

Adverbial derivation in Maltese and Italian: a starting point for studies in crosslinguistic productivity

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Most studies on the productivity of derivational affixes focus on one language and compare the different degrees of productivity the affixes exhibit (Plag, 1999; Plag, Dalton-Puffer, & Baayen, 1999). The focus of this study is slightly different. In a pilot study the productivity of the derivational suffix /-ment/ in Maltese (1) is assessed and then compared to the productivity of the Italian suffix /-mente/ (2), after which the Maltese suffix was modelled.

- (1) *Sfortunata-ment, qatt ma j-ghadd-i hadd minn hawn.*
unfortunate-ADV never NEG 3-pass:IPFV-PL someone from there
'Unfortunately, nobody from there ever passes here.' (Le Petit Prince)
- (2) *Sfortunata-mente non passa mai nessuno da queste parti.*
unfortunate-ADV NEG pass:3SG.PRS never nobody from these parts.
'Unfortunately, nobody from there ever passes here.' (Le Petit Prince)

On the one hand, general measures of productivity like Baayen's P and P* (Baayen, 1992) are applied. On the other hand, a more fine-grained analysis of the possible adjectival bases in both languages is achieved with the comparison of the most frequent derived forms in both languages. This approach can give valuable insights into the integration of loan suffixes and the question of holistic storage versus on-line construction of derived forms. Furthermore, the crosslinguistic focus can be extended to other Romance languages that possess a form of -ment(e), such as Portuguese, Spanish, French, Catalan, Occitan and Sicilian.

References

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