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Contemporary French morphology trends: A case-study of formal neologisms in newspapers monitor corpora

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Every Language is constantly evolving, due to several historical, sociological and economic reasons. Morphology is one of the aspects of the linguistic change. One way to grasp these changes is to study word-formation trends, also named formal neology, which mainly resorts to derivation, composition, truncation and borrowing (Schmid, 2015). In this work, we propose to explore new word morphological trends in contemporary French.

This study is part of an ongoing project, Néoveille, which aims at detecting, tracking and analyzing neologisms on monitor corpora, notably in French. The web platform (www.neoveille.org) enables to detect and track the lifecycle of neologisms through multivariate (linked to diastraty and diatopy) statistics (Cartier, 2016).

In contemporary French, the two traditional morphological processes, derivation and composition, are highly lexically productive. Derivation is by far the most frequent process used to create a new form (about 60% of all neologisms so far), competing with composition (about 20%). We observe that some prefixes appear to be overused (ultra-, ex-) whereas they were not that productive a few decades ago. Another aspect is the emergence of new formants (such as bio-, eco-, e-, etc.).

We will also detail the diastratic variation of derivation and composition, notably in women's magazines.

The data provided by the web platform shed also light on loanwords, which are another highly productive way to create words (about 15%). Among them, French words coined with material borrowed to foreign languages, also called "allogenisms"(Humbley, 2015), are worthy to be mentioned (slashing, cashico, hijabista). The English pattern N/ADJ-Ving is also disseminating. This is also the case for anglicisms which have been adapted in French through prefixation and/or suffixation, like the new french infinitive downvoter, with an usage linked to social networks.

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