
Semantic transparency and variation in nominal syntagmatic compounds in Romance languages

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The scientific debate about syntagmatic compounds of the type N+Prep+N is characterized by terminological insecurity and very heterogeneous attempts of classification. The status of multi-word units such as sp. *bicicleta de montaña*, fr. *livre pour enfants* or port. *história em quadrinhos* is discussed controversially, as they lie at the interface of lexicon and syntax. In fact, in Romance languages, syntagmatic compounds appear to be very productive and they may vary in their degree of lexicalization, idiomaticity and fixedness.

The present talk aims to concentrate on the role and semantic transparency of the prepositional element in syntagmatic compounds. It has been argued, that prepositions in syntagmatic compounds have lost their initial meaning and are now fully opaque and lexicalized items. In a first part, I will analyze the alternation and variation of the prepositional element. This includes the omission of the constituent as in fr. *stylo à bille* - *stylo-bille* and sp. *tren de mercancías* - *tren mercancías*, as well as the alternation between different prepositional elements, such as sp. *esmalte de/para uñas* or fr. *flûte de/à champagne*. In a second part, I will present and discuss a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the role of the prepositional element in word-formation processes by means of the TenTen Corpora of French, Spanish and Portuguese. The results may shed light on the role of the prepositional element in syntagmatic compounds, its transparency and its interchangeability.

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