Emerging uninflectedness in French clipped verbs

**Maria Copot, Ninoh Agostinho Da Silva, Ahmed Beji, Arno Watiez &
Olivier Bonami**
Université de Paris
maria.copot@etu.u-paris.fr, ninohesteban@gmail.com, ahmedbeji@live.fr,
arno.watiez@live.fr, olivier.bonami@linguist.univ-paris-diderot.fr

Productive truncation in French nouns (*pneumatique -> pneu*; *introduction -> intro*) is long established and well documented (Kerleroux 1999). Recent years have seen the emergence of a parallel truncation process in verbs (*je me déconnecte -> je me déco*). The combination of apocope and of the suffixal nature French conjugation provide an interesting new source of uninflectedness (Spencer 2020).

We devise a computational method for retrieving truncated verbs from a corpus and analyse the retrieved forms in order to extract generalisations on the phenomenon. We first extract all verbal tokens in the corpus FrWaC that are a substring of an inflected verb in the French lexicon (*déco* gets extracted since it's a substring of *déconnecter*, *décorer*, *décoder* ...). The full forms matched by the substring constitute potential matches for the corresponding full form. The best match is chosen by evaluating how well it fits the context, on the basis of methods from distributional semantics (Lenci 2018). Human evaluation reveals that the best match is indeed the correct corresponding full form in 88% of the cases.

The conclusion of the computational corpus study is that the phenomenon is productive, not limited to a subset of lexicalised truncated forms, nor to a restricted set of paradigm cells. From the point of view of theoretical morphology, it is interesting to note that, while inflectional suffixes are fully lost in truncated verbs, stem allomorphy sometimes leads to the preservation of partial inflectional properties. For instance, among truncated forms of AVOIR, *nous av* signals a present or imperfect while *j'aur* signals a future or conditional. This raises interesting questions on the division of labour between stem allomorphy and affixal exponence in inflection systems, which we will discuss in the talk.

References: • Kerleroux, F. (1999). Sur quelles bases opère l'apocope ? *Silexicales 2 : la morphologie des dérivés évaluatifs*, 95-106. • Lenci, A. (2018). Distributional models of word meaning. *Annual review of linguistics* 4(1), 151-171. • Spencer, A. (2020). Uninflectedness: Uninflecting, uninflectable and uninflected words, or the complexity of the simplex. In L. Körtvélyessy & P. Štekauer (eds.), *Complex words: Advances in morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 142–158.