

Morphology and meaning in Portuguese deverbal adjectives

Alexandra Soares Rodrigues

Escola Superior de Educação - Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

Centro de Estudos de Linguística Geral e Aplicada - Universidade de Coimbra

The aim of this paper is to study the relation between morphology and meaning in Portuguese deverbal adjectives. In Portuguese, there are many suffixes that may generate adjectives from verbs. Some of those suffixes are *-dor* (*batalhador* ‘fighter’, *bebedor* ‘drinker’, *migrador* ‘that migrates’), *-deiro* (*caideiro* ‘that is about to fall’, *palradeiro* ‘chatterer’, *assadeiro* ‘that is good to be roasted’), *-douro* (*morredouro* ‘that is about to die’, *semeadouro* ‘that is good to be sown’, *roçadouro* ‘that is good to clear land of wood’), *-ão* (*chorão* ‘that cries’, *papão* ‘that eats a lot’, *resmungão* ‘grumbler’), *-nte* (*brilhante* ‘that glitters’, *relaxante* ‘relaxant’, *coagulante* ‘coagulable’), *-oso* (*humilhoso* ‘humiliating’, *necessitoso* ‘that needs something’) and *-vel* (*destacável* ‘detachable’, *agradável* ‘that pleases’, *variável* ‘variable’).

We will analyse the contribution of each suffix to the meaning of the adjective.

We will go through some traditional approaches on derivational suffixes.

One approach observes suffixes as simple phonological spell-outs of Word Formation Rules (cf. Beard 1995).

Another approach conceives of suffixes as mere operators of the topicalisation of an argument belonging to the argument structure of the verbal base (e.g. Rappaport Hovav & Lieber 1992, Booij 1986, Sproat 1985). According to this point of view, the meaning of the derivative depends on the argument that is assumed by the suffix.

However, the analysis of our data does not support those approaches. Against the first approach, we may advance that there are many fine grained meanings, according to each suffix, on deverbal adjectives. Take adjectives such as *chorão* and *choroso*. Both of them correspond to the meaning ‘that cries’ and both come from the verb *chorar* ‘to cry’. Nevertheless, each one has different usages, due to their different meaning nuances. *Chorão* applies to ‘someone who cries frequently and with little cause’, whilst *choroso* qualifies ‘someone who shows indices that has been crying’. These subtle differences in the meanings are shared by other derivatives of the same suffixes. Thus, it is not possible to consider suffixes as a simple phonological form of a word formation rule, because each suffix provides the derivative with a different, although sometimes very subtle, meaning. These semantic differences seem to go beyond the proposal of Rainer (1999) concerning the division between ‘pure’, ‘dispositional’ and ‘potential’ adjectives.

The second approach is not adequate either. It is not possible to correlate a single argument to each suffix. See, for instance, the suffix *-douro* and its derivatives: (*morredouro* ‘that is about to die’, *semeadouro* ‘that is good to be sown’, *roçadouro* ‘that is good to clear land of wood’). *Morredouro* ‘that is about to die’ corresponds to an internal argument, which assumes Subject, of the verb *morrer* (‘to die’). *Semeadouro* ‘that is good to be sown’ corresponds to an internal argument, which assumes Direct Object, of the verb *semear* ‘to sow’. *Roçadouro* ‘that is good to clear land of wood’ corresponds to an external argument, which assumes Subject, of the verb *roçar* ‘to clear land of wood’. The same occurs with adjectives with other suffixes. (We follow Lexical-Functional Grammar (Bresnan 2001) in this argument structure approach.)

We assume that the construction of deverbal adjectives is not based on argument structure, since there is no unique relation between each kind of adjective/suffix that constructs it, its meaning and the argument structure of the verbal base. We propose that semantic mechanisms are responsible for the construction of these adjectives. Those semantic

mechanisms are founded on coindexation, which we define as a semantic process between semantic features of the base and semantic features of the suffix (Rodrigues 2008).

To prove that suffixes have a strong determination on the meaning of the derivative, we will compare deverbal adjectives with other adjectival derivatives, such as denominal ones, constructed with the same suffixes (e.g. *montanhoso* 'mountainous' from *montanha* 'mountain' or *ardiloso* 'cunning', from *ardil* 'ploy'). This will also demonstrate that the same suffix may intervene in different word formation rules, according to our model "Word formation rules in interfaces" (Rodrigues 2008).

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