A Constructionist Account of an Extragrammatical Process:
Blending and Lexical Series in Italian

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Introduction

This work concerns the boundaries of marginal and extragrammatical morphology (Dressler, 2000).

The aim is to explore the productivity of 4 lexical series (i.e., *series of lexemes generated by blend's splinters*) inside an Italian newspaper corpus.

1. *aperi*cena < *aperitivo* x *cena*
2. *danz*attore < *danzatore* x *attore*
3. *eli*porto < *elicottero* x *aeroporto*
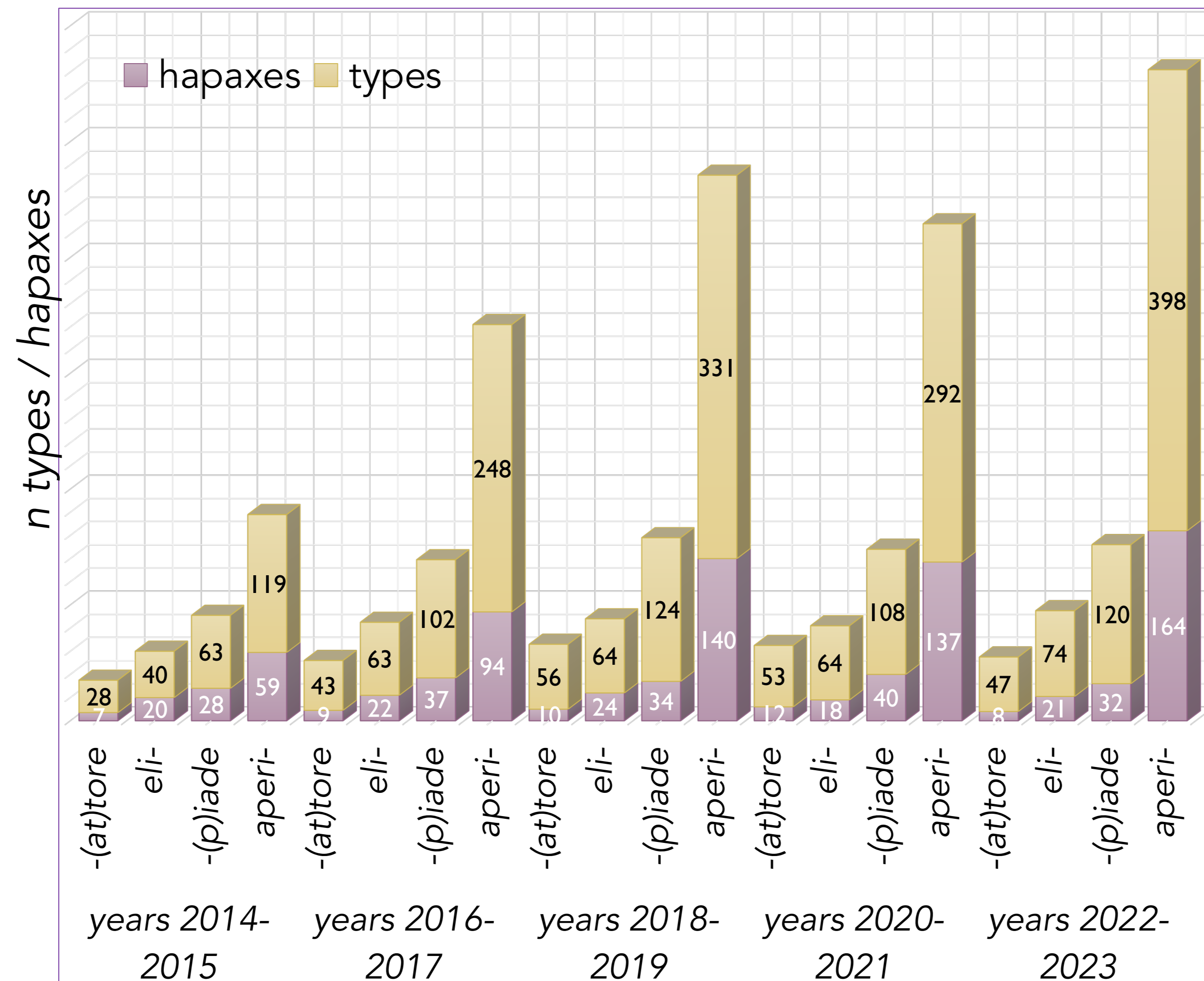4. *universi*adi < *università* x *olimpiadi*

Research questions

1) Lexical series (from hereon LS) can be viewed as *constructions* (Booij, 2010)?

2) The splinters involved in the creation of LS are closer to derivation (affixoid) or to compounding (combining form) (Iacobini, 1999)?

3) What is the current productivity of these splinters in the Italian newspaper language?

5-step-method

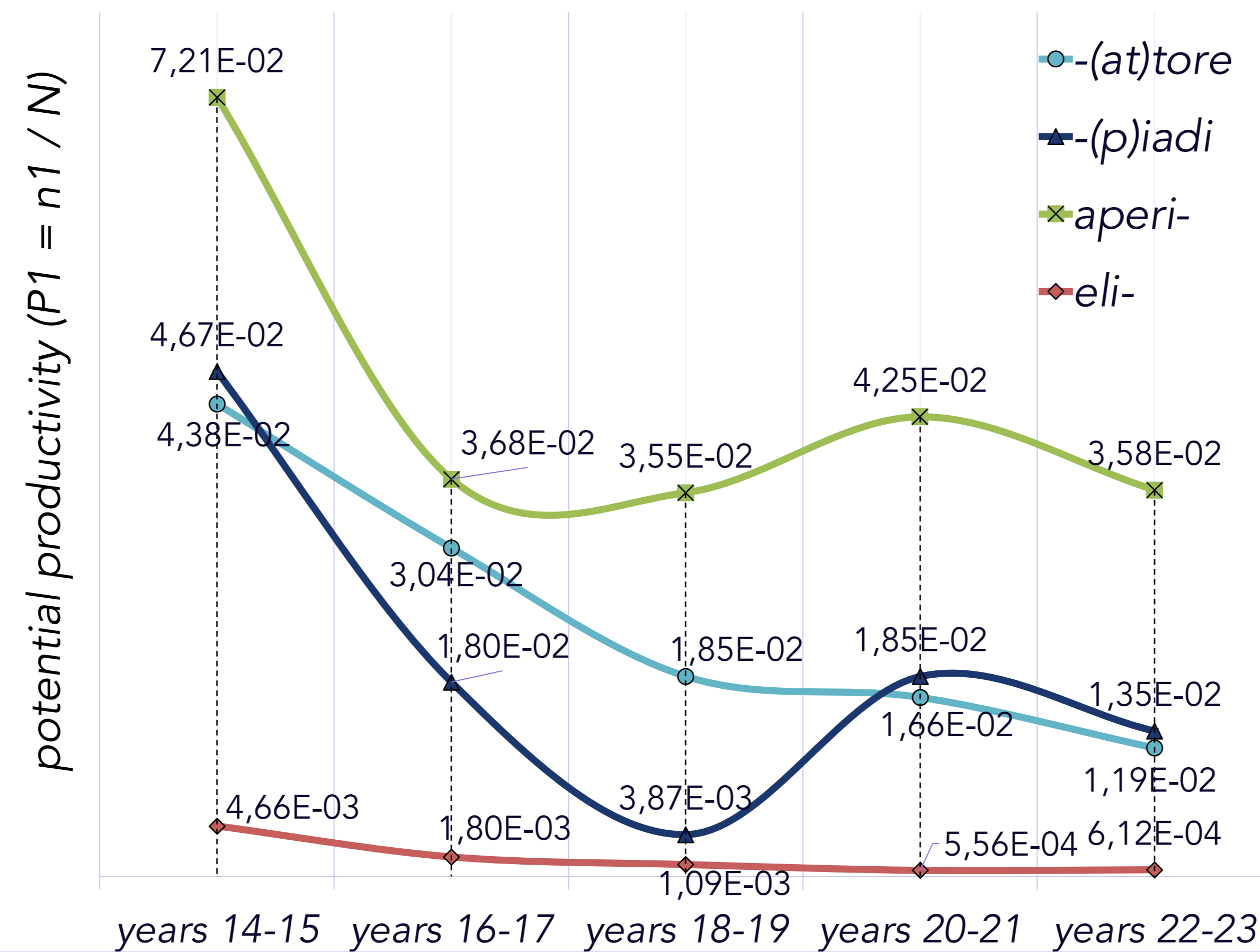1) Selection of the 4 most frequent initial and final splinters from 2 databases of Italian blends.

2) Semi-automatic extraction of LS from the Italian Trends corpus in Sketch Engine (Baiša *et al.*, 2017; timespan 2014-2023).

3) Subdivision of the corpus into 5 subcorpora, each comprising 2 years (2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021, 2022-2023).

4) Semi-automatic extraction of *types*, *tokens*, and *hapaxes* in each subcorpus.

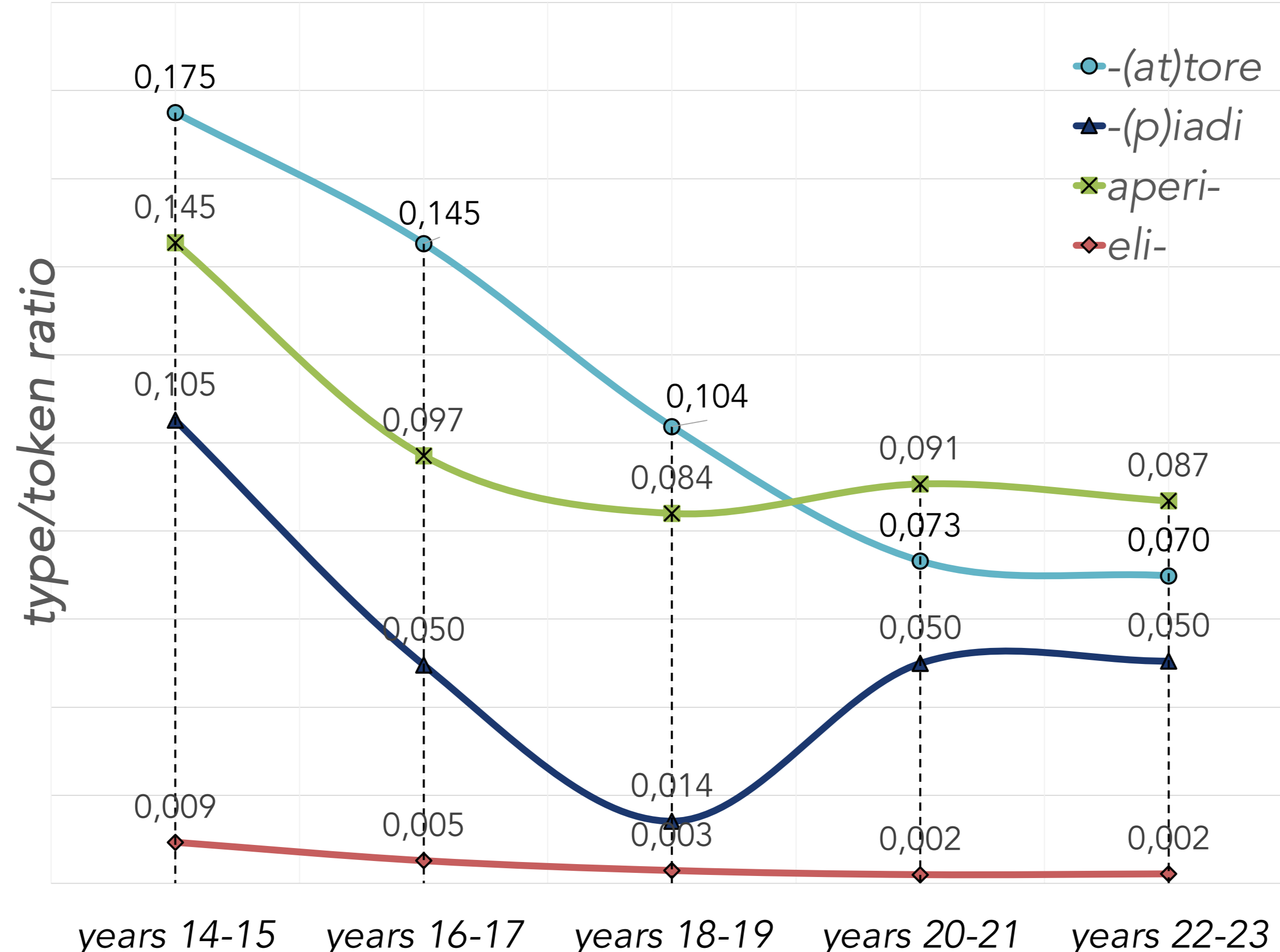5) Quantitative analysis carried out on Microsoft Excel.

References
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2. Booij, G. (2010). *Construction Morphology*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
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5. Dressler, W. U. (2000). Extragrammatical vs. marginal morphology. In Doleschal, U., Thornton, A. M. (eds.), *Extragrammatical and Marginal Morphology*. LINCOM: München: 1-10.
Iacobini, C. (1999). Distinguishing derivation prefixes from initial combining forms. In *Proceedings of the First Mediterranean Conference on Morphology, Mytilene, Greece, 19-21 September 1997*: 132-140.
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Results

N of types / hapaxes for each formative in each subcorpora

Potential productivity of the LS

Type/token ratio of the LS

subcorpora info

SCAN ME   SCAN ME

20-words freq lists

Discussion

From a constructionist perspective, sometimes splinters undergo a process of semantic subgeneralization, for which the meaning varies depending on the lexeme to which it is attached.

$$<[\text{aperi-} [X]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \Longleftrightarrow [\text{happy hour substituting SEM}_j]_k>$$

[*aperipranzo, aperimerenda, aperibrunch*]

$$<[\text{aperi-} [X]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \Longleftrightarrow [\text{SEM}_j \text{ based happy hour}]_k>$$

[*apericarne, aperifish, aperisushi*]

$$<[\text{aperi-} [X]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \Longleftrightarrow [\text{happy hour during which SEM}_j \text{ takes place}]_k>$$

[*aperivolley, aperivax, aperitrek*]

However, more often the (slightly) grammaticalised splinters (Brinton & Traugott, 2005) retain the full lexical meaning of the original splinter and could therefore be considered combining forms.

$$<[\text{eli-} [X]_{Nj}]_{Nk} \Longleftrightarrow [\text{SEM}_j \text{ with helicopter}]_k>$$

[*elisoccorso, eliambulanza, elitaxi*]

$$<[[X]_{NPR/Nj} \text{-iade}]_{NPRk} \Longleftrightarrow [\text{sport event in or related to SEM}_j]_k>$$

[*convittiadi, Bologniadi, scienziadi*]

Conclusions

LS generated by blends' splinters represent a productive means to coin new lexemes, whether they enter into dictionaries or not.
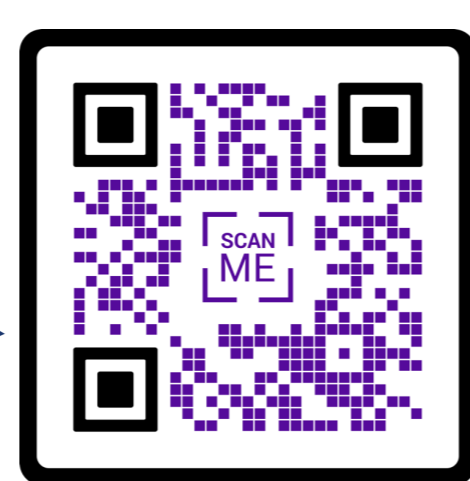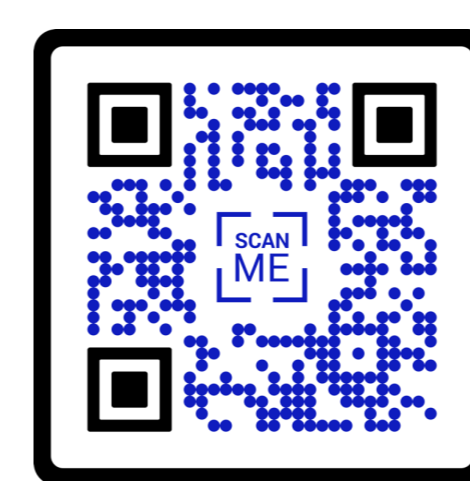
Tracking their productivity is important to understand the current status of the formative and to understand whether it develops new semantic patterns.

Established LS are closer to compounding and akin to combining forms, passing from the extra-grammatical to marginal morphological domains.

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