

# On the idiomatic nature of unproductive morphology

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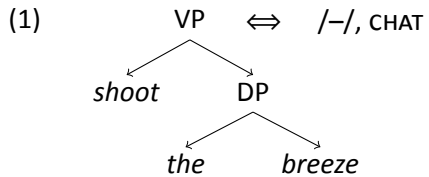
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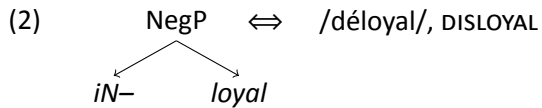
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## The productive negative prefix: *iN-*

- ▶ productive negative adjectival prefix: *iN-*
- ▶ 420 adjectives with *iN-* in *Le Petit Robert* (Huot 2007: 179)

(3)	injuste	'unjust'
	ingénereux	'ungenerous'
	incroyant	'unbelieving'
	incomplet	'incomplete'
	inactif	'inactive'
	immodeste	'immodest'
	impoli	'impolite'
	illisible	'unreadable'
	irrégieux	'unreligious'

## The productive negative prefix: *in-*

“It would appear [...] that *in-* can be quite freely prefixed to almost any French adjective in *-able* or *-ible*” (Zimmer 1964: 49)



## The productive negative prefix: *iN-*

- ▶ new transitive verbs can be productively suffixed with *-able*
- ▶ adjectives so derived can be productively prefixed with *iN-* (p.c. Amélie Rocquet)

V	V-able	<i>iN-V-able</i>	
texter	textable	intextable	'untextable'
démoniser	démonisable	indémonisable	'undemonisable'
dévierger	déviergeable	indéviergeable	'undeflowerable'
pixelliser	pixellisable	inpixellisable	'unpixellatable'
oscariser	oscarisable	inoscarisable	'unoscarisable'
podcaster	podcastable	impodcastable	'unpodcastable'

# Unproductive negative prefixes

- ▶ *dé(s)-, dis-, mal-, mé(s)-*
- ▶ Counts in *Le Petit Robert 2017*

## dé(s)–

- ▶ 154 adjectives with *dé(s)–* that are negative
- ▶ only 4 where *dé(s)–* derives a negative adjective from an existing positive adjective

(4)	désagréable	‘unpleasant’
	déshonnête	‘dishonest’
	défavorable	‘unfavorable’
	déloyal	‘disloyal’

## dé(s)–

(5)	désavantageux	'disadvantageous'
	désastreux	'disastrous'
	dépouillé	'bare'
	désordonné	'sloppy'
	déplacé	'unwarranted'
	démystifiant	'demystifying'
	dégingande	'gangling, lanky'
	déliquescent	'decaying'
	délétère	'harmful'
	défectueux	'faulty'
	dément	'mad'
	défunt	'dead'
	débonnaire	'naive, tolerant'

## dis-

- ▶ 23 adjectives with *dis-*
- ▶ only 2 where *dis-* derives a negative adjective from an existing positive adjective

(6)	discourtois	'rude'
	discontinu	'discontinuous'

## dis-

(7)	dissemblable	'different'
	dissonant	'dissonant'
	dissuasif	'deterrent'
	disruptif	'disruptive'
	disjonctif	'disjunctive'
	disparate	'disparate'
	disparu	'disappeared'
	distrain	'distracted'
	discutable	'debatable'
	disetteux	'poor'

## mal-

- ▶ 27 adjectives with *mal-*
- ▶ 13 where *mal-* derives a negative adjective from an existing positive adjective

(8)	malsain	'unhealthy'
	malpropre	'unclean'
	malhonnête	'dishonest'
	malpoli	'rude'
	malcommode	'unpractical'
	malentendant	'hard of hearing'
	malgracieux	'unelegant'
	malheureux	'unhappy'
	malaimé	'impopular'
	malaisé	'difficult'
	maladroit	'clumsy'
	malodorant	'smelly'
	malséant	'improper'

# mal-

(9)	malade	'ill'	
	malin	'smart'	
	malencontreux	'unfortunate'	
	malicieux	'malicious'	
	malveillant	'malicious'	
	maléfique	'evil'	(bénéfique)
	malvenu	'unwelcome'	(bienvenu)



## mé(s)–

- ▶ 9 adjectives with *mé(s)–*
- ▶ only 1 where *mé(s)–* derives a negative adjective from an existing positive adjective

(10) mécontent ‘dissatisfied’

## mé(s)–

(11)	méchant	'nasty'
	mécréant	'heretical'
	méfiant	'distrustful'
	méprisable	'despicable'
	méprisant	'contemptuous'

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# Polarity restrictions

All the negative prefixes show polarity sensitivity:

- ▶ they do not attach to a (derived or underived) negative base (Zimmer 1964)
- ▶ negative adjectives cannot be modified by *peu* 'little' (?)

## No negative base (I)

$A_{POS}$		$A_{NEG}$	
injuste	'unjust'	*infaux	not-false
ingénereux	'ungenerous'	*inavare	not-stingy
incroyant	'unbelieving'	*inmécreant	not-heretical
incomplet	'incomplete'	*infragmentaire	not-fragmented'
impoli	'impolite'	*inrustre	not-rude
inactif	'inactive'	*impassif	not-passive

## No negative base (II)

$A_{POS}$		$A_{NEG}$	
désagréable	'unpleasant'	*désennuyeux	not-annoying
désordonné	'sloppy'	*dénonchalant	not-sloppy
discourtois	'uncourteous'	*disgrossier	not-rude
malheureux	'unhappy'	*maltriste	not-sad
malpropre	'unclean'	*malsale	not-dirty
malhonnête	'dishonest'	*malméchant	not-bad
mécontent	'dissatisfied'	*mésennuyé	not-annoyed

## No negative base (III)

*inimpossible	'impossible'
*inirréligieux	'unirreligious'
*dédéloyal	'undisloyal'
*indéloyal	
*maldéloyal	
*indiscourtois	'undiscourteous'
*malmalheureux	'ununhappy'
*mémécontent	'undissatisfied'

## No modification with *peu* 'little'

	$A_{POS}$		$A_{NEG}$	
	actif	'active'	*passif	'passive'
	probable	'likely'	*embêtant	'annoying'
peu	crédible	'credible'	*hostile	'hostile'
	frais	'fresh'	*ennuyeux	'boring'
	clair	'clear'	*embrouillé	'confused'



## No modification with *peu* 'little'

	A <sub>POS</sub>	A <sub>NEG</sub>	
	actif	*inactif	'(in)active'
	probable	*improbable	'(un)likely'
peu	crédible	*incrédible	'(in)credible'
	tolérant	*intolérant	'(in)tolerant'
	juste	*injuste	'(un)just'

## No modification with *peu* 'little'

	A <sub>POS</sub>	A <sub>NEG</sub>	
peu	agréable	*désagréable	'(un)pleasant'
	loyal	*déloyal	'(dis)loyal'
	favorable	*défavorable	'(un)favourable'
	courtois	*discourtois	'(un)courteous'
	continu	*discontinu	'(dis)continuous'
	heureux	*malheureux	'(un)happy'
	propre	*malpropre	'(un)clean'
	content	*mécontent	'(dis)satisfied'

## Interim conclusion

- ▶ the productive and the unproductive prefixes behave identically
  - ▶ they do not attach to a negative base
  - ▶ they derive adjectives that are not modifiable by *peu* 'little'

# Preview

- ▶ we first explain the polarity restrictions on negative adjectives
- ▶ we then present an analysis of the unproductive prefixes

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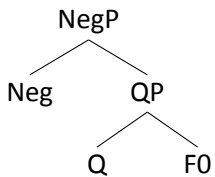
**Negative adjectives**

Unproductive prefixes

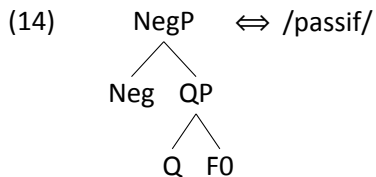
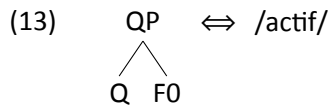
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## Negative adjectives

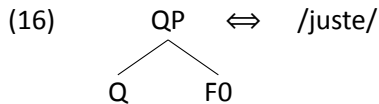
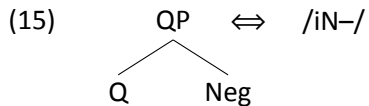
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## Negative adjectives



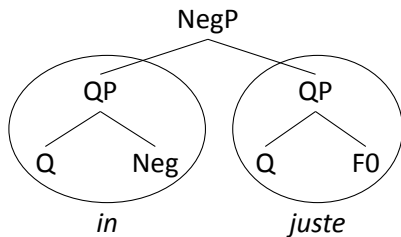
## Negative adjectives





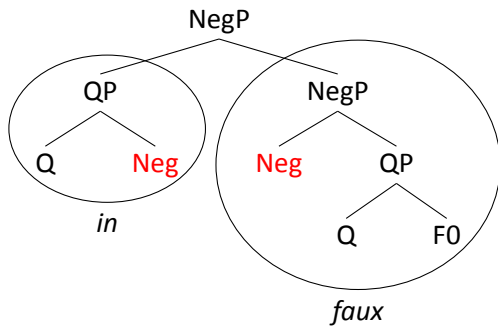
## Negative adjectives

(17)



## Negative adjectives

(18)



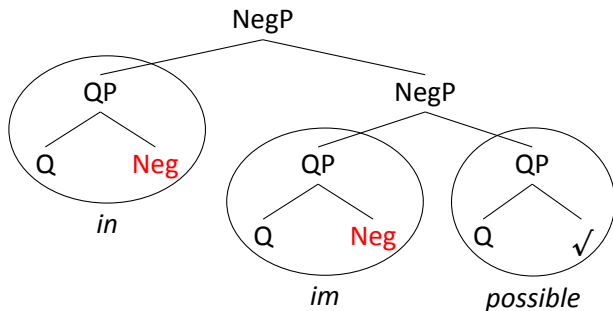
## Negative adjectives

(19) \* $\langle X, X \rangle$

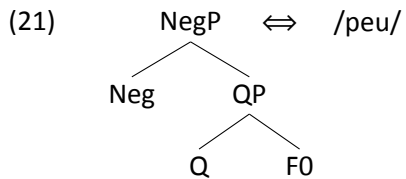
The functional sequence must not contain two immediately consecutive identical projections.

# Negative adjectives

(20)

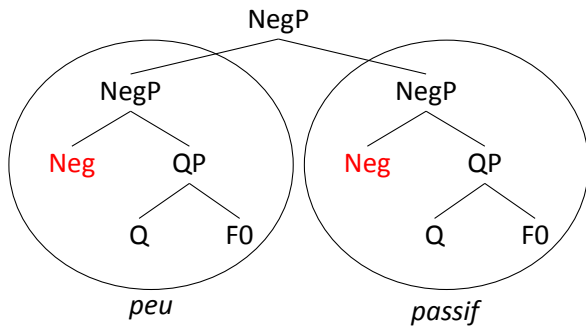


## Negative adjectives



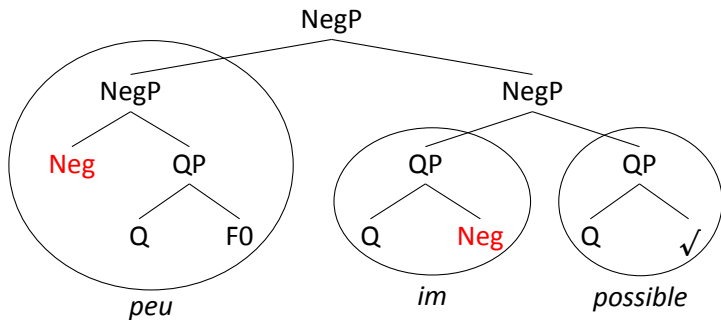
# Negative adjectives

(22)



# Negative adjectives

(23)



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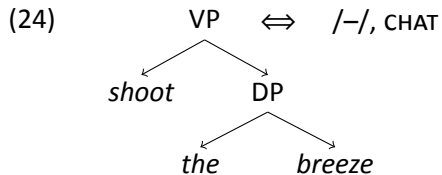
Negative adjectives

**Unproductive prefixes**

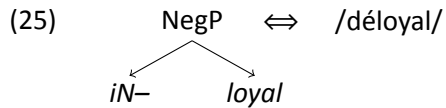
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## Unproductive prefixes

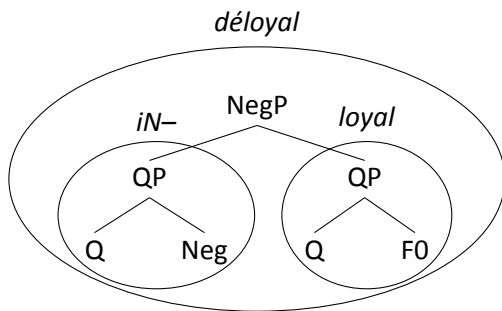


## Unproductive prefixes



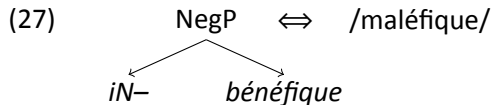
# Unproductive prefixes

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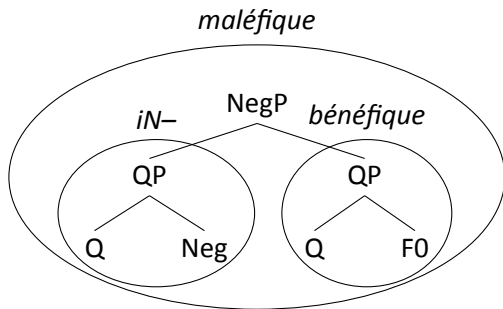
# Unproductive prefixes

- ▶ *maléfique* 'evil' – *bénéfique* 'beneficial'
- ▶ *malvenu* 'unwelcome' – *bienvenu* 'welcome'

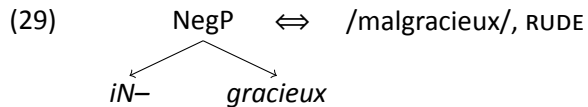


# Unproductive prefixes

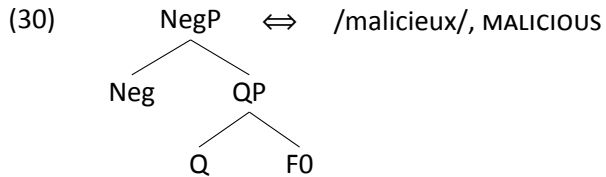
(28)



# Unproductive prefixes



# Unproductive prefixes



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- ▶ Negative adjectives of all sorts (underived, productively derived, improductively derived) show similar syntactic behaviour.
- ▶ They all contain a Neg feature.
- ▶ Improductively derived negative adjectives contain a pointer to
  - ▶ the productive negative *iN-*
  - ▶ the positive adjective

## References

- Huot, Helene. 2007. La préfixation négative en français moderne. In Frank Floricic (ed.), *La négation dans les langues romanes*. 177–204. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Zimmer, Karl. 1964. *Affixal negation in English and other languages* Supplement to *Word*, Monograph 5.