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Aero–Lexicography : Observations on the Treatment of Combinemes and Neoclassical Combinations in Historical and Scholarly European Dictionaries

Abstract

This paper compares the treatment of *aero–* and the combinations of which it is the initial component in selected historical and scholarly English, French and German dictionaries which allow a comparison between the different lexicographical traditions and languages. It concentrates on the morphological status of *aero–* as a bound word–formation item or combineme and on the structure and etymology of neoclassical combinations with *aero–*, and concludes with a plea for a paneuropean dictionary of Neolatin.

1. Neoclassical combinations and the combineme *aero–*

Anyone who has written or studied European dictionaries must be familiar with the vast repertoire of lexical items derived ultimately from classical Greek and Latin that make up a large part of his or her essential metalanguage. *Lexicography* and *metalexicography* are cases in point, as are *terminology* and *terminography*, *morphology*, *etymology* and *lexicology*, *neuro–*, *psycho–* or *sociolinguistics*, *lexicostatistics*, and many more either already available to or readily borrowed into.or coined in most European vernaculars. Such items have a number of noteworthy characteristics, four of which this paper comments on briefly, especially in respect of etymology and morphology as treated in selected historical and scholarly dictionaries.

First, such items are truly European, which means that any study of them must have a European and multilingual dimension that has not been and may not be easily accommodated by national and largely unilingual philologies and lexicographies. Certainly, a European perspective is essential to establish their etymology, both their immediate provenance and their ultimate source, to ascertain e.g. whether a given item in English may have been taken over from Greek or Latin, Medieval Latin or Neolatin, borrowed from another European vernacular, or coined in the domestic tradition. Second, they are for the most part modern formations not handed down from classical antiquity, even though their components are more often than not Greek or Latin in origin, but coined in Neolatin or in a European vernacular. Hence the tag 'neoclassical' as found in the English literature. Third, they are in most cases complex morphological items readily analysable into smaller components, analysable at least by educated speakers, especially by those in

professions that require a tertiary or university background. Their precise morphological status will depend on the status of their components. Hence the superonym 'combination' seems more appropriate in the first instance than hyponyms such as 'compound' and 'derivative' which require or imply stricter definition. Fourth, these components are sometimes identifiable as lexemes or as syntactic end categories, e.g. *lexicography*, *linguistics* and *statistics*, but in other cases they are not, as with *meta-*, *-graphy*, *-logy*, *neuro-*, *psycho-*, *socio-* and *lexico-* in the above examples. These latter are all bound items found in combination with other items. Hence they may be called 'combinemes', a generic term which opposes them to lexemes are freestanding items, but leaves their precise morphological status open to subcategorisation (Hoppe et al. 1987: 442–444).

The morphological status of such European combinemes of Grecolatin origin, and hence of the combinations coined with them, seems to be a matter of dispute. As is the etymology of such neo– or euroclassical combinations. This is true not least of historical and scholarly lexicography, which is the main and often the sole source of information on euroclassicisms. Indeed, the more (different) dictionaries one consults, the more (different) treatments and descriptions one finds. This is certainly true of interlingual comparisons; it is also true of intralingual comparisons; and it is even true of different dictionaries from the same publisher (Kirkness 1993). To get a sharper focus on such disputes, this paper concentrates on the item *aero–* in English, French and German, three vernaculars that are among the most important in the lexical give and take in post–Renaissance Europe. There are two principal reasons for this choice.

First, *aero–* is lemmatised in the most comprehensive and informative modern historical and scholarly dictionaries in each case: *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, especially in the Second Edition *(OED²)*, *Trésor de la langue française (TLF),* and *Deutsches Wörterbuch* von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm. Neubearbeitung *(DWB²)*. This makes possible an unusual measure of comparability between three different lexicographical traditions in Europe, one of which – German – has diverged so markedly from the other two in respect of the treatment, or better non–treatment, of euroclassicisms that comparisons are usually impossible. These dictionaries are founded primarily on attestations in written sources, many (or most or some) of which are explicitly mentioned or directly quoted, and thus provide the most reliable textual material yet available as a basis for comment on lexical features and developments in the three languages. Second, the OED entry for *aero–* introduced in 1884 the term 'combining form'. Significantly, it referred not to the English lemma *aero-*, but to Greek (transliterated) *aero–* as the combining form of Greek *aer, aera* 'air, the atmosphere', from which English *aero–* was adopted. 'Combining form' has subsequently established itself in the English literature as the preferred label for non–affixal bound word–formation items such as *aero-*. However, it does not seem to have found an equivalent in say French or German, where 'confix'

has been used recently (Hoppe et al. 1987: 424–444; Kocourek 1982: 94, 108–110). The variations in terminology reflect continuing uncertainty over morphological status.

2. *Aero*–Lexicography in English, French and German

OED[2] records some 140 *aero*–combinations: 45 are listed in different typefaces in an introductory nest article on the lemma *aero*– together with definitions, dated textual examples and some etymologies; some 64 are lemmatised individually, with 30 further sublemmas, and have concise articles containing information on meaning, usage and etymology–history as well as dated textual examples. The combinations cover the whole range from obsolete, technical or ephemeral to fully lexicalised and in widespread current use. *OED*[2] does not specify the word class or part of speech of English *aero*–. Thus the morphological structure and status of the combinations with *aero*– as initial component also remain vague, even when one follows up the cross–references to the terminal components, some of which have lexeme status (*dynamics, foil*), many of which however do not (*–logy, –naut* etc.). All main lemmas have etymologies, with English coinages clearly distinguished from borrowings. When coupled with the datings, this information enables one to reorder the combinations chronologically and reconstruct the development of *aero*– as a combineme in English, even though many questions remain open. The oldest combination is *aeromancy* 1393 (why borrowed from an Old French form, especially when this is unattested?), followed by the derivative *aeromancer* 1400 and much later by *aeromantic(k)* 1635 (what is the immediate as opposed to the ultimate Greek source?); then by *aerostatical* 1685 (why derived from *aerostatic* when this is first attested in 1783?); *aerometria* 1731, the Latin (Latinate?) form of *aerometry* 1751 (why not borrowed from older German *Aerometrie* 1716, germanised from Neolatin *aerometria* 1709?); *aerology* 1736 (why not borrowed from older French *aérologie* 1696, rather than a modern formation in English from English *aero*– and Greek *–logia*?); and *aereo–elastic* 1747, a hapax that perhaps represents the first use of *aero*– as a combineme in English. With the rise of science and technology (chemistry, aviation), *aero*– clearly has established itself as a productive word–formation item in English, especially since the late nineteenth century.

TLF records some 120 *aéro*–combinations in an extensive nest article on the lemma *aéro*–, along with the less frequent forms *aér*– and *aéri*–, which includes semantic and morphological information on *aéro*– and its variants in combination, especially on the terminal components with which it combines in French, as well as details on the morphology, pronunciation and spelling, etymology and history of the lemma and references to secondary literature. In addition, some 64 of the combinations are lemmatised individually with details on meaning, usage and etymology–history, textual examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in some cases

frequencies, bibliographies and other information. The pragmatic range of the combinations is very similar to that in English. *TLF* labels *aéro–* clearly as "élément préfixal", but refers to it both as "préfixe" and as "élément" in the body of the article. *Aéro–*combinations are consistently referred to as "mots composés", regardless of whether the terminal component is a freestanding lexeme, a "mot (autonome)" (*gare*, *port*), or not, e.g. an "élément suffixal" (*–drome*, *–graphe*, *–scope* etc.). The etymologies of the individually lemmatised items suggest strongly that "dérivation", used in some 10 cases, is restricted to suffixation alone. They also reveal very few borrowings: *aéromancie* 1380 from Late Latin *aeromantia*, *aéromel* 1845 from Greek *aeromeli*, and *aérophobe* 1752 from Latin *aerophobus* (even though older *aérophobie* 1751 is "composé des éléments aéro– et –phobie"?). The preponderance of French coinages is overwhelming, and raises questions: could not *aérologie* 1696 be a borrowing or adaptation from Neolatin rather than a combination of the French elements *aéro–* (previously found only in *aéromancie* and *aéromancien* 1545–90) and *–logie*, just as *aérométrie* 1712 is more likely borrowed or adapted from Neolatin *aerometria*, first used by the German Christian Wolff in 1709, as *TLF* states? Is German influence possible with *aérodynamique* and *aérolithe*, just as English is with *aérosol*? Nonetheless, *aéro–* is clearly well established as a word–formation item in French, used particularly in the formation of learned classicisms ('mots savants'). The development of *aéro–* as a combineme from the eighteenth century on follows a path very similar to that of its English counterpart, with the *TLF* even more informative on that development than *OED*[2]. Both dictionaries/languages share very many combinations and also include many other items derived ultimately from classical Greek *aer* and Latin *aer* to reinforce the central position of the neoclassical *aero–/aéro–*combinations.

This is not the case in German, which differs markedly. *DWB*[2] records but 19 *aero–*combinations with brief definitions and in half the cases short etymologies in nest articles dominated by generous dated textual examples. Many are taken from encyclopedias and dictionaries (cf. also *OED*[2]), which suggests a more restricted currency and pragmatic range of the combinations. They are preceded by a short article on the lemma *aero–* "als bestimmungswort für eine reihe jüngerer, meist substantivischer zusammensetzungen im bereich der technik, zu griechisch *aer*, lat. *aer* untere luftschicht, dunstkreis, atmosphäre, luft." However, there is no entry on *Aero* as a lexeme, nor do *–logie*, *–naut*, *–stat* etc. have lexeme status in German, unlike e.g. *Bus* and *Dynamik*. Thus the morphological description of *aero–* as determinans and of *aero–*combinations as compounds must be called into question. As must the etymologies, which at best suggest the ultimate source, but seldom hint at the immediate provenance of the combinations: the oldest German item, *Aerometrie* 1716, is rather adapted from Neolatin *aerometria* (Wolff 1709), as the first example suggests, than formed "aus *aero–* (= the German lemma) und griechisch *metria* (zu *metron* maß)"; *Aerostat* 1784 is

more likely influenced by its contemporary French and/or English equivalents than formed "aus *aero–* und lateinisch *stare (statum)* stehen", *Aerologie* 1784 more likely either adapted from Neolatin or influenced by its older French and English counterparts than formed "aus *aero–* und griechisch *logia* (zu *logos* wort)". Only with *Aeronaut* 1784 and *Aeroplan* 1894 are the corresponding French items referred to as possible etyma alongside the unlikely combination of German *aero–* and Greek *nautes* and *planos* respectively. *Aero–* is clearly not well established as a combineme in German, and the treatment of the morphology and etymology of *aero*–combinations in DWB^2 is clearly not on a par with that in OED^2 and *TLF.*

3. Euroclassicisms and Neolatin

The material presented here is necessarily limited and allows only preliminary conclusions that need to be verified – or falsified – by a study of more items, both combinemes and combinations, from more dictionaries from more European vernaculars together with reference to Greek and Latin (dictionaries). Nonetheless, it does raise key questions of morphological and etymological description in historical and scholarly lexicography, questions that quite obviously require a European perspective as the items under consideration could appropriately be tagged 'euroclassicisms'.

First, the material highlights the need for a stricter definition of the morphological status of both combinemes such as *aero–* and the combinations it enters into. Neither is adequately catered for by the traditional categories of lexeme and prefix or suffix, compound and derivative, even when these are used loosely. Similarities and differences in the use and productivity of a given combineme and in the structure and pragmatic range of its combinations in different vernaculars make European cooperation across languages and lexicographies highly desirable. Second, it highlights the need to consider both immediate provenance and ultimate source in respect of etymology, which necessarily involves modern vernaculars and the classical languages and thus makes European cooperation across languages and lexicographies quite essential. One requirement is complete historico–etymological vernacular dictionaries which include euroclassical combinemes and above all combinations. In this respect, German suffers badly from comparison with English and French – and indeed other vernaculars. Thus there is an urgent need either for DWB^2 to proceed beyond the available letters (D and in part A, E) and those planned (A–F) or for alternative lexicographical projects. Another requirement is consultation of the dictionaries and thesauri of classical Greek and Latin and completion of modern dictionaries of Medieval Latin. The third and most pressing requirement, however, is the lexicographical documentation and description of Neolatin, a European phenomenon that

transcended national (language) boundaries for centuries in the early modern era.

This study of *aero*–lexicography can only hint at the importance of Neolatin, directly in respect of *aerology* and *aerometry* (cf. also *aeronautics* and *aerostatics* in *OED²*). Indirectly, however, the dearth of vernacular *aero*–combinations before the eighteenth century, the number of mixed vernacular classical etymologies in *DWB²* and to a lesser extent *OED²*, especially in contrast to the early onset of French domestic coinages in *TLF*, the paucity of *aero*–combinations attested in Medieval or classical Latin, and the semantic gulf between *aero*–combinations in classical Greek and their formal equivalents in modern vernaculars (*aerodrome, aeroplane* etc.), when taken together, raise questions about the relationship of ancient Greek to today's European languages, particularly about its role as a reservoir for modern scientific and academic lexis. They also point to Neolatin as one key to an answer to those questions. But this is a hypothesis that must remain untested until the Neolatin of European scholars, scientists and literary authors is fully chartered territory in European historical and scholarly lexicography (cf. Hoven 1994). A paneuropean dictionary of Neolatin is required.

References

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