

Morphological conversion in Latin, and its continuity in Romance languages
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Abstract

The relevance of the concept of morphological conversion in Romance languages has been the subject of a debate for some time. Within the framework where conversion is considered a dynamic process with a base and a derivative (cf. Bauer 1983), the view that conversion is a word-based process whereby absolute formal identity must occur as a necessary condition is now in competition with (or, in some languages, has been replaced altogether by) the interpretation that conversion may apply as a stem- or root-based process and, therefore, no strict formal identity is required.

This paper presents a range of cases in which conversion can be described to occur in Latin, and its continuity into the most widespread Romance languages (French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish), wherever the latter interpretation of the two above may apply (for a different approach on the topic in Latin, cf. e.g. Fruyt 2011; for the Romance languages, cf. Corbin 1987, Floricic 2016 and Kerleroux 1996, 1997 for French; Thornton 2004 and Rainer 2016a for Italian; Pöll 2016 and Rodrigues 2013, 2022 for Portuguese; Grossmann 2016 and Sala 2016 for Romanian; Pena 1991, 1999 and Rainer 2016b for Spanish). The review of cases and the ensuing discussion starts out from classic references, like Diez ([1836] 1874) and Meyer-Lübke ([1894] 1895), and includes recent references too, like Litta Modignani Picozzi & Passarotti (2023). The Latin examples discussed are from Litta Modignani Picozzi & Passarotti (2023), after confirmation based on Gaffiot (2000), Lewis & Short (1879) and Glare (2012). Doubtful cases were excluded.

The gamut of patterns is presented in the open word-classes by word-class (noun/verb, adjective/noun, adjective/verb, adjective/adverb, adverb/verb) and in the two possible directions. In the closed word-classes, the direction attested is presented (e.g. noun-to-adverb, determinative-to-adjective). Inflectional classes are considered within the above as appropriate, and word-class specificities, like the case of participles are presented too (cf. Matthews 1972 and Aronoff 1994 for opposite views; besides classical sources, e.g. by Quintilianus, cf. also Maiden 2013 and Rainer 2016c.). The paper also takes account of additional cases, like intra-categorical shift, the use of the same base for conversion into various word-classes, formation of derivatives of different inflectional classes from the same base within the same pattern, the use of various morphological forms as bases for the same pattern, or recursive conversion.

The picture that emerges is one of continuity between Latin and Romance languages, certainly in the most productive patterns, i.e. deverbal noun formation and denominal verb formation, as described since Diez ([1836] 1874: 265-268 and 362, respectively).

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