Commencer et finir – une approche quantitative des binômes verbaux en français préclassique

To Begin and to End: a quantitative approach to verbal binomials in Preclassic French

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Abstract: Preclassic French may be regarded as a culmination in the use of synonymic binomials, reaching their peak of frequency, showing signs of frozenness, and starting to be denounced as a clumsy rhetorical device that dwindles accordingly. In this paper, we adopt a quantitative approach on verbal binomials in Preclassic French based on data from the Frantext corpus, evidencing key structural properties of the system: the two sets of verbs that are combined are different enough to ensure a greater diversity of binomials, while the associations between these sets are constrained so as to ensure a high level of informativity between the two verbs, and therefore a better degree of coherence in the use of the binomial construction. We also offer a simple yet novel statistical method to select the most relevant and significantly recurrent verbal binomials in the corpus.