

Fradin, Bernard, Kerleroux, François and Plénat, Marc, *Aperçus de morphologie du français*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2009, 313 pp. 978 2 84292-224 5
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This book presents a new approach to morphology, which is to be considered once more as an independent discipline, instead of being subsumed under syntax, as has long been the case. It is to be defined purely as the result of processes internal to the lexicon, and the concept of the morpheme is to be dropped for being too simplistic. Such an approach was first put forward in a PhD in 1970 by François Dell, but it was not until the late 1990s that this position was taken up in earnest by a number of French researchers. This led to the establishment in 2000 of a CNRS research group headed by Bernard Fradin, who presents, along with others, some of the results of their work. Each chapter may be seen as a separate entity, but the fact that many of the chapters are headed by different combinations of the same authors gives this volume an unusual sense of unity.

The new basic morphological unit is an abstract entity, the lexeme (*lexème*), which is realised in concrete terms by words (*mots-formes*). Thus *apparaît* and *apparaissent* constitute two *mots-formes* i.e. two occurrences of the same lexeme. All lexemes may lead to the formation of independent phonological entities, although they may not always exist as an autonomous base. Thus *somatique* is a *mot-forme* but its base, the lexeme *somat* has no independent existence. Only nouns, verbs and adjectives are considered to be lexemes since they have clear lexical meanings. Grammatical words such as prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and determiners are grammemes (*grammèmes*) and are analysed independently. Since adverbs form an heterogeneous category they may come under one or other category. Starting from this base, the aim is to describe and explain all the main areas of French derivational morphology.

Some of the chapters are mainly theoretical: they concentrate on delimitating morphology as a discipline, which entails defining its fundamental links with phonology, establishing the phonological, semantic and syntactic properties of lexemes and the various rules governing derivation. This also entails refining the concept of lexeme and grammeme by analysing borderline cases, e.g. what is the status of a preposition such as *contre* in *à contre-courant* or of *question* in *question travail*? And what about cases such as *amande* which, instead of giving **amanderaie*, gives the truncated *amandaie*?

In other words, special attention is given to the more problematic areas of French morphology, namely those dealing with oddities and apparent exceptions. This is because, whereas in the past linguists did not dispose of enough examples to draw meaningful conclusions as to why they occurred and in what contexts, the Web has changed all that, constituting as it does a near infinite corpus in its own right. As a result, whereas in the past the morphologist was often solely dependent on his/her intuition, this intuition can now be checked on a grand scale.

The areas examined often start with questions such as : Why does *goutte* give *gouttelette* and not **gouttette* on the model of *fille/fillette*? And why *Molieresque* but *Racinien* or *Cornélien*? Why *Parisien* but *Nantais*? Such questions have led to an appreciation of the importance and nature of phonological constraints in derivation. Studies of *verlan*, portmanteau and hypocoristic words, and the oralisation of acronyms also highlight regularities and constraints not envisaged before. And dealing with marginal phenomena has led to a better understanding of concepts such as grammaticality, marginality and extra-grammaticality in relation to a regular core. This comes out particularly clearly

in the study of words derived from cardinal numbers, which reveals interesting gaps, which may, however, be filled when the context requires it, hence the occurrence of (*) *treizaine* on the Web. Other interesting facts also emerge: words such as *douzaine* may refer either to an exact or an approximate number, whereas *septaine* always refers to an exact number and *huitaine* to an approximate number. Such oddities often point to deeper morphological considerations.

Other chapters deal with compound nouns, without having recourse to the concept of underlying syntax, the single chameleonic 'evaluative' suffix – *et* as opposed to the numerous prefixes of the *méga* or *hyper* type, and, in the context of the nominalisation of verbs, the establishment of a 'hidden root' –*at* as in *admirer/admir-at-ion*, or *louer/loc-at-ion*, which is shown to go back to Latin.

This is but a small sample of the areas covered in a book which is, on the whole, easy to read since the authors had to start at the beginning and adopt a clear form of expression in order to get their message across. Otherwise no converts! As a result it can be read equally well by amateur morphologists, fascinated by the 'secret life' of French derivational morphology, and by morphologists in search of new horizons to explore. It is, taken as a whole, a worthwhile book.

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Les consonnes doubles: féminins et dérivés is the first volume of a series of 'Etudes pour une rationalisation de l'orthographe française', under the editorship of Claude Gruaz. The book takes the form of a general introduction, common to all future volumes, laying out the rationale for change to the spelling system, a discussion of the particular question of geminate consonants in feminine and derived forms, lists of words concerned, and a study of usage.

The 1990 reform of French spelling was particularly weak in its recommendations concerning double letters, an area repeatedly fingered as a source of confusion for writers. Simplification in this area concerned a handful of words in *-olle*, and a proposal that new derivations from words in *-on* should not see the *n* doubled – hence, for example *variationisme*. In other areas, the reform added new geminates, aligning *chaussetrappe*, *charriot* and *combattif* with *trappe* (despite *attraper*), *charrier* and *combattre*, tidying up given lexical paradigms at the expense of overall uniformity. This volume's historical overview of proposals for geminate reform shows clearly how previous reforms, such as the officially commissioned reports by Faguet (1905) or Beslais (1965) consistently favoured the simplification of non-functional geminates. This work is therefore a welcome attempt to set out a comprehensive statement of how geminates might form the basis of a future reform, if and when such a reform is undertaken.