**ABSTRACT:** This study focuses on the word formation process that involves the combination of neoclassical elements, a process that for the vast majority of morphologists is a special component, on the borderline between derivation and compounding. In Latin and Greek, these elements were lexemes, hence characterized by their syntactic autonomy, while in Portuguese (and in other modern languages) they are items with a lack of independent status, not appearing in a fixed order. These aspects contribute to different classifications of these elements (prefixes, suffixes, bound roots, stems, first or second elements of a compound). Thus, we will attempt to clarify which are the neoclassical elements that, in addition to their prefixed or suffixed position, may also have some degree of autonomy, trying to understand what differentiates them from Portuguese words.