

## **Of mice and (of) men**

### **Phonological influences on the omissibility of French "de" in coordination**

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In English "pieces of tomatoes and of carrots" and "pieces of tomatoes and carrots" are both possible, and are roughly synonymous. French shows similar variation for its preposition "de" (roughly 'of'): "morceaux de tomates et de carottes" or "morceaux de tomates et carottes", though French is much less likely to omit the second "de".

This talk uses a large written corpus of French, the Google n-grams corpus, to test whether phonological factors influence the omissibility of the second "de". These factors include the lengths of the words involved, what sound the second word begins with, and whether the words following "de" begin with vowels or consonants ("de" has an allomorph "d" that is used before vowel-initial words).

Phonological factors do show an influence on rates of omitting the second "de", which means that either the phonological content of words is accessed before final syntactic decisions are made, or that deleting the second "de" is a phonological operation. We'll consider some consequences of each of these approaches.

This project also has a methodological goal: reproducible research. The project uses some new and fairly user-friendly software tools that allow the whole process from downloading corpus files to producing final plots and statistics to be automated through a single computer script. This makes it easier to correct errors when they're caught and to manage a project, but maybe more important, it will make it possible for other researchers to pick apart the analysis, test for errors, and try their own variations on the analysis.