

# Preface & acknowledgments

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**Compound Words in Spanish: Theory and history**

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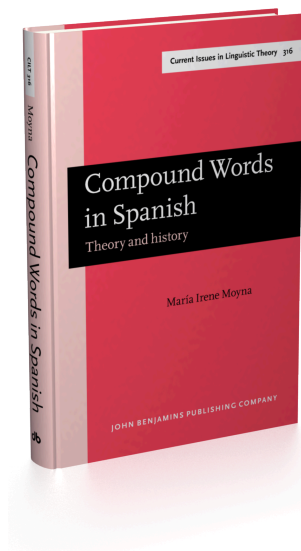
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## Preface & acknowledgments

To say that compounding has been of interest to linguists from the earliest times may sound trite, but it is true. This is evident, for example, in the nomenclature used to identify compound patterns, which is still based on choices made by Pāṇini some 2,500 years ago. Words like *dvandva*, *tatpuruṣa*, and *dvigu* may be mystifying and slightly frustrating to the non-initiate and complicated to typeset even with modern computer keyboards, but they have stood the test of time as a visible manifestation of the collective expertise on compounding accumulated for over two millennia.

Yet, it was not really until the second half of the 20th century that the descriptive accounts typical of earlier periods gave way to theoretical debates. Compounds became a hot topic, because they were possibly the clearest example of the kinds of problems faced by generative grammarians as they tried to tease apart the territories of morphology and syntax. Are compounds rule-generated or stored lexical objects? The more we consider the question with data from language acquisition and processing, the more the answer seems to be ‘Yes’.

When I started working on compounding at the tail end of the 20th century, that debate was raging and in many ways, it still is. However, more recent studies have begun to look at compounds for what they are, rather than for what they have to say about the relationship between different modules of grammar. The past decade has seen the publication of a handbook devoted entirely to compounds, as well as works focused on specific compound patterns and their cross-linguistic similarities and differences. Moreover, there are new edited collections that consider compounding from interdisciplinary perspectives including typology, acquisition, and psycholinguistic processing.

For all that, the field still lacks a modern treatise on the historical development of compounding patterns in any given language. To be sure, there is an entire volume of the *Transactions of the Philological Society* devoted to compounding in historical languages (Volume 100, 2002), but the articles are not diachronic in the sense that they do not systematically document the evolution of compounding over time. The chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Compounding* devoted to diachrony (Kas-tovsky 2009) presents a taxonomy of the compounding types in the Indo-European family, but it does not trace each pattern chronologically. This book comes to fill a descriptive and theoretical vacuum by taking a first stab at the topic with data from Spanish.

The title of the book is dual, because I expect it to have two main audiences. The first group of readers will probably be theoretical linguists who may come looking for

fresh data to prove one or another hypothesis. The second group will be made up of historical linguists who may seek in this book a description of the changes in the compounding patterns of Spanish. Because I cannot predict how much theoretical background historical linguists will have on the issue of compounding or how much theoretical linguists will agree with my point of departure, I have included a couple of chapters that lay down the theoretical basis for the rest of the book. Readers more interested in description may prefer to skip these chapters or simply scan them for specific information. My hope is that, whatever they opt to do, they will find the book useful and the story of compounding as fascinating and as puzzling as I still do, after all these years of working with them.

This book owes much to the help, inspiration, and encouragement of many people. My initial interest in compounds developed at the University of Florida, where I carried out my doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Gary Miller. I did extensive additional data collection and all of the writing while working at the Department of Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University. I am grateful to our two department heads during that period, Víctor Arizpe and Larry Mitchell, for allowing me the time I needed to complete the project. I also gratefully acknowledge a stipend and time release granted by the TAMU Office of the Vice President for Research, through the Program to Enhance Scholarly and Creative Activities, and another grant from the Glasscock Center, which helped defray part of the cost of indexing this book.

If the first draft was a long-drawn and lonely effort, its many subsequent rewrites have been more collective and infinitely more enjoyable. First, I wish to thank my writing group at TAMU, organized by Prudence Merton. The members of the group provided the best non-expert feedback one could hope for, a generous supply of dark chocolate, and much needed comic relief and companionship over long months of work. I also wish to thank the linguists who have commented on portions of this work, in particular John Lipski, Esther Torrego, and Robert Smead. Israel Sanz carefully went over my Latin translations, and Steven Dworkin, Larry Mitchell, David Pharies, Juan Uriagereka, and Roger Wright read the entire manuscript and provided valuable feedback that improved its content and readability many times over. David Pharies must be thanked for believing that I would complete this project, at times when my own certainty flagged. For my first single-author book, I was very fortunate to have the guidance and gentle prodding of my editor, E.F.K. Koerner, the unfailing good will and assistance of Anke de Looper, who was in charge of the entire production process, and the collaboration of Do Mi Stauber, who drew up the index. I appreciate their useful suggestions and experience almost as much as their patience. I owe my largest debt of gratitude to my parents, Patrick Moyna and María Cristina Borthagaray, and to my daughter, Matilde Castro, who supported me in too many ways to count.

I guess being an unsuccessful poet  
isn't as attractive as it used to be.  
But where's the risky spirit,  
the headlong leap into the vast  
unknown of love, where anything  
and everything might happen? Where's  
the wish to be surrounded by poems,  
the great sustaining luxuries and dangers  
of poems, or to make one's life itself  
a poem, unpredictable, meaning  
many things, a door into the other world  
through which even a child might walk?  
Words have such power, I wanted to tell her.  
You never know what may come of them.  
Or who will be the beneficiary.

From "On Love and Life Insurance: An argument" by John Brehm (reproduced by  
kind permission from the author).

