

Argument-Projecting Structures

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This contribution will focus on French eventive Ns in an attempt to bring new insight to the question of how and where the ability to project Argument Structure (AS) is initiated, and more generally to provide further evidence in support of a *syntactic approach* to word formation. According to Borer (2013), only nominalization of a lexically attested verbal base by means of a *-tion*-style functional allomorph (now *ATK*) may produce AS-projecting Ns (ASNs). However, in the light of recent French data (cf. Krebs (2019)), it appears that a subset of unquestionably non-deverbal Ns may project AS, AS being defined as *an ordered set of at least two arguments*.

Main claims : a) Not all ASNs are deverbal (dev.). b) AS need not be inherited from a lexical V. c) AS is generated earlier than categorization. d) AS is transmitted through syntax.

A large subset of French unsuffixed (0-) Ns pass the canonical aspectual tests for AS detection, showing them to behave exactly as ambiguously as suffixed ones (cf. Grimshaw (1990)) :

(1) Le vol *(des bijoux) en deux minutes par un homme cagoulé afin de les revendre...

The stealing of the jewels in two minutes by a hooded man in order to resell them...

Interestingly, many of them, when used as ASNs, may translate into English as *-ing* nominals : accueil ‘welcoming’, arrêt ‘stopping’, collecte ‘gathering’, copie ‘copying’, découpe ‘cutting up’, dépôt ‘depositing’, écoute ‘listening’, envoi ‘sending’, fouille ‘searching’, 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’, sauvegarde ‘saving’, traque ‘stalking’, vol ‘stealing’, vote ‘voting’.

The tests are positive with some Ns that are not related to any V, such as *sac* ‘sack’, *meurtre* ‘murder’ (cf. Kupferman (2000)), *rapt* ‘abduction’ (cf. Huyghe *et al.* (2017)), *siège* ‘siege’...

(2) 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. [°saquer_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.

... and a few neoclassical compounds : *homicide* ‘homicide’, *protéolyse* ‘proteolysis’, etc.

(3) L’exérèse en quelques minutes *(de l’angiome) par le dermatologue afin de soulager son patient se déroula à la perfection.

The removal, in a few minutes, of the angioma by the dermatologist in order to relieve his patient went perfectly.

Others seem to contain an unaccusative predicate : *exode* ‘exodus’, *essor* ‘expansion’, *départ* ‘departure’, *retour* ‘return’, *osmose* ‘osmosis’, *nymphose* ‘nymphosis’, *-cytose* ‘cytosis’ Ns... :

(4) 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.

Such nominals could be argued to be *relational* Ns, i.e. Ns involving a monadic predicate, not an AS. However, in order to show that they embed a structure of subevents, we propose a new test which is to check their compatibility with the modifier *successif* (‘successive’) when the DP is not in a predicative position – so it may target the N’s internal predicative ability without being skewed by the predication induced by a copula, an apposition or a light verb (cf. Roy & Soare (2014 : 150)) –, a property not shared by relational nominals :

(5) Nous visitâmes la [demeure/résidence/propriété] (*successive) de plusieurs célébrités.

We visited the successive [resting place/residence/property] of several celebrities.

(6) Nous assistâmes [au sac / à l’exode] successif de plusieurs [cités/ethnies].

We witnessed the successive [sack/exodus] of several [cities / ethnic groups].

When it stands as the subject of a verb in conditional mood, only a DP whose head is an ASN may be introduced by the definite article in the purpose of denoting a hypothetical event :

- (7) [Un/*Le] putsch des généraux serait une catastrophe. [Simple Event N (SEN)]
[A/The] putsch of the generals would be catastrophic.
- (8) [Une/La] sédition des généraux serait une catastrophe. [Unergative V-lacking ATK-ASN.]
[A/The] sedition of the generals would be catastrophic.
- (9) Un/le sac de la ville par les ennemis serait une catastrophe. [Transitive V-lacking 0-ASN.]
[A/The] sack of the city by the enemy would be catastrophic.

0-ASNs exhibit the same AS alternations (agentive vs non-agentive, causative vs anticausative) as their ATK counterparts (cf. Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer (2015)) :

- (10) le jet/le lancement d'une pierre sur sa voiture par le garnement
the throwing/launching of a stone at his car by the scallywag
le jet/la projection du navire à une telle hauteur dans ces roches (after Hugo)
the throwing/projection of the ship so high among those rocks
- (11) l'arrêt/l'extinction délibéré(e) de la machine par le technicien de maintenance
the deliberate stopping/shutdown of the machine by the service engineer
l'arrêt/l'extinction spontané(e) de la machine sous l'effet de la coupure de courant
the spontaneous stopping/shutdown of the machine due to the power outage

Some of them, e.g. *gel* or *réveil*, may receive a propositional reading :

- (12) Nous exigeons le gel de ses avoirs / le réveil du patient.
We demand the freezing of his assets / the waking of the patient.

The nonnecessity of the lexical existence of the V appears clearly if we consider that *meurtre_N* 'murder_N' still projects an AS while the V [†]*meurtrir* is no longer used in the relevant sense :

- (13) Le meurtre *(de César) par les sénateurs en dix secondes afin de sauver la République...
The murder of Caesar by the senators in ten seconds in order to save the Republic...

Similar reasoning applies to the ATK-N *ascension* 'ascension', related to [†]*ascendre_V* 'ascend' :

- (14) Son nouveau film retrace son ascension de l'Everest en seulement six jours. (web)
His new film retraces his ascension of Everest in only six days.

Non-autonomous bases may thus form ATK-Ns (cf. Zwanenburg (1983) for a comprehensive list), some of which, e.g. *oblation* 'oblation', *abduction* 'abduction', may project AS :

- (15) L'audition pendant deux minutes de la mélodie par les élèves. (°auditionner une mélodie
The audition, during two minutes, of the melody by the pupils. to audition a melody)

The absence of those Vs may constitute an *accidental gap* (cf. Chomsky (1965 : 187)) : being built on valid structures, they belong to the *possible lexicon* (cf. Botha (1968 : 129), Weinreich (1969 : 74), Halle (1973 : 8), Aronoff (1976), Corbin (1985), Di Sciullo & Williams (1987)).

For suffixed ASNs, it is straightforwardly the unattested V – or rather, the structure that makes its existence possible – which is the ancestor of the N, and arguably the source of the AS. But in the absence of an overt suffix we cannot know if we are dealing with deverbality. Should we reconstitute a pair such as °*siéger/siège* or °*saquer/sac*, we would still need to determine whether we have a V→N pair or an *unoriented* pair (UP) (Tribout (2010 : 160), Marchand (1963 : 186)). We may assume the two members of an UP not to be built from one another, but instead share a category-neutral *common root* (Marantz (1996), Kiparsky (1997), Harley & Noyer (2000), Hale & Keyser (2002)). In AS-UPs, the common ancestor, then, has to be the *one common source* of the AS projected by either member : there is, we suggest, an *uncategorized primary source structure*, from which even Vs inherit their AS. It echoes a claim by Alexiadou (2009 : 256), namely that “the presence of AS should be dissociated from the presence of verbalizing morphology” : it may account for mismatch in ATK-SENs (i.e. for their grammatically unactivated V) since it predicts that all Vs may possess an AS-lacking alternate form. We may conclude that the presence or absence of covert functional morphology merging directly with the root might account for the aspectual ambiguity that is the hallmark of nominalizations. AS could be generated by the syntax inside the category-free domain of the root, viewed as an abstract index (cf. Embick & Noyer (2007), Acquaviva (2008)).

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