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French Event Nominals Without a Lexical Source of Derivation

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1 Introducing the Issue

1.1 Event Nominals

1.1.1 Ambiguity in Nominals

Grimshaw (1990): projection of Argument Structure (AS) is correlated to Inner Aspect.

- (1) a. the exam [*of the patient]
b. (i) the examination (of the patient (by the doctor))
(ii) the examination *(of the patient (by the doctor)) in/for two hours

The N in (1a) lacks AS ; while (1b.i) is ambiguous, (b.ii) receives a telic reading and in that case, the complement of the N becomes obligatory.

- Prepositional aspectual modifiers, initially proposed for Vs by Vendler (1967):
 - ▶ in *x*-time, Fr. ‘en un temps *x*’ (henceforth IN-X) modifies telic predicates;
 - ▶ for *x*-time, Fr. ‘pendant un temps *x*’ (now FOR-X) modifies atelic predicates;
 - When Inner Aspect is involved, the deverbal N unambiguously projects AS.
 - When no Inner Aspect is involved, no AS is projected.
 - ▶ The deverbal N then yields either a *Simple Event* or a *Result* reading.
 - The AS-projecting (AS-) variant (Complex Event Nominal in Grimshaw, AS-N here) denotes a *Complex Event* and exhibits special event-related grammatical properties, such as compatibility with event-internal modifiers in the singular.
 - The non-AS- variant may denote either a Simple Event (cf. 2a) or a Result (cf. 2b).
- (2) a. The construction lasted two years.
b. This building is a very beautiful construction.

1.1.2 The syntactic approach

- Distributed Morphology (DM) :
 - ▶ prior to taking part in any operation, the Root merges with a category-assigning functional head, typically *n* or *v* (Marantz 1996);
 - ▶ depending on which kind of DM implementation is adopted, the Root may (Marantz 1997, 2001, Harley 2014) or may not (Acquaviva 2009, Alexiadou 2014) project.
- Exo-Skeletal Model (cf. Borer 2005a,b, 2013) : the category of the Root is determined by the syntactic structure inside which it is embedded.
 - ▶ As Borer (2013: 61) rightfully points out, if we take the ambiguity to reflect syntactic variation instead of fortuitous homonymy, then the Root cannot be assumed to take arguments.
 - ▶ In this talk, the Root will be regarded as devoid of any grammatical features.
- Although both models tend to predict that a verbal/adjectival layer is mandatory in all ASNs, the data I am going to provide will be argued to challenge this assumption.
- The lexical view consists in rejecting a systematic account of the link between AS-Ns and their derivational source (cf. 3).

(3) **Chomsky's (1970) *Idiosyncrasy Argument* in a nutshell**

Attestedness of a given nominalization with a given meaning being quite unpredictable, a transformational account is inadequate.

- Such an approach crucially fails to account for regular patterns (cf. 4).

(4) **Structural variation in relation with the source V**

a. **Transitive AS setup**

- (i) la formation d'une coalition par les transfuges
'the formation of a coalition by the defectors'
- (ii) Les transfuges formèrent une coalition.
'The defectors formed a coalition.'

b. **Unaccusative AS setup**

- (i) la formation spontanée d'une falaise
'the spontaneous formation of a cliff'
- (ii) Une falaise se forma.
'A cliff formed.'

c. **Non-AS- readings**

- (i) *Simple event reading*
Nous avons suivi une formation intensive.
'We attended an intensive training course.'
- (ii) *Manner reading* (cf. Katz & Postal 1964: 122–148, Alexeyenko 2015)
On peut comprendre ce mot en observant sa formation.
'One may understand this word by looking at its formation.'
- (iii) *Object reading* (cf. Lakoff 1970: 31, 65–66)
Le soldat se retrouva face à une formation de chars ennemis.
The soldier found himself in front of an enemy tank formation.'

1.1.3 Deverbal or not deverbal ? The case of Zero-Derived Nominals (ZNs)

- According to Borer (2013), AS-Ns are necessarily formed by suffixation of an attested verbal base, and moreover, she denies the existence of a zero nominalizer in English (despite contradictory data put forward by Newmeyer 2009).
 - ▶ But French at least possesses a null nominalizing head with AS-transmitting properties, as illustrated in (5).
- (5) Le vol des bijoux par le gangster en à peine quelques minutes.
'The stealing of the jewelry by the gangster in hardly a few minutes.'
- ▶ As extensively studied by Tribout (2010), in some cases it can be tricky to determine whether a given ZN is truly deverbal, because the direction of the semantic implication is not clear.

- What is interesting for us here, is that the direction of the derivation may be uncertain for AS-Ns as well, cf. (6).

- (6)
- a. le massacre de la population par l'armée
'the slaughtering of the population by the army'
 - b. L'armée massacre la population.
'The army slaughters the population.'

- ▶ Is it possible that *massacre*_{AS-N} is not derived from *massacre*_v ?
 - I will show evidence that AS-Ns such as *massacre*_{AS-N} are not derived from a lexical verb, but from a structure which lacks some of the projections that are generally lexicalized by a verb used in a sentence, namely :
 - VoiceP, as responsible for manner modification and causative alternation ;
 - AspectP, as licensing modifiers of Outer Aspect
 - PolP, as authorizing the preposed negation *non*-.

1.2 Event Nominals without a Lexical Source

1.2.1 French data

- Neoconstructionist works (Alexiadou 2001, Borer 2013, Harley 2009):
 - ▶ ASNs must be built from a lexically attested verbal base.
- However, as I suggested in Krebs (2020) there are French ASNs which, whether suffixed or not, are not related to an attested verbal entry, cf. (7) ; I call them V-lacking AS-Ns.

- (7) l'audition du morceau de musique par les enfants [^o*ouïr* un morceau de musique]
'the audition of a musical tune by the children'

- ▶ Considering such AS-Ns as (7), we see that autonomous attestedness of the base is not required in order for an AS-N to be created.
- ▶ Thus, it is legitimate to wonder if Ns such as *massacre*_{AS-N} are really derived from a lexical verb.

1.2.2 Goal of the talk

- The goal of this talk is to argue that there are two types of AS-Ns in French, whose respective properties are now going to be detailed.
- Importantly, members of either type may or may not be related to a lexical verb, it does not change their properties as emphasized by the tests.
 - ▶ Type 1 AS-Ns, which have *-ion*-style or null suffixation, have at least 5 strong verbal properties which are missing in type 2 AS-Ns, some of which will be detailed.
 - they exhibit Outer Aspect,
 - they accept the preposed negation *non*-,
 - their AS may be subject to transitive/unaccusative configurational variation, cf. (4a–b),
 - they are compatible with manner PP modifiers,
 - their non-AS- counterparts may have manner and object readings as in (4c.ii–iii).

- ▶ Type 2 AS-Ns, which never involve overt *ion*-style suffixation, also lack all of those properties :
 - they lack Outer Aspect,
 - they reject the preposed negation,
 - except for the fact that they are ambiguous between a simple and a complex event, they are not capable of undergoing AS- alternation as illustrated in (4a),
 - they are not compatible with manner PP modifiers,
 - their non-AS- counterpart may only denote Simple Events: manner and object readings are not available (as seen in (4c.ii–iii)).

1.2.3 The Claim

- My claim with respect to such numerous and striking differences will be as follows :
 - ▶ Type 1 AS-Ns inherit their AS from an embedded full verbal structure, including a vP, an optional VoiceP as well higher projections for Outer Aspect and Polarity.
 - I shall call them *V-ASNs*. All *ion*-style-suffixed AS-Ns belong to that type. Examples of ZNs are given in (8).

(8) Examples of ZNs which exhibit such strong verbal properties: *accueil* ‘welcoming’, *arrêt* ‘stopping’, *collecte* ‘gathering’, *copie* ‘copying’, *découpe* ‘cutting up’, *dépôt* ‘depositing’, *écoute* ‘listening’, *envoi* ‘sending’, *gel* ‘freezing’, *incendie* ‘burning’, *jet* ‘throwing’, *port* ‘wearing’ or ‘carrying’, *prêt* ‘lending’, *purge* ‘purging’, *rapport* ‘retrieving’ (hunting game), *renvoi* ‘resending’, *report* ‘carrying over’, *respect* ‘respecting’, *réveil* ‘awakening’, *vol* ‘stealing’, *vol* ‘thieving’, *vote* ‘voting’.

- ▶ Type 2 Ns inherit their AS from a structure that does not have the full range of verbal properties that type 1 exhibits.
 - My claim is that this is so because, although they involve an event predicate with its AS, they lack the functional apparatus of a standard verb as found in sentences.
 - Since they are not deverbal in the traditional sense, i.e. they do not inherit their complex Event Structure from a verbal source which may be lexicalized, I shall call them “Native AS-Ns”, now N-ASNs. Examples are given in (9).

(9) N-ASNs exhibit weaker verbal properties
assassinat ‘assassination’, *massacre* ‘slaughtering’, *meurtre* ‘murder’,
sac ‘sack’, *siège* ‘siege’, *rapt* ‘abduction’, as well as *nauffrage* ‘ship-
wreck’, *agonie* ‘agony’, *homicide* ‘homicide’, *genocide* ‘genocide’.

2 Event Nominals without a Lexical Source

- Most neoconstructionist works (Alexiadou 2001, Borer 2005b, 2013, Harley 2009) assume ASNs to be necessarily built from a lexically attested verbal base.
- However, many French AS-Ns are not build on a lexical verb.
 - ▶ We are now going to conduct some tests.

2.1 Eventivity

2.1.1 IN-X test and internal modification

- *-ion* AS-Ns without a related lexical verb.
 - ▶ Some event nominals with anticausative reading are not related to a lexical verb, but pass IN-X and generally accept internal modification.
 - ▶ Those Ns may exhibit transitivity alternation.
- (10) a. la combustion spontanée d'un corps en quelques minutes [\dagger comburer_v]
 'the spontaneous combustion of a body in a few minutes'
 b. la combustion du carbone par l'oxygène en quelques minutes
 'the combustion of the carbone by the oxygen in a few minutes'
- The alternation doesn't necessarily involve causativity : in (11b), the theme is not affected.
- (11) a. l'ascension du ballon vers le ciel en quelques minutes [\dagger ascendre_v]
 'the ascent of the balloon towards the sky in a few minutes'
 b. l'ascension de l'Everest par l'alpiniste en cinq jours
 'the ascent of Everest by the alpinist in five days'
- No overt suffixation:
- (12) a. °exoder_v
- (i) La ville a reçu un ultimatum, ce qui a provoqué l'**exode** en quelques heures de plus de la moitié de ses quelque cent mille habitants. (*Le Monde*)
 'The city was issued an ultimatum, which caused the exodus in a few hours of over half its one hundred thousand or so inhabitants.'
 - (ii) Le numéro un albanais s'est déclaré confiant dans la victoire, en dépit des troubles qui ont agité le pays depuis le début de l'année, et de l'**exode** en neuf mois de quelque soixante mille Albanais à la recherche d'une vie meilleure. (*Sud-Ouest*)
 'The Albanian leader claimed to be confident in the victory, despite the unrest that has shaken the country since the beginning of the year, and the exodus in nine months of sixty thousand Albanians seeking a better life.'
- b. †naufrager_v
- (i) Le **nauffrage** en quelques secondes du fileyeur de Loïc Riou avait causé la mort de dix personnes. (*Nouvel Obs*)
 'The shipwreck in a few seconds of Loïc Riou's spinner had caused the death of ten persons.'
 - (ii) l'implication d'un sous-marin dans le **nauffrage** en quelques minutes du chalutier (web)
 'the involvement of a submarine in the shipwreck in a few minutes of the trawler'
 - (iii) un processus incontrôlable, le **nauffrage** en quelques mois de la seule puissance habilitée à rivaliser avec les États-Unis (research work)
 'an uncontrollable process, the shipwreck in a few months of the only power capable to rivalize with the United States'

- Implicit Agent Control may be infelicitous even if a *par*-‘by’-phrase is possible.

(13) **Unaffixed Ns:**

- a. Le sac *(de la région) par les Huns en quelques mois (? afin d’asseoir leur domination) aboutit à la rupture du traité de paix avec Rome. [^osaquer_v une ville ‘sack a city’]
‘The sack of the region by the Huns in a few months in order to establish their domination lead to the rupture of the peace treaty with Rome.’
- b. Le rapt massif en seulement quelques jours *(de plusieurs dizaines d’enfants) par les intégristes (? dans le but de les endoctriner) m’a indigné. [^orapter_v]
‘The massive abduction in only a few days of dozens of children by the integristes in order to indoctrinate them outraged me.’
- c. Le meurtre *(de César) par les sénateurs en quelques secondes dans le but de sauver la République provoqua une guerre civile. [^omeurtrer_v]
‘The murder of Caesar by the senators in a few seconds in order to save the Republic caused a civil war.’
- d. Le siège *(de nombreuses cités phéniciennes) par Alexandre en seulement quelques années (? afin de consolider l’hégémonie de la Macédoine) fut un exploit. [^osiéger_v]
‘The siege of many Phoenician cities by Alexander in a few years so as to strengthen the hegemony of Macedonia was a feat.’

(14) **Greek compounds in -ose, -èse, -yse:**

- a. l’apoptose rapide des neutrophiles et leur phagocytose par les macrophages (research work) [^o(s’)apoptoser_v]
‘the quick apoptosis of neutrophiles and their phagocytosis by macrophages’
- b. L’exérèse en quelques minutes de l’angiome par le dermatologue dans le but de soulager son patient se déroula à la perfection. [^oexérer_v]
‘The exeresis in a few minutes of the angioma by the dermatologist in order to relieve his patient went perfectly.’

A certain level of productivity with respect to hypothetical source verbs may be found through back-formation cases.

We find this recent example of relexicalization with a transitive structure :

- (15) On l’a accusé d’avoir naufragé le cinéma français. (P. Vialar, 1956)
‘He was accused of shipwrecking the French cinema.’

2.1.2 The Counterfactuality Test : Implicit Conditionals

- At the ConSOLE conference last month I presented a test which has been put forward by Schueler (2006) but never used in studies on nominalizations.
 - ▶ I call it the Counterfactuality Test and it consists in using the N in a DP which is either the subject or the factive object of a V in Conditional Mood.
 - ▶ There is no if-style clausal antecedent, and therefore, that is called an Implicit Conditional (IC) construction.
 - ▶ Crucially, the test is intended to be conducted in a completely out-of-the-blue context. The reason is that we want to know whether the nominalization can have non-presuppositional reading, i.e. denote the occurrence of the event itself, like a hypothetical fact.

- (16) a. Le bombardement de la ville par l'armée constituerait un désastre humanitaire.
The bombing of the city by the army would constitute a human disaster.
b. #Le bombardement de l'armée sur la ville constituerait un désastre humanitaire.
The army's bombing on the city would constitute a human disaster.

Crucially, while the AS-N in (16a) perfectly fits in an out-of-the-blue context, the nominalization in (16b), in turn, may only refer to an event whose occurrence has been previously mentioned: the absence of such a context yields ungrammaticality.

Following Schueler (2006), I take this blocking to be due to the absence of a quantifiable event.

Since N-ASNs, as I argue, turn out to be quite unfelicitous with FOR-X, the Counterfactuality Test is a very convenient way to test atelic N-ASNs.

- (17) a. (i) La recherche de cet idéal (pendant plusieurs années) te permettrait d'aller de l'avant.
'The researching of this ideal for several years would allow you to move forward.'
(ii) La quête de cet idéal (? pendant plusieurs années) te permettrait
the quest of this ideal for several years you would-allow
d'aller de l'avant.
to move forward
- b. (i) Le pillage de cette ville (pendant plusieurs jours) ferait souffrir les habitants.
'The plundering of this city for several days would make the inhabitants suffer.'
(ii) Le sac de cette ville (? pendant plusieurs jours) ferait souffrir les
the sack of this city for several days would-make suffer the
habitants.
inhabitants
- c. (i) La vénération de l'individualisme durant vingt ans nous mènerait au chaos.
'The veneration of individualism for twenty years would lead us to chaos.'
(ii) Le culte de l' individualisme (? durant vingt ans) nous mènerait au
the cult of the individualism for twenty years us would-lead to
chaos.
chaos
- d. (i) La glorification de ce criminel pendant deux heures m'insupporterait.
'The glorification of this criminal for two hours would be unbearable for me.'
(ii) L' éloge de ce criminel (? pendant deux heures) m'
the praise of this criminal for two hours for-me
insupporterait.
would-be-unbearable

Some Ns which had hitherto be completely ignored may now be regarded as AS-Ns.

2.2 Polarity: The Negation Test

- In some cases a preposed negation can be inserted.
 - As illustrated in (18), the preposed negation widely scopes over the whole predicate.
- (18) La non-consommation de ces champignons pendant trois mois te permettra de guérir.
'The non-consumption of those mushrooms for three months will allow you to heal.'
- The negation can be used whether there is an attested verbal base or not.
- (19) a. La non-exploitation du gisement et la non-combustion de son or noir éviteront à la planète l'émission de 500 millions de tonnes de CO₂. (*Libération*)
'The non-exploitation of the deposit and the non-combustion of its black gold will spare the planet the emission of 500 million tons of CO₂.'
- b. Tous pensèrent alors que ce temps défavorable avait pour cause la non-crémation de l'enfant. (1922) [[†]crémer_v]
'All then thought that this unpropitious time had been caused by the non-cremation of the child.'
- c. La non-audition de cette mélodie serait regrettable.
'The non-audition of this melody would be a shame.'

In case of transitivity alternation, both variants take the negation :

- (20) a. la non-ascension du point culminant par Durand (web)
the non-ascent of-the peak by Durand
- b. la non-ascension de l'équipe première en division supérieure (web)
the non-ascent of the team first to division upper

Importantly, unergative predicates also take the negation.

- (21) a. L'accord de M. X ressortait de la non-protestation de celui-ci à la réception des relevés mensuels. (*Legifrance*)
'Mr X's agreement followed from the non-protestation of the latter as he received the monthly statements.'
- b. Le nonaccès à ces médicaments condamnerait ce patient.
the non-access to those medicines would-condemn this patient

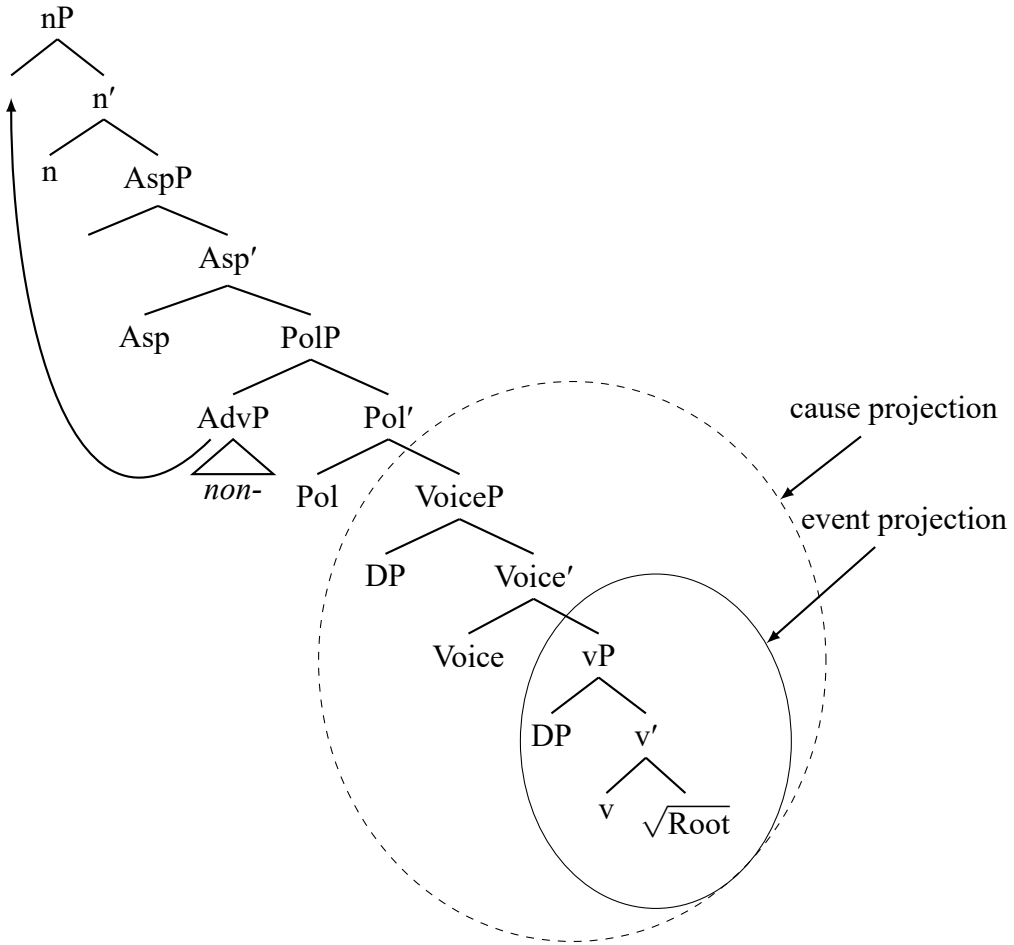
- Crucially, N-ASNs are incompatible with *non-* :

- (22) a. (i) Le non-pillage de ces villes serait regrettable.
'The non-plundering of these cities would be a shame.'
- (ii) *le non-sac de ces villes
'the non-sack of these cities'
- b. (i) Le non-enlèvement de ces jeunes filles serait un soulagement.
'The non-abduction of those young girls would be a relief.'
- (ii) * le non-rapt de ces jeunes filles
'the non-rapt of those young girls'
- c. * le non-assassinat du dissident
'the non-assassination of the dissident'
- d. * le non-meurtre du dissident
'the non-murder of the dissident'

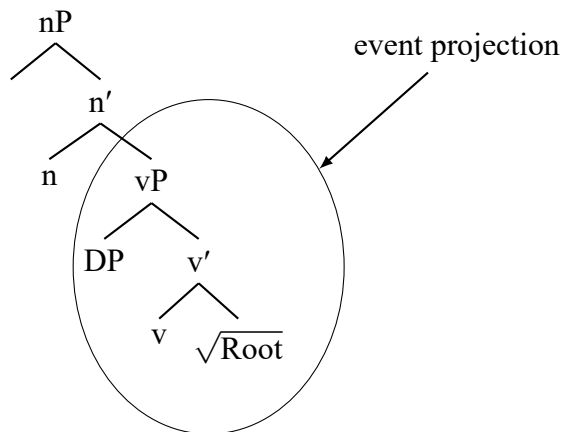
3 Possible formal analysis

(23) Deverbal vs. Native AS- Event Nominals – The *Event Root Shell* hypothesis

a. *Deverbal AS- Event Nominal: Verbalized Event Shell*



b. *Native AS- Event Nominal: Bare Event Shell*



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