

On a Subclass of Non-Affixed Deverbal Nouns in French

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Abstract

In what follows I have two limited aims: (a) draw an empirical consequence from precedent analyses on the stem allomorphy in the French verb, as regards abstract deverbal non-suffixed Nouns such as *resultat* or *corrélat* as well as *concept* or *tract*, (b) search for theoretical implications of this re-organization of the data. My communication is organised as follows: after summing up the main results of two precedent analyses on the stem allomorphy in verbal inflection and in deverbal derivation (§1), I'll show that the Extra Stem, specialised for derivation, hidden to Inflection, appears in converted deverbal lexemes as well as in suffixed ones (§ 2). After drawing some consequences (§ 3), I'll examine the status of these newly recuperated, morphologically converted deverbal N: they are formally distinct from converted deverbal N previously recensed, but are they semantically distinct (§4) ?

“By contrast, the notion of lexeme [...] is entirely independent of morphological invariance: some (probably most) lexemes have a unique form associated with them ; others do not” (Aronoff, 1994, 9)

1. Stem allomorphy in the French Verb

We speak of stem allomorphy when a single lexeme uses more than one stem for its inflexion, or when complex lexemes which are constructed on the same lexeme base do not use the same stem.

1.1.

To account for the stem allomorphy in inflection, I refer to Bonami & Boyé 2002, whose main results are:

- **Multiple stems:** lexemes may come equipped with a collection of phonologically distinct stems (cf. Lieber, 1981, Aronoff, 1994, Pirrelli & Battista 2000, Stump 2001)
- **Stem space:** lexemes come equipped with a structure for storing stems, in as much as these stems are indexed with certain grouped parts of the paradigm.

Stem 1	PRST Sg
Stem 2	PRST 3 Pl
Stem 3	IMPFT & PRST1/2 PL

So there are verbs which use up to three different stems in the present (cf. *vouloir: je veux, nous voulons, ils veulent*), but all verbs use the same stem for the three singular forms, and all verbs use the same stem for the first and second plural forms.

- **Stem indexing:** the verbal stem space has a number of 12 different slots used in inflection: by default, most slots contain identical stems, so that what we call regular verbs use a single stem in the whole paradigm.
- **Morphemes:** this type of groupings across the paradigm shows that the stems involved in inflectional morphology are pure morphological objects, that is morphemes in the sense of Aronoff 1994. This stem allomorphy is not motivated, either from a phonological nor from a morphological point of view.

1.2. *Distribution of derivational suffixes such as -ion, -eur/-rice or -if/-ive.*

To account for the distribution of derivational suffixes such as *-ion, -eur/-rice or -if/-ive*, we postulated (Bonami, Boyé, Kerleroux, 2004) that French verbs possess a 13th slot, filled with an extra stem, or ES, which never surfaces in inflected verbal forms, but is visible in derived lexemes such as DÉRIVAT-ION, or SUPPLÉT-IF, or FORMAT-EUR. The default form of this ES is formed by appending *-at-* at the end of the Stem 3. This analysis relies on the classification of deverbal Nouns in *-ion*, which can be classified according to the way their form relates to that of the S3. There are 6 cases:

		Surface Relation between S3 and the nominal lexeme	examples
Class 1	Open	S3 + asjô	dérivation
Class 2	Open	S3 + kasjô	nidification
Class 3	74	S3 + jô	dispersion
Class 4	45	S3 + isjô	composition
Class 5	28	S3 + sjô	diminution
Class 6	305	X ¹ + jô	abstraction

Table 1. *Classes of the French deverbal N in -ion*

In Table 1, one can see that the default realization of the extra stem is obtained by appending *-at* at the end of the Stem 3, as in the class 1. The class 2 collects the deverbal Nouns suffixed in *-ion* obtained from Verbs which are themselves suffixed in *-ifi(er)*. As this verb class in *-ifier* is productive, the class of derived Nouns in *-ification* is altogether open and irregular. The other classes are altogether irregular and closed.

¹ In class 6, we call X a verbal stem distinct from S3, which resembles the past participle. (*abstrait/ abstract*)

2. Empirical objective

We argue here only that the extra stem ES shows up

- not only in suffixed lexemes, data which constitute the empirical basis of the hypothesis,
- but also in converted ones.

V with default ES	Suffixed Lexeme	Converted Lexeme
<i>agglomérer</i>	<i>agglomérat-ion</i>	<i>agglomérat</i>
<i>attenter</i>	<i>attentat-oire</i>	<i>attentat</i>
<i>corréler</i>	<i>corrélat-ion, corrélat-if</i>	<i>corrélat</i>

Table 2. Verbs with default ES

...agrégat, alternat, assassinat, attentat, condensat, corrélat, crachat, distillat, éjaculat, exsudat, filtrat, format, habitat, isolat, pissat, plagiat, postulat, prédicat, réduplicat, résultat, troncat²...

The identification of this extra stem, hidden to inflexion, is the result of a displacement of allomorphy: instead of describing phenomena of allomorphic suffixes, one describes allomorphic stems in the verbal lexeme. A considerable advantage of this analysis is that we do not need to predict parallel allomorphies for the other suffixes *-eur, -if/ive, -oire, -ure* (cf. *modificatoire, compositeur, reducteur, descriptif, courbature*.)

As the hidden stem has not always the default form (cf Table 1), we have to analyse other nominal lexemes as converted ones to , constructed on the Extra Stems which are irregular ones, as in Table 3.

V with irregular ES	Suffixed Lex	converted Lex
<i>Insérer</i>	<i>insert-ion</i>	<i>insert</i>
<i>Substituer</i>	<i>substitut-ion, substitut-if</i>	<i>substitut</i>
<i>Concevoir</i>	<i>concept-ion, concept-eur</i>	<i>concept</i>
<i>Ouïr</i>	<i>audit-ion</i>	<i>audit</i>
<i>Requérir</i>	<i>réquisit-ion</i>	<i>réquisit</i>
<i>Tirer</i>	<i>tract-ion, tract-eur</i>	<i>tract</i>

Table 3. Verbs with irregular ES

....institut, attribut, affect, percept, abstract, tact,

² We recensé 67 deverbal converted Nouns on a list of 430 Nouns ending in *-at*, which was provided by our colleague N.Hathout (ERSS & Toulouse) using his informatic tool called Webaffix (cf. Hathout & Tanguy, 2001)

Verbes	N affixed in -ion	converted N on ES	deverbal N / A on S3
plagier	Ø	plagi-at	plagiaire
assassiner	Ø	assassin-at	assassin
cracher	Ø	crach-at	cracheur
pisser	Ø	piss-at	pisseur, pisse

Table 4. Verbs whose ES appears exclusively in converted N.

the V *plagier*, *assassiner*, *cracher*, *pisser* do not construct suffixed lexemes on their ES. Their converted N are the exclusive instance of their ES, as they construct other deverbal nouns on S3 as in *plagiaire*, *cracheur*, *pisseur* or *assassin* (**plagiataire*, **crachateur*, **pissateur*, **assassinateur*).

With this hypothesis on the stem allomorphy of the V and the default form of the ES, we expect to observe new formations using it; and we did find new attestations, such as *narrat*, which the French writer Antoine Volodine gave as subtitle to his recent novel *Les anges mineurs* (Le Seuil, 2001)

“Écoutons Volodine expliquer lui-même ce qu’est un narrat” (Internet)

We found also *defecat*, *replicat*, *comparat*, on the Net.

3. Consequences

3.1. One single nominal derivational suffix –at left

One consequence of this analysis is to eliminate one of the two processes of nominal suffixation in –at usually attested in morphological inventories in French: once the form *Xat* has been re-identified as one in the collection of the stems of the verb, French morphology is left with only one suffixation process, showing up in:

(4) *épiscopat*, *cardinalat*, *mécénat*, *baronnat*, *kamikazat*³

i.e. lexemes referring to the social position hold by the referent of the lexeme simplex or to the function⁴ of this role.

³ “Y a-t-il crise de la vocation dans le kamikazat ?” D. Durand, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, 10/8/05.

⁴ And, through metonymy, to the period or to the place where the function is exerted (Lecomte, 1997)

(i) *pendant mon professorat*, *pendant mon noviciat*

(ii) *dans tout le comtat*, *dans l’émirat*, *aller au commissariat*

But when *commissaire* refers to the person responsible for an exposition of fine arts, the name of the function is available:

(iii) *mon commissariat a duré trois mois.* (= ‘*ma charge de commissaire*’)

Lexeme simplex 'social role'	Suffixed lexeme in -at 'dignité de'- or function
<i>mécène</i>	<i>mécénat</i>
<i>cardinal</i>	<i>cardinalat</i>
<i>baron</i>	<i>baronnat</i>
<i>vizir</i>	<i>vizirat</i>
<i>émir</i>	<i>émirat</i>
<i>professeur</i>	<i>professorat</i>

Table 5. Suffixed denominal N in -at

3.2. Contradiction with analyses which

- either identify one single suffixe -at, derivational suffix supposed to apply both on verbal basis (*resultat*, *agrégat*) or on nominal basis (*maréchalat*, *artisanat*), as it is done in TLF, in Dubois, 1962.
- or which distinguish two derivational suffix, correlated with the categorial difference of verbal basis and nominal basis. (Lecomte, 1997)
- It comes also in contradiction with Huot's (2001) analysis who identify any -at as an aspectual suffix, not a derivational one, with value of "accompli", taken to be the continued realization of the i-e "élargissement" of the i-e root (Benveniste, 1935, chap. 9).
- But it is concordant with Corbin's (1987) analyses, who saw the segment -at- in *resultat* as a "segment parasite", which meant that she clearly denied the derivational status to it.

3.3.

The recognition of this particular instance of stem allomorphy implies not to confuse between extra stems in *Xat-*, and verbal stems who end in -at and are common to inflection and derivation, as with

- (8) *combattre / combat* *appâter / appât*
ébattre / ébat *rabattre / rabat*
débattre / débat *constater / constat*
contracter / contrat (afr. *contract*)
acheter / achat (afr. *achapter*, XII° *achater*)

3.4.

As a consequence of this re-organisation of the data, we obtain, as morphologically derived, lexemes which were left before in isolation (from the morphological point of view), and supposed to give access only to etymological and/or to socio-historical explanations such as:

- (9) *concept, percept, institut, attribut*, are adscribed to the latine supines in Petit Robert dictionary
tract (in DHLF), *abstract, audit* (Gd Robert) are identified as anglicisms
tact, requisit, as latinisms, latin borrowings.

4. Status of these recuperated morphologically derived data

Do the deverbal nouns converted on ES form a subclass among all the converted Nouns previously recensed and analysed (Lieber, 1981, Kerleroux, 1996, Meyer- Lübke, 1974) ?

4.1.

Formally we have distinguished 4 subclasses, or twice two:

Stems common to Inflexion & Derivation		Extra Stem	
Converted N on S1 Masc A	Converted N on S3: a)Masc & b)Fem B	Converted on ES (+ default) Masc C	Converted on ES (- default) Masc D
<i>soutien maintien ébat, débat, rabat, combat</i>	a) <i>change, legs, rabais, rebut, progrès, trot, port, accord, encart, don, abandon, pardon, regret</i> b) <i>attaque, écoute, annonce, commande, baisse, donne, relâche, nage</i>	<i>agrégat corrélat filtrat résultat troncat</i>	<i>insert tact tract abstract concept, percept attribut, institut substitut</i>

Table 6: Formal subclasses of converted N

N.B1: The masculine converted N on Stem 3 in the B column is no more a productive type. The feminine form is the unique productive pattern in the B case, since XVII^o s.

N.B2: The masculine converted N (in every class) present the effects of some phonological regularities: the last Consonant usually falls (as in *rabais* vs *baisse*, or *maintien*, *combat*,); the last vocal may be nasalised (cf *don*, *abandon* VS *donne*). But one remarks that the converted N of class D, i.e. derived from the Extra Stem of the Verb, are not always following these phonological regularities: *attribut* (*attribuer*) is

similar to *rebut* (*rebuter*), *insert* (*insérer*) is similar to *encart* (*encarter*) as regards the non realization of the last consonant, which contrasts with *concept*, (VS *respect*) or *audit*.

4.2. *Semantically: are there distinct subclasses ?*

Actually we assume, using associated syntactic tests, and following Grimshaw (1990) the dual interpretation of deverbal abstract N in general in French.

We ask the question: are the deverbal N converted from the ES (Class C & D) belonging to the same class, that is, virtually semantically ambiguous, as the members of the classes A & B, which are described as apt to denote resultative objects [+R], products of the effectuation of the process, on one part, and events [+Ev] (complex or simple) on the other.

4.2.1.

The interpretation [+Ev] of the deverbal abstract N as N denoting a complex event, (that is, as argument-taking Noun), is correlated with the following syntactic constructions:

- exclusive definite determinants,
- presence of argumental complement,
- exclusive singular,
- aspectual adjectives as *constant, fréquent, éphémère, systématique...*

4.2.2.

The interpretation [+R] of deverbal abstract N as denoting a resulting object, effect of the process, is correlated with the following syntactic constructions:

- all types of determinants
- no argumental complement
- variation in number
- no aspectual modifiers

These syntactic criteria permit us to see that the converted deverbal Nouns, pertaining to the class A & B, in Table 6, i.e. deverbal N converted from the verbal Stems S3 or S1, common to Inflexion and to Derivation, possess both the [+Ev] and the [+R] interpretations, as it is manifested respectively in examples (10) & (11), and as the suffixed deverbal N do too:

- (10) *Le maintien des frontières de la République est un devoir sacré
Le port constant du chapeau lui avait occasionné une légère tonsure
Le transport trop fréquent de ces dessins a causé de graves dommages
Le récit de ses malheurs lui avait pris deux jours
La baisse du prix du pétrole a eu lieu au plus mauvais moment
L'attaque de la diligence a eu lieu dans la forêt
L'annonce de sa mort a eu lieu hier à midi*
- (11) *Ces jeunes femmes ont des maintiens trop rigides
Les ports majestueux des chênes et des hêtres étaient admirablement rendus par
le peintre
Les transports en commun sont en grève
Les récits de Paul ravissent la famille
Les baisses subites des bourses de Londres et de Singapour sont inquiétantes
Aucune de ces attaques ne le fera reculer
Ces annonces de fermeture d'usines sont décourageantes.*

4.3.

In contrast, the resultative interpretation appears to be the unique possible one for the converted N of the C & D classes (collected in Table 6), as the contexts in (12) allow to see:

- (12) a. *procéder à un audit, présenter des réquisits, un combinat, procéder à des inserts, élaborer des concepts, changer les attributs, faire un plagiat, obtenir un distillat, tirer des tracts, ...*
- b. * *L'audit systématique des nouvelles recrues est prévu (VS L'audition)*
* *L'attribut d'une prime de fin d'année a été voté (VS L'attribution)*
* *L'agglomérat des deux substances s'est produit en une heure (VS L'agglomération)*

4.4.

In particular, when the lexicon provides the pair of a N deverbial N in *-ion* and a converted N, both on the special stem ES, they present the repartition event/ resultative object, which seem to constitute a mini-scheme:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (12) | <i>troncation/ troncat</i> | <i>éjaculation/ éjaculat</i> |
| | <i>distillation/ distillat</i> | <i>filtration/ filtrat</i> |
| | <i>insertion /insert</i> | <i>attribution /attribut</i> |

4.5.

An indirect proof of the main disponibility of the resultative interpretation ‘product of the process’ lies in the existence of lexemes which are morphologically non conform, since the verbal basis is lacking, but which are semantically conform;

- (13) *alcoolat*: “médicament obtenu par distillation de l’alcool sur des substances aromatiques”
oléolat: “huile essentielle”
hydrolat: “eau chargée, par distillation, de principes végétaux volatils”
 cf. also *lysat*, *cédrat*, *orangeat*, etc.

4.6.

An other proof of this proeminence of the resultative interpretation lies in the fact that denominal verbs suffixed in *-ifier*⁵, which form abstract N in *-ification*, (= class 2 in Table1.), do not furnish any converted N in *Xificat*. And we observe that this is not strange at all since the resulting object of the process of *nidifier*, *nidification* is *nid*, that is, the simplex nominal basis itself, which blocks any **nidificat*.

(14)	Verb	Action	Noun
	<i>nidifier</i>	<i>nidification</i> :	‘ un nid’
	<i>codifier</i>	<i>codification</i> :	‘ un code’
	<i>pacifier</i>	<i>pacification</i> :	‘ la/une paix’
	<i>désertifier</i>	<i>désertification</i> :	‘ le désert’
	<i>planifier</i>	<i>planification</i> :	‘ un plan’

4.7.

Some converted Nouns, built on Extra Stems however also exhibit the properties of argument-taking Nouns (exclusive definite determinat, presence of argumental complement, exclusive singular, aspectual adjectives as *constant*):

- (15) *L’assassinat de Maskhadov par le FSB a eu lieu le 8 mars*
L’attentat contre la mairie s’est produit en plein jour
Le plagiat des auteurs du XVIII a eu lieu sur une grande échelle
Je peux en témoigner: le crachat a eu lieu sous mes yeux

We finally can conclude that N which are converted on the ES constitute a semantic subclass among converted deverbal N, with a resultative interpretation, denoting the resulting object of the process, while converted deverbal N on S3 or S1, are ambiguous, apt to be interpreted as N denoting objects or events. Actually, the data of (15) are the

⁵ The only 2 forms in *-ificat* are *certificat* and *pontificat*. *certificat* is regularly derived from *certifier*, itself borrowed from the desadjectival latin verb *certificare* ‘to attest’. And *pontificat* is the derived N denoting the function of the *pontife* (‘ the pope’) and belongs to the serie of the Table 5, as an ironical gift of etymology.

same as those collected in the Table 4, that is, they are converted deverbal N which do not form a pair with a suffixed N in *-ion*.

5. Conclusion

Assuming that lexemes come equipped with an array of stems (Aronoff, 1994, chap. 2) allows us to include into morphology a certain amount of data that are usually left in isolation, except from an etymological viewpoint. It was not our aim, but it happens. Has this sort of overlapping (of Morphology upon Etymology) theoretical consequences?

Once we abandon the reductionist doctrine “that the essence of language lies in the psychological invariance of the morphemes – as in Jakobson’s structuralism and early generative phonology” (Aronoff, 1994., 9), and define the unit of morphology, the lexeme, as a set of stems associated to a set of related meanings, we don’t need the distinction between bound vs free forms:

Le lexème étant par définition une entité abstraite, c’est-à-dire considérée hors emploi, il n’y a pas de sens à dire qu’un lexème est un élément libre (alors que par exemple les affixes seraient des éléments liés). La question de savoir si une unité linguistique est libre vs liée ne se pose que pour les expressions figurant dans les phrases. Tout ce qu’on peut dire dans l’optique développée ici, c’est que les lexèmes ont pour corrélats des expressions libres (i-e des mots-formes). (Fradin, 2003, 93)

And we remain wondering whether the well and long established contrast between *savant/ non-savant* or *savant/populaire*, which has been used in all morphological works on French since Darmesteter, should be questioned too, once the results here presented are obtained.

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