

Truncation and Exponence – How Small Can You Get?  
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Two characteristics make truncation particularly interesting for the study of morphological exponence: First of all, truncatory processes represent a morphological process in which the exponent of a morphological category is often marked only by a specific word structure of the derivative. Secondly, many truncatory processes pose a challenge to theories of morphological exponence which define morphological processes in terms of overt formal compositionality and semantic transparency.

In this talk I will report on the interim results of a project that I am conducting in collaboration with Birgit Alber (University of Verona) on the structural properties of exponents of truncatory processes. On the basis of a corpus comprising some 100 truncatory patterns from a variety of different languages, I will present a crosslinguistic survey of truncatory patterns. I will argue that earlier claims found in word-formation theory about the structural unpredictability of outputs of truncation are in need of revision. Instead, I will show that an optimality-theoretic account in the spirit of Generalised Template Theory (GTT, McCarthy & Prince 1995, 1998) is viable. Crucially, however, we will see that a GTT account predicts more than has hitherto been in the focus of pertinent studies. In particular, it predicts 'ill-behaved' patterns which have been claimed not to exist in the GTT literature like, for example, subminimal structures and atemplatic structures varying in size. Indeed, we regularly, find such structures in our data.