermore, the productivity of an inflection class appears to be associated with stress predictability: speakers channel foreign roots primarily into inflection classes with predictable stress patterns (for example, *-i* class nouns are systematically stressed on the penultimate).

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Nominalisatie and nominalizacija walk into a pub, where nominalisering and nominaliziranje are already sitting: Latinate nominalisations in Germanic and Slavic

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Latinate nominalisations have spread throughout Germanic and Slavic, where they enter into different competition patterns with native derivations. This presentation focuses on cognates of Latinate nominalisations in *-ion* (e.g. *assimilation, distribution*) and their competition with native deverbal nominalisations. We concentrate on Dutch and Western South Slavic (WSS) languages (Slovenian and Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian). All these languages share a feature distinguishing them from English: Latinate verbs have an obligatory overt verbalising morpheme, preserved also in native nominalisations. For example, the cognates of English *conserve* are *conserv-er-en* in Dutch and *konzerv-ira-ti* in WSS, with corresponding native nominalisations *conserv-er-ing* and *konzerv-ira-nje*. These compete with Latinate nominalisations, which lack verbal morphology and are therefore plausibly analysed as deradical: *conservatie* and *konzervacija*. Dutch and WSS differ in the status of the nominalised infinitive. In Dutch, the nominalized infinitive functions as a noun and can take a genitive (P-marked) argument. Potentially related to this, native derivational nominalisations in *-ing* are not fully productive (cf. *distribuer-en* ‘distribute, distributing’ vs. **distribuer-ing*). In WSS, the infinitive cannot be nominalised, and every Latinate verb derives a nominalisation in *-nje*. We present corpus studies comparing the frequency of Latinate and native nominalisations (1) in the plural and (2) followed by a genitive-marked form. Adapting standard tests in the syntactic literature on nominalizations (Grimshaw 1990 *inter alia*), we hypothesize that plural marking indicates less verbal structure, while genitive complements signal more verbal structure. Across the dataset, Latinate nominalisations behave as carrying less verbal structure, especially in pairs. For instance, in 50 Dutch pairs, the average percentage of nominalisations followed by a genitive (*van*) was 29% for Latinate forms and 42% for native ones. In Slovenian, the figures are 29% vs. 48%. Regarding plural marking, Dutch shows Latinate 7% vs. native 4%, while Slovenian shows Latinate 13% vs. native 0.5%.

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Borrowed word-formation in French: the suffix *-ing* as a root suffix

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For French, Dell & Selkirk (1978) make a distinction between non-native and native suffixes: non-native, Latinate suffixes, but not native suffixes, can undergo or can provoke backing of the preceding vowel (Learned Backing). Non-native (level 1) suffixes are close to the root and cannot be preceded by native (level 2) suffixes.

Within a syntactic approach to morphology and based on Creemers et al. (2015), Don et al. (2015) propose a three-way distinction instead of a two-way distinction between types of suffixes in French: root suffixes, first head suffixes and head suffixes. They argue that the deverbal nominalizing suffixes *-age* and *-ment* are head suffixes, corresponding to Dell & Selkirk's native suffixes. The deverbal nominalizing suffix *-(a)tion* is analyzed as a first head suffix: it attaches to bound roots, it triggers Learned Backing, but it is not categorially flexible.

In this paper I analyze the deverbal nominalizing suffix *-ing* in French, borrowed from English, as a root suffix. According to Creemers et al. (2015), root suffixes attach to bound roots and are categorially flexible. If root suffixes are Latinate, they also trigger Learned Backing, such as *-al* and *-eux*, but this does not apply in the case of the suffix *-ing* borrowed from English. Based on a corpus research it is shown that, in French, *-ing* only attaches to English verbs, which, not having an autonomous status in French, can be considered bound roots. Although the suffix *-ing* generally forms nouns in French, it is shown in this paper that *-ing* forms are sometimes also used instead of French infinitives, i.e. as verbal forms. Therefore, it is argued that *-ing* in French is categorially flexible and that it is therefore a root suffix.

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Sino-Korean predicates on the nature of syntactic categorization

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Sino-Korean predicates require the use of a light verb within the sentential domain, yet lack verbal functional structure embedded within a corresponding process nominal (Yoon & Park 2008). Native Korean predicates, however, require verbal functional structure in a corresponding process nominal, and disallow the use of a light verb within the sentential domain. This generalization indicates that argument structure is not inherently linked to a particular syntactic domain, but rather comes from the Root itself: Sino-Korean process nominals and their predicate counterparts must both utilize a $\sqrt{(\text{Root})\text{P}}$ (Harley 2014). Roots are heads that project phrases and take complements, contrary to the view of Roots in decompositional morphosyntactic theory, which assumes Roots to be syntactically deficient and unable to exist in a structure without categorization (Alexiadou 2014; Borer 2003, 2014; Lohndal 2020; Merchant 2019; Embick & Marantz 2008).

The data suggests that “Root categorization” is not a real function of the grammar. Investigating the morphosyntax of native vs. Sino-Korean predicates reveals that Sino-Korean loanwords generate predicates with transparent morphological forms that map cleanly to corresponding underlying structure, precisely because they resist combination with native derivational affixes. The generated structure lacks a categorizing head entirely: though categorizing heads exist, they serve to demarcate transitions from the verbal to nominal domain, or vice versa, and do not attach directly to Roots.

I further argue that loanwords are a diagnostic for demarcating the size of the minimal unit that can be exponed post-syntactically (Vocabulary Insertion; e.g., Bobaljik 2012) for a given language, and therefore may be used to predict what syntactic information will be obscured by the morphological form of a given native predicate. Rigorous investigation of loanwords cross-linguistically therefore provides researchers the opportunity to resolve a number of longstanding questions on the nature of argument structure and the role of syntactic categorization.

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