

## Root categorization as an interface condition: Evidence from compounds

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There has been a surge of syntactic research on compounding, joining a large literature on the nature of roots and phase theory. In an attempt to probe into the syntactic domain for idiosyncratic interpretation and to account for lexical integrity effects, some recent studies on compounding have argued that root compounds (RootCs) are made up of two free acategorial roots directly merged in syntax, without undergoing categorization (Zhang 2007; Bauke 2014, 2016). The main goal of such an approach is to extend the phase domain in order to maintain two uncategorized roots awaiting further Merge operations. When a category head is merged on the top of this structure, it will trigger its Spell-Out (Marantz 2001, 2008), and as a result, both roots will be identified as a single syntactic object for the purposes of movement and binding, and they will be assigned a fixed, non-compositional interpretation.

In this talk I will argue that categorially non-individuated roots are not legitimate LF and PF objects, along with Panagiotidis (2011, 2014, 2015). Consequently, any syntactic object made up of two uncategorized roots will induce formal crashing at the interfaces. I will show that the merger of bare roots leads to the following drawbacks:

- **Problem #1:** Feature-less items projects (Acquaviva 2009);
- **Problem #2:** Since no root projects, it is not possible to determine the head of a RootC;
- **Problem #3:** If RootCs made up of two uncategorized roots bear a single category head, they should display a single primary stress (Marvin 2002, 2013), conflicting with the phrasal stress pattern of Romance RootCs (e.g., Port. *video-depoimento* lit. video+testimony ‘video-testimony’; It. *càpo-stazione* lit. chief+station ‘stationmaster’; Sp. *empresa-fantasma* lit. firm+ghost ‘cover-up company’);
- **Problem #4:** It does not explain why we find different grammatical relations within RootCs, such as attributive (e.g., En. *sword fish*; Port. *peixe-espada* ‘swordfish’), subordinate (e.g., En. *apron string*; Port. *creme-de-leite* ‘milk cream’), and coordinate relations (e.g., En. *actor director*; Port. *pastor-deputado* ‘pastor-representative’);
- **Problem #5:** It does not account for the correct distribution of different nominal class markers within Romance nominal RootCs (e.g., Port. *peix-e espada-a* ‘sword fish’; *ministr-o chef-e* ‘chief minister’); and it would not prevent the attachment of verbal theme vowels to these compounds;
- **Problem #6:** It would preclude the insertion of inflectional markers in the first members of Romance non-compositional RootCs (e.g., Port. *samba-s canção-es* lit. samba-PL+song+PL ‘boxers’).

My main claim is that root categorization cannot be analyzed as a matter of parametric variation, as well as an optional derivational step. I will propose that lexical integrity effects can be straightforwardly accounted if we assume that the unifying characteristic of compounds is the presence of a category head merged on the top of two categorized roots. Finally, I will claim that non-compositional domains are not determined by categorization. Rather, non-compositionality is assigned at LF, through instructions associated with roots in a particular syntactic environment (Harley 2014).