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Romance conversions from a cognitive perspective

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Outline

1. Types of V-N-conversion in French, Italian and Spanish: root conversion vs. nominalized infinitive (NI)
2. Cognitive approaches to V-N-conversion and their applicability to Romance NIs
3. The use of syntactic NIs and suffixations in newspapers
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1. Types of V-N-conversion in French, Italian and Spanish: root conversion vs. nominalized infinitive (NI)

Definition and examples

conversion

= the use of one morphological form with different part of speech values and potentially different, but related meanings

⇒ V-N-conversion:

(1) En. *work_V* – *work_N*

root conversion: change of inflectional affixes

- (2a) It. *acquist-are_V* ‘to buy’ – *acquist-o_N* ‘purchase’
- (2b) Fr. *demand-er_V* ‘to ask for’ – *demand-e_N* ‘request’

word conversion: the infinitive’s inflectional affix becomes part of the noun’s stem (Gévaudan 2007, Umbreit in pr.)

- (3a) It. *cant-are_V* ‘to sing’ – *cantare_N* ‘song, epic’
- (3b) Sp. *vol-ar_V* ‘to fly’ – *volar_N* ‘process of flying’

⇒ nominalized infinitive (NI)

≠

- (1) En. *work_V* – *work_N*

Two types of nominalized infinitive:

1. Lexicalized NI (not productive)

(3a) It. *cant-are_V* 'to sing' – *cantare_N* 'song, epic'

(3c) Fr. *di-re_V* 'to say' – *dire_N* 'statement, declaration'

(3d) It. *i cantar-i_N* 'the songs', Fr. *les dire-s_N* 'the statements'

Characteristics of the nominal form:

- shows all nominal properties and is a full member of the language's lexicon.
- is the result of a lexicalization process
- is semantically rather unpredictable

2. “Syntactic” NI (not productive in French)

(3b) Sp. *vol-ar_V* ‘to fly’ – *volar_N* ‘process of flying’

(3e) It. *nuot-are_V* ‘to swim’ – *nuotare_N* ‘process of swimming’

(3f) Sp. **los volar-es_N* (pl.), It **i nuotar-i_N* (pl.)

Characteristics of the nominal form:

- does not show all nominal properties and is probably not a member of the language’s lexicon.
- is the result of a spontaneous syntactic nominalization process
- is semantically predictable: process, state etc. reading identical to the verbal infinitive

2. Cognitive approaches to V-N- conversion and their applicability to Romance NIs

Overview

Langacker 1987 / 1991 (English)

Twardzisz 1997 (English)

Farrell 2001 (English)

Dirven 1999 / Schmid 2005 (English)

Gaeta 2002 / 2003 / 2004 (Italian)

(...)

Selected approaches (1): Dirven 1999 and Schmid 2005

- conversion as a form of metonymy (cf. also Radden/Kövecses 1999, Schönefeld 2005)
- Dirven (1999): In verbs derived by conversion, components of schemas stand metonymically for other components of the same schema, e.g.
action schema $\text{to clean}_V \leftarrow \text{clean}_{\text{ADJ}}$
denotes RESULT
 - ⇒ RESULT = most salient element of action schema
 - ⇒ RESULT stands for the whole schema, i.e. denotes the action schema as such.
- Schmid (2005): extension to deverbal converted nouns, e.g.
 - ACTION for RESULT: $a \text{ cut}_N$
 - ACTION for AGENT: $a \text{ cheat}_N$
 - MANNER OF MOTION for ACT: $a \text{ swim}_N$

Selected approaches (1): Dirven 1999 and Schmid 2005

⇒ Applicability to Romance NIs?

- lexicalized NI: most cases can be explained metonymically, i.e. as based on **contiguity**, cf.

(3c) Fr. *dire_V* ‘to say’ – *dire_N* ‘statement, declaration’

⇒ ACTION for RESULT

(4) It. *vestire_V* ‘to dress’ → *vestire_N* ‘dressing style’

⇒ ACTION for MANNER

But:

Deverbal root conversions and overt nominalizations display metonymic meanings too. This is a case of regular polysemy (cf. Rainer 1993: 214-215, Schmid 2005:171-175, Gaeta 2004: 316-318, Thornton 2004: 516, 518):

Selected approaches (1): Dirven 1999 and Schmid 2005

(2a) It. *acquistare_V* ‘to buy’ – *acquisto_N* ‘purchase’ in the sense of ‘action of buying’ vs. ‘what has been bought’

(5) En. *invit-ation* ‘action of inviting’, vs. ‘invitation card’

⇒ Dirven’s and Schmid’s approach could be extended to other derivations (cf. Blank 1998, Koch 2001).

- “syntactic” NI: cannot be explained metonymically, cf.

(3b) Sp. *volar_V* ‘to fly’ – *volar_N* ‘process of flying’

⇒ The noun neither denotes a result nor any other components of the same schema.

⇒ Verb and NI are identical, denoting e.g. a process (Blank 1998, Koch/Marzo 2007).

Selected approaches (2): Gaeta 2002/2003/2004

- Langacker-based
- 2 types of action nouns in Italian with subtle semantic differences:

(a) suffixation and (root) conversion

It. *affonda-mento* ‘sinking’, *costru-zione* ‘construction’, *nuot-o* ‘swimming’, *semin-a* ‘seeding’

= **reification and bounding, holistic conceptualization of the event expressed by the verb**

(b) nominalized infinitive (= syntactic type)

It. *affondare_N* ‘the sinking’, *nuotare_N* ‘the swimming’

= **focalization of the internal dynamics of the event expressed by the verb, “detelicization” of telic verbs, no bounding, no profiling of a region**

Selected approaches (2): Gaeta 2002: 192 / 2003: 111

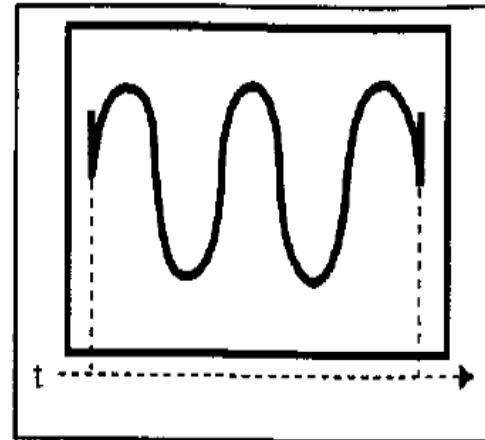


Fig. 2 *affondamento*

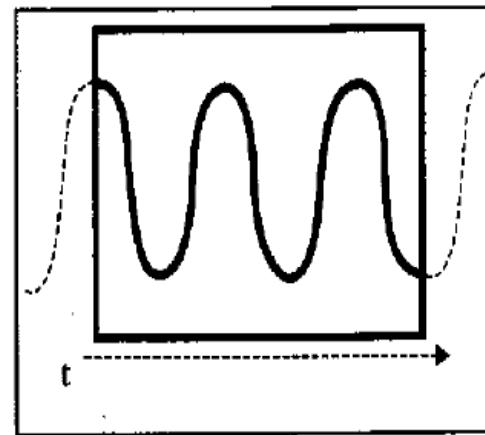


Fig. 3 *nuoto*

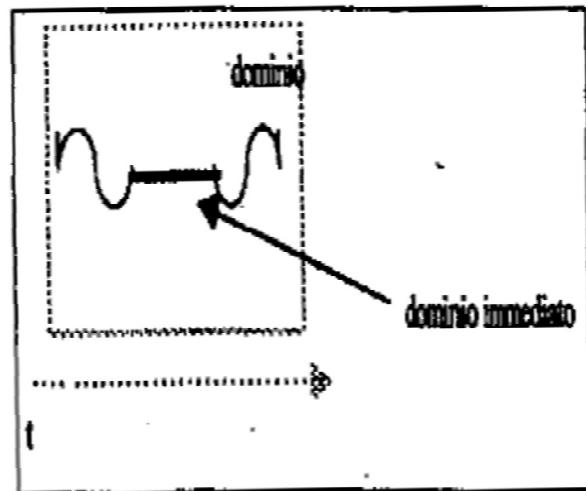


Fig. 4 *l'affondare*

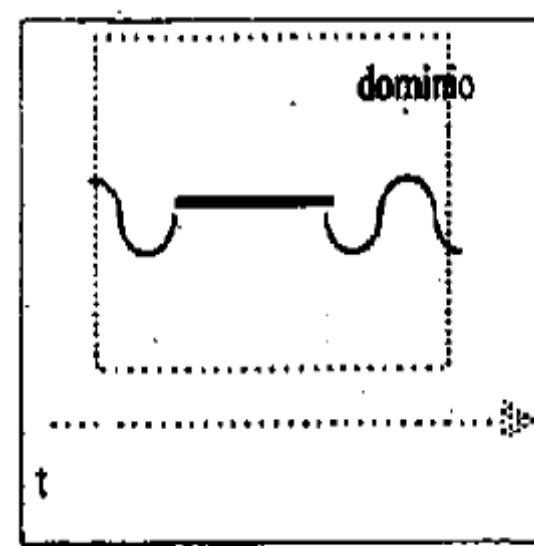


Fig. 5 *il nuotare*

Selected approaches (2): Gaeta 2002/2003/2004

⇒ Completeness and applicability to other languages?

- syntactic NI: yes.
 - ⇒ The focus on the internal dynamics seems to correctly account for the NIs in Italian as well as in Spanish, cf.

(6) It. *Il nuoto agonistico implica **il nuotare** allo scopo di ottenere la migliore prestazione, ...* (Google)

'Competitive swimming implies swimming with the aim of obtaining the best performance, ...'

(7) Sp. *Hay varios estudios que sugieren que tan sólo un 6% de los pasajeros se sienten totalmente tranquilos durante el vuelo y que muchas personas evitan **el volar*** (Google)

'There are several studies suggesting that only 6% of the passengers feel completely calm during the flight and that many people avoid flying'

But:

The interpretation of these occurrences is rather subjective.

Selected approaches (2): Gaeta 2002/2003/2004

- lexicalized NI: is missing in Gaeta's analysis
 - ⇒ Does not focus on the internal dynamics ≠ type (b)
 - ⇒ Bounding and reification take place, but the majority of lex. NIs does not have an action meaning (cf. 8 vs. 9, Marzo/Umbreit 2013) → not completely covered by type (a)

(8) Fr. *Quiproquos, et jeux de mots (...)* ont déclenché **les rires de l'assistance.**

(www.estrepublicain.f)

'Misunderstandings and puns (...) have provoked the laughter of the audience'

(9) Sp. **Su andar** [del lobo] es particular y característico de la especie.

(<http://www.cromo.com.uy/2012/12/el-lobo-que-camina-en-zancos/?print=1>)

'Its manner of walking [of the wolf] is particular and characteristic of the species'

Summary

- The lexicalized NI is best accounted for by a combination of Gaeta's and Schmid's approaches: It is bounded and it either conceptualizes events holistically or metonymically highlights different components of the underlying schema.
- However, the same polysemy can occur with root conversions and suffixations, which speaks in favor of a unified account.
- For the syntactic NI, Gaeta's approach seems to be convincing: The NI focalizes the internal dynamics of the event expressed by the verb, where required including detelicization.

⇒ **But:**

Can Gaeta's description be confirmed with concrete corpus data, i.e. from a usage-based point of view?

3. The use of syntactic NIs and suffixations in newspapers

Italian syntactic NI - suffixation doublets and triplets

- comparison of
 - It. DET + *aggravare* vs. DET + *aggravamento*
‘aggravate’ ‘aggravation’
 - It. DET + *proliferare* vs. DET + *proliferazione*
‘proliferate’ ‘proliferation’
 - It. DET + *avanzare* vs. DET + *avanzamento* vs. DET + *avanzata*
‘advance’ ‘advance(ment)’
- corpus: TWIC, subcorpus *Corriere della sera* 1997

Observations

1. Some doublets indeed seem to display the difference described by Gaeta (just like in 6 and 7), but
2. Other doublets or triplets refer to different semantic domains. Therefore, the difference in conceptualization is less pronounced:

(10) <hit hitnr=2> Porri, macchie scure, nei: con **l' avanzare** degli anni fioriscono sulla pelle diverse imperfezioni.

'Warts, black spots, liver spots: in the course of the years various imperfections sprout on the skin'

⇒ time, age (58%), 86% with a *con*-PP: beginning lexicalization?

(11) <hit hitnr=3> Con **l' avanzamento** dei lavori [...], il nostro paese non ha avuto più pace.

'With the progress of the works [...], our village hasn't found peace any more'

⇒ progress of work or career (64%)

(12) <hit hitnr=19> Il tentativo del presidente è di fermare l'
avanzata dei ribelli guidati da Laurent Kabilia [...]

'The president's attempt is to stop the advance of the rebels guided by Laurent
Kabilia [...]'

⇒ military advance (26%), used metaphorically (44%)

3. Sometimes, syntactic NI and suffixation are used in exactly the same context. In these cases, the variation seems to be stylistically motivated rather than expressing a conceptual difference, compare:

(13) <hit hitnr=3> Voci di **un aggravarsi** delle condizioni del 92enne padre delle riforme.

'Rumors about an aggravation of the state of the 92-year-old father of the reforms'

(14) <hit hitnr=2> Nuove voci e smentite su **un aggravamento** delle condizioni di salute di Deng Xiaoping.

'New rumors and denials of an aggravation of the state of health of Deng Xiaoping'

and:

- (15) <hit hitnr=6> **L' avanzare** della colata di acqua mista a fango può mettere a repentaglio non solo la viabilità, ma anche isolare abitazioni e ostruire il torrente Nizza.

'The flowing of the water stream mixed with mud can put at stake not only the usability of the roads, but also isolate dwellings and block the Nizza creek.'

- (16) <hit hitnr=1> **L' avanzata** della colata di acqua mista a fango non solo potrebbe ostacolare la viabilità pubblica, ma anche isolare abitazioni e ostruire il torrente Nizza.

'The flowing of the water stream mixed with mud could not only hamper the usability of the roads, but also isolate dwellings and block the Nizza creek.'

⇒ In concrete language use, other language internal or external factors, such as differentiation w.r.t. semantic domains or stylistic variation, can override the conceptual difference between bounded and unbounded nominalizations.

⇒ challenge for Gaeta's theory or general problem of corpus data?

4. Conclusion and outlook

- ⇒ The Romance lexicalized NI (type Fr. *dire_N*)
 - has undergone a bounding process and typically manifests various metonymic extensions.
 - shows a behavior that is parallel to other (Romance or English) deverbal nominalizations, be they conversions or suffixations.
- ⇒ The Romance “syntactic” NI (type It. *nuotare_N*) is unbounded and focusses the internal dynamics of the verb meaning.
- ⇒ However, in concrete language use, the conceptual difference between syntactic NIs and bounded nominalizations becomes blurred by language internal or external factors.
- ⇒ More thorough studies are needed in order to determine if this observation results from the use of corpus data:
- ⇒ Are experimental data better suited to grasp the subtleties?

**Thank you for your
attention**

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Appendix

(30)

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ICLC 12

June 26th, 2013

(17) <hit hitnr=37> I rivestimenti vinilici sono sconsigliati perché (...) ricoprono le pareti di una pellicola non traspirante che favorisce (...) **il proliferare** di microorganismi e batteri .

'Vinyl coatings are not advisable because they (...) cover walls with a non-transparent film that favors (...) the proliferating of micro-organisms and bacteria.'

(18) <hit hitnr=44> ottimo terreno per **la proliferazione** di muffe e microorganismi

'optimal ground for the proliferation of fungi and micro-organisms'

background information on TWIC

- Corriere della Sera Archivio elettronico su CD-Rom 1997
(c) RCS Editori-Quotidiani 1998
- Specials:
 - no differentiation between accents: all combinations vowel+apostrophe have been converted to grave (àèìòù)
 - no acute accents in this corpus
- **35.216.556 words**
- XML format and pos tagging may 2005

background information on TWIC

number of occurrences:

- DET + aggravare: 17 vs. DET + aggravamento: 26
- DET + proliferare: 37 vs. DET + proliferazione: 48
- DET + avanzare: 24 vs. DET + avanzamento: 56 vs.
DET + avanzata: 105

- continuum integrating NIs, root conversions and suffixations with their different meanings:

N				V
concr. obj.	abstr. obj.	manner	action	synt. NI
Fr. <i>le manger</i>	It. <i>il sapere</i>	It. <i>il vestire</i>	Fr. <i>le rire</i>	It. <i>il nuotare</i>
It. <i>incarta-</i> <i>mento</i>	Fr. <i>sentiment</i>	It. <i>porta-</i> <i>mento</i>	Fr. <i>enlève-</i> <i>ment</i>	Fr. <i>l'habiter</i>
It. <i>disegno</i>	Fr. <i>charge</i>	Fr. <i>accueil</i>	It. <i>nuoto</i>	
				lexicalization
[+ bound.]	[+ bound.]	[+ bound.]	[+ bound.]	[- bound.]
[- dyn.]	[- dyn.]	[+/- dyn.?]	[++ dyn.]	[++ dyn.]
[+ plur.]	[+ plur.]	[+ plur.]	[+/- plur.]	[- plur.]
[++ reified]	[+ reified]	[+ reified]	[+ reified]	[- reified]

(on the gradualness of reification cf. Schmid 2005: 170)