

Introduction: Morphology in Bordeaux

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This volume presents a selection of the papers and posters presented at the *Décembrettes 6*, which were held at the Athénée Municipal in Bordeaux on December 4-6, 2008. The *Décembrettes* conference in linguistic morphology first took place in December 2002, and has since become an important meeting for the researchers in the field, organized biannually in Southwestern France. Overall, 21 talks and 6 posters were presented at the 6th meeting. The variety of the problems and languages considered, and of the approaches adopted in the papers we present here are a sign of the vitality of this domain of research. As it is well known, in the last three decades morphology has undergone rapid development, after a period of relative decline. Today several high-quality publications are produced in the field every year, and researchers actively explore the links between morphology and other domains, including but not limited to the closely associated fields of phonology and syntax. Major conferences on morphology are regularly organised, especially in Europe, and largely contribute to the reinforcement of the domain. The *Décembrettes* were born and developed in this context. They are organized by one of the largest morphology research teams in France (part of the CLLE-ERSS research group, at the universities of Toulouse le Mirail and Bordeaux 3) and follow in the tradition of the conferences organised in 1997, 1999 and 2002 by the *Forum de Morphologie*, the first network that brought together French morphologists.

The guiding principles of the *Décembrettes* mirror those of the Toulouse / Bordeaux morphology team. Papers are generally selected to present a large range of theoretical frameworks and approaches. The interface between morphology and other domains of research is encouraged. The last three papers of this volume are emblematic in this respect: they present practical examples of fruitful interaction between morphology and the experimental fields of psycholinguistics, acquisition studies and natural language processing. We consider this capacity to establish a dialogue with other research domains as a real strength of our field. Moreover, we favour linguistic studies based on the observation and the analysis of real data. Data may be collected by various means (traditional lexicographic sources, modern resources like the Web or laboratory experiments), but all the papers presented in the volume illustrate, without exception, this approach and present studies strongly rooted in the examination of real data. Finally, the *Décembrettes* are recognised as a conference giving a large place to PhD students, post-docs and young researchers in general.

The papers presented in the volume are primarily based on data from French and other Romance languages. But the authors also study Russian, Germanic languages, Greek dialects, and other sources of data. As in other fields of descriptive, theoretical, and experimental linguistics, research in morphology is built upon detailed examination of individual linguistic systems, as well as cross-linguistic observations and generalisations.

The volume is divided into two parts. The first part includes a series of papers on inflectional class systems in the languages of the world, which was the main topic of one of the conference sessions. This topic is an important issue for several morphologists working on inflection, and is one of the main concerns of the morphology team within the CLLE-ERSS research group. The first paper of the volume, by Greville G. Corbett, presents a general discussion of inflectional class, and proposes a ‘canonical’ approach to the concept. By analyzing inflectional class systems in the world’s languages, Corbett presents a model of what an abstract model of this grammatical feature should look like, and tries to evaluate to what extent actual grammatical systems conform to this model.

The following papers are devoted to problems of diachronic analysis. In the first of these contributions, Antje Dammel studies the emergence of a new class in the verbal system of Swedish and Norwegian, marked by the suffix *-dde* in the preterit. The author argues that the change in question depends on purely linguistic forces, and proposes a functional explanation for the emergence of a new form of the preterit. The following paper, by Maria Rosa Lloret, considers Catalan data, in particular from the variety spoken in Alghero (Sardinia), and shows that inflectional class shift may be one of the strategies used to repair phonological conflicts emerging from phonological change. Finally, Christoph Schwarze analyzes how a Latin derivational suffix, /sk/, evolved into an inflectional stem-extension in French, appearing in particular in verbs of the so-called *i*-conjugation (i.e. marked by a theme vowel /i/).

The next two papers both look at the nominal inflectional classes of Italian and propose distinct but complementary analyses for this set of data. Traditionally, at least five inflectional classes are identified for Italian nouns, marked by the final vowel. In his contribution, Paolo Acquaviva correlates the traditional classes to the general morphological system of Italian, and in particular to gender and number marking, to propose a formal account of nominal declension. Apart from traditional data, his account is based on recent gender / class mismatches, as *la ministro* ('the (woman) minister'). From another perspective, Diana Passino, proposes a simplification of the Italian nominal inflectional class system by using Element Theory to decompose the vocalic inflectional exponents into basic elements, so that number inflection can be reduced to the alternation of the two markers A for singular and I for plural.

The papers in the second part of the volume tackle various topics of morphological analysis, either presenting purely theoretical studies or examples of interaction between morphology and other domains. Maria Ohannesian and Clàudia Pons propose an analysis of paradigmatic pressures in an Optimality Theoretic framework. On the basis of Catalan and Spanish examples, the two authors show how inflectional paradigms may be divided into subparadigms within which attraction forces among the forms are stronger than with forms from other subparadigms. Aurore Koehl's paper addresses the question of the nature of nouns derived by the suffix *-ité* in French, traditionally labelled as 'property nouns'. The author proposes a semantic analysis, based on a large corpus survey, and shows that a great number of these nouns are better qualified as 'relation nouns'. In the following paper, Nicola Grandi presents some observations on Italian constructs of the type *riunione fiume* (lit. 'meeting river', 'very long meeting'), traditionally referred to as appositive compounds. The author shows that these forms differ in many respects from canonical compounds, and proposes instead analysing the second element as an adjective, converted from a noun. Consequently, the constructs in question represent a case of mismatch between morphology and syntax. In her study in dialectology, Dimitra Melissaropoulou analyzes evaluative (augmentative and diminutive) suffixation in Standard Modern Greek and in some Greek dialects. Her conclusion is that, unlike in Greek, the evaluative system of Greek dialects tends toward 'optimisation', i.e. to a less complex morphological system. And finally, Pavel Štichauer's paper presents an interesting and innovative approach, combining a diachronic study and a quantitative analysis. The author considers the productivity of three deverbal suffixes in Old Italian (*-mento*, *-zione* and *-gione*) from the 13th to the 16th century, and shows how a statistical analysis may shed light on the variation in productivity of different morphological items.

As we mentioned above, the three last papers of the volume illustrate interactions between morphology and other domains of research. The first one, by Madeleine Voga and Hélène Giraud, presents psycholinguistic evidence in support of a supra-lexical model of morphological competence, corresponding to a lexeme-based approach in theoretical morphology. In their study the two authors show that morphological processing is influenced not only by lexical neighbours, but also by pseudo-lexical neighbours, i.e. by words sharing some material with the target word, although not morphologically related (as in the French pair *portons* 'we carry' – *portugais* 'Portuguese'). In the following paper Serena Dal Maso presents a study of the acquisition of morphology by learners of Italian L2. The author focuses in particular on prefixal derivation, and underlines the effect of prefix and base frequency in the recognition of complex words by learners. Finally, Nabil Hathout's paper, which closes the volume, presents the implementation of a model of morphological competence, based

on the idea that morphological structures emerge from formal and semantic regularities observed in the lexicon. The model proposed is tested on a large-scale corpus of the French lexicon.

Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues from the morphology group at CLLE-ERSS, without whom the *Décembrettes* could not have been organised: Hélène Giraudo, Nabil Hathout, Marc Plénat and Michel Roché, as well as to our students from SciLàB who helped hosting a successful conference. We are also grateful to all the colleagues who helped us in the review and edition process of this book, in particular Dany Amiot, Olivier Bonami, Patricia Cabredo-Hofherr, Basilio Calderone, Antonio Fábregas and Florence Villioing.

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