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*What is a word? Missionary approaches analysing the internal structure of the word.*

Bilingual dictionaries composed by missionaries during the colonial period used mainly the Spanish-Latin dictionary of Antonio de Nebrija as their model. Compiling dictionaries of the indigenous languages was mainly based on translation. Notwithstanding, missionaries did not only follow strictly Nebrija's model, - which was developed in Europe and written for Europeans-; often they omitted less relevant lemma's or added new entries.

Missionaries did not only compiled dictionaries starting from Spanish. Many authors also compiled bilingual bidirectional dictionaries, or bilingual monodirectional dictionaries, starting with entries in the indigenous language, with translations or (near) equivalents in Spanish. From a linguistic point of view, the lexicographers had to solve complex linguistic problems, since there were no examples available. Some questions to be discussed are:

- How did the lexicographers select the head words when these are preceded by prefixes, for instance?
- How did they deal with derivation, composition, and prefixation or agglutination?
- How did they approach complex constructions in polysynthetic languages?
- How did they analyse the internal structure of the word when no "bloomfield-like" morpheme theory was not available yet? Did they only include "words" (what is a word according to them?) in their dictionaries (the traditional eight parts of speech) or also those entities which fall outside this latinate classification ("particles", affixes, clitics, etc. or other parts of speech "which can not stand alone"?, or word-phrases, as occurs in Nahuatl, for instance).

In this presentation, some creative solutions are discussed. Our corpus is a selection of dictionaries of Mesoamerican (Otomanguean and Uto-Aztec) and Asian languages (Chinese and Vietnames) from the 16th and 17th century.