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When evaluative morphology, pluractionality and aspect get tangled up: A case study of French suffixed verbs

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Abstract

Pluractionality is "the phenomen[on] where a certain derivational morphological marking on a verb [...] indicates that the event denoted by this verb is, in some sense, pluralized: repeated in time, distributed in various locations, holds of many participants, etc." (Greenberg 2010). In French, evaluative suffixes, when joined to verbal bases to build derived verbs, often function as pluractionality markers (e.g., *mordre* 'bite', *mordiller* 'nibble, lit. bite off small bites several times'). This paper focuses on the relation between evaluation and aspect /pluractionality and shows that verbal evaluation involves a modification of the internal structure of the event expressed by the verb, which in turn has an influence on its lexical aspect, and on its argumental structure.

Key words: pluractionality, evaluative morphology, aspect

1. Introduction

Research on evaluative morphology usually reflects a wide range of values which are likely to be expressed by this type of process. To account for these meanings or meaning effects, one must place oneself at the boundary between several domains: aspect (iterative/frequentative, e.g., *mordiller* 'to nibble'), evaluation (diminutive/augmentative e.g., *nageoter* 'to swim poorly'), pragmatics (depreciative/meliorative/hypocoristic, e.g., *philosophailler* 'to philosophize about unimportant topics') (see for example Dressler & Barbaresi 1994, Dal 1997, Grandi 2002, Fradin 2003, Fradin & Montermini 2009). The primary goal of this paper is to analyze evaluative deverbal verbs formed by suffixation in order to understand the relationship between evaluation and aspect. Two main factors account for this relationship: (a) evaluative morphology enables us to create, among others, iterative (or frequentative) meanings, and (b) the adjunction of an evaluative affix usually leads to the modification of the internal structure of the process expressed by the base. While French uses evaluative suffixation, other languages use other morphological processes, mainly reduplication and apophony. The variety of ways in which these

processes affect the internal structure of the process has also been theorized by means of the notion "pluractionality", which will also be addressed in this paper.

The paper is organized in three main sections. In the first section, we present the properties of affixal evaluative morphology and emphasize the extreme complexity of the data. We also show why an approach that employs evaluation is complementary to one that employs pluractionality. The second section provides a detailed analysis of a corpus of around 170 French deverbal evaluative verbs. The third section sheds light on the consequences of deverbal evaluation and pluractionality on lexical aspect and verb argument structure.

2. Characteristics of evaluative morphology

Evaluative morphology is understood as the range of processes (affixation, reduplication, etc.) which enable a system to build lexemes the meaning of which is that of an evaluation (diminution, augmentation, pejoration, melioration) of the base lexeme (see Mel'čuk 1994, Stump 1993, Grandi 2002, 2009, Fradin & Montermini 2009, among others). As a result, the constructed lexeme belongs usually to the same category as its base, a property which is sometimes called *homocategoriality* (cf. Scalise 1986, Dal 1994, Stump 1993, Corbin & Temple 1994. For an opposite view, see Delhay 1999).

In French, evaluative morphology is relatively undeveloped, unlike in other languages, such as, for instance, Italian and Russian. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive of a statement such as the Italian example given in (1). [The example is drawn from Fradin (2003: 177), who is based on Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994).]

(1) Oggi mangiamo l'ov-etto & la carn-ina.
today we eat the egg-DIM & the meat-DIM

It would be possible to use, instead of a morphological formation, which seems quite unnatural (*??Aujourd'hui mangeons l'oeuvet et la viandette*), the adjunction of the adjective *petit* 'small' plus the possessive determiner: *Aujourd'hui, mangeons notre petit oeuf et notre petite viande* 'Today we are going to eat our little egg and our little piece of meat'. Moreover, whereas in French evaluative morphology concerns only major categories (noun, verb and adjective), in other languages evaluative affixes can also be added to grammemes, and in particular to adverbs:

(2)	a.	Spanish:	*ahora*	'now' >	*ahorita*	'now' (informal)
	b.	Italian:	*male*	'bad' >	*maluccio*	'rather bad'

French does, however, possess a significant set of evaluative affixes: prefixes (*hyper-/hypo-, super-, sur-/sous-, extra-, ultra-*, etc.) and suffixes (*-et, -ot, -ard, -asse, -ille, -Vcher,*[1] *-ville*). Most of the work on French evaluative suffixation deals with the noun class (cf. among others Dal 1997, Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Fradin 2003). However, the way in which evaluation affects the lexicon is hardly addressed (see Plénat 2005 and Dal 1999, for a marginal discussion of the issue).[2]

2.1. Affixal evaluative morphology: Some basic characteristics

Firstly, evaluative affixes form paradigms: They can often be substituted by each other, hence it is possible to find certain strings of examples, especially when the distinction between the terms is not extremely marked: *traînasser / traînailler* 'to dawdle (over something)'; *baisoter / baisouiller* 'to give some little kisses'; *dormasser / dormichonner / dormitailler / dormoter* 'to sleep lightly / for a short period of time'; *pleuviner / pleuvioter / pleuvasser* 'to drizzle', etc. Moreover, there have been quite a few cases of affixal substitution. For example, between the 14th and the 17th centuries, the suffix *-ot* frequently replaced the suffix *-et* in derived verbs; cf. *cligneter* → *clignoter* 'to blink, to twinkle', *chucheter* → *chuchoter* 'to whisper', *causeter* → *causoter* 'to chat' (concerning the latter, the two forms are still attested by the *Trésor de la langue française* (hereafter *TLF*), but the second form is the only form to be used in Modern French).

Secondly, the lexeme formation rules are often heterocategorial, that is, they form lexemes that belong to a lexical category, which is different from that of the base. Moreover, they usually specify an input and an output category:

(3) a. *-age*: V → N: *masser / massage* 'to massage / massage', *laver / lavage* 'to wash / washing', *sevrer / sevrage* 'to wean / weaning'

b. *-ien*: N → A: *sartre / sartrien* 'Sartre' / 'Sartrian', *crâne / crânien* 'skull'/ 'cranial', *Brésil / brésilien* 'Brazil' / 'Brazilian'

[1] The V before *-cher* symbolizes any vowel, because the suffix can appear under different forms, e.g., *-ocher, -icher, -ucher*. The same convention is also used for *-Viller* (e.g., -ailler, -iller, -ouiller).

[2] In contrast with Tovena & Kihm (2008), we assume that the so-called *evaluative affixes* are real affixes and not *infra-morphs/submorphs*. Due to space limitations, we do not provide here an exhaustive justification of this issue. It should be noted that we rely on the analyses of Plénat (1999) and Roché (2008).

In contrast, the rules which form evaluative constructions possess the two reverse characteristics: (a) they accept several lexical categories as input, and (b) they form lexemes which belong to the same lexical category as their base (= homocategorial relationships). Some representative examples with the suffix *-et/te(er)* are given in (4a):

(4)	a.	N > N	*sac/sachet*	'bag'/'small bag'
		A > A	*gentil/gentillet*	'kind'/ 'kind enough'
		V > V	*voler/voleter*	'to fly'/'to flutter'
	b.	V > N	*tremper/trempette*	'to dip'/'to take a quick dip, to play in the shallow water'
		N > V	*bourse/boursicoter*	'stock exchange'/'to dabble in the stock exchange'

In the examples in (4b), the rule also forms deverbal nouns (*trempette* 'a quick dip') or denominal verbs (*boursicoter* 'to dabble on the stock exchange'). We still find the heterocategoriality of the other affixes but such cases are rare.

Thirdly, the evaluation, be it morphological (as in the examples just given) or non-morphological (as in French, with the adjunction of *petit* 'small') involves two crucial dimensions (cf. Mel'čuk 1994, Grandi 2002, taken up by Fradin & Montermini 2009): a measurative and an appreciative dimension, which can occur together.

a. The measurative evaluation involves the opposition 'small/big':

(5) a. small: *sac/sachet* 'bag/small bag', *histoire/historiette* 'story/little story'
b. big: *fort/extrafort* 'strong/extra-strong', *barque/barcasse* 'rowboat/big rowboat'

b. The appreciative evaluation, in its turn, involves the opposition 'good/bad':

(6) a. good: *sucer/sucette* 'to suck/lollipop', *soeur/soeurette* 'sister/little sister'
b. bad: VIN/VINASSE 'wine/cheap wine', CHAUFFEUR/CHAUFFARD 'driver/reckless driver'

The interpretation of a lexeme frequently contains the two dimensions. For instance, a lot of derived lexemes with the suffix *-et* refer to physically small entities, which are rather

positively connoted, e.g., *bleu/bleuet* 'blue/nice small blue flower/cornflower', *fenouil/fenouillette* 'fenel/brandy which has been corrected and distilled with fenel seed' (trad. from the *TLF*).[3]

Fradin (2003), Fradin & Montermini (2009) group together the meaning of the lexemes which are suffixed by *-et* in two main poles, the 'referential pole', which contains the set of interpretations involving the measurative dimension, and the 'speaker pole' which contains the set of interpretations involving the appreciative dimension (good, bad, but also pejorative, meliorative, hypocoristic). We will use this taxonomy here since it is convenient and quite transparent.[4]

The last characteristic of evaluative morphology is the following: evaluative affixes, which, as mentioned above, are not much differentiated, can nonetheless occur together at the same time:[5]

(7) *super-mega-génial* 'super-mega-great', *dormichonner* 'to sleep lightly, to kip'

2.2. Complexity of the data

Three main factors are responsible for the extreme complexity of the analysis of deverbal evaluatives: (a) the multiplicity of the interpretations, (b) the intermingling of different meanings, and (c) the variability of the interpretations according to the context. We briefly illustrate, in this section, each of these difficulties.

2.2.1. The multiplicity of interpretations

The so-called evaluative suffixes convey various values. A first set of examples is given in (8):

(8) a. Est-ce qu'il neige toujours? (...) il *neigeote*, chère madame! (...) Quelques vagues flocons dans l'air ! (*TLF*) 'Is it still snowing? (...) It's *snowing lightly*, dear Madam! (...) Some little snowflakes in the air!

b. Ses doigts étaient couronnés d'un bourrelet d'envies enflammées qu'il *mordillait* par intervalles et arrachait du bout des dents. (Web) 'His fingers

[3] Henceforth, when no particular indication is given, the definitions are taken from the *TLF*.

[4] It is possible to integrate in the speaker pole the connivance between the speaker and his/her interlocutor which Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994) talk about.

[5] On this topic, cf. Scalise (1986), Stump (1993), Bauer (1993), Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi (1994).

had inflammed hangnails which he was *nibbling* from time to time and tearing off with his teeth.'

c. Il *chroniquaille* dans une feuille de boulevard. (*TLF*) 'He sometimes writes (unimportant) chronicles in the local rag.'

Among the possible interpretations of these derived verbs, some are well described in the literature on evaluation:

- diminution: *neigeoter* in (8a), even if the concept itself is not very simple, since diminution can concern one or several parameters of the entity which is denoted by the base. Here, for example, the size and the density of the flakes, cf. on this point Fradin (2003) or Grandi (2002);
- iteration/frequentativity: *mordiller* in (8b) means, as attested in the *TLF*, 'to bite slightly several times'; this notion is well-known; cf. frequentative verbs in Latin.
- depreciation, as in (8c), where *chroniquailler* is pejorative and means 'to write (unimportant) chronicles once in a while'.
- augmentation and appreciation (namely, positive appreciation). Even if the augmentation interpretation is often mentioned in evaluative morphology, it is almost absent from the verbal lexicon in French. As far as the positive appreciation is concerned, we shall see that it is never the only interpretation of a verbal lexeme; rather, it is always associated with another interpretation. This is the case, for example, of the verbs *dormichonner* 'to sleep lightly' and *berçotter* 'to rock, to cradle a little bit', which have a hypocoristic value but the diminution is undoubtedly present.

In addition to these 'prototypical' and expected values, deverbal evaluatives express other values, which are listed in the works on pluractionality and which can be found in numerous languages (see among others Cusic 1981, Lasersohn 1995, Collins 2001, Van Geenhoven 2004, 2005, Wood 2007, Tovena & Kihm 2008, Greenberg 2010). Based on Cusic (1983), Greenberg (2010:119) defines pluractionality (or verbal plurality) as "the phenomena where a certain morphological marking on a verb (gemination, affixation, and many times partial or full reduplication) indicates that the event denoted by this verb is, in some sense, pluralized: repeated in time, distributed in various locations, holds of many participants, etc."[6] Greenberg lists the different values expressed by the pluractional verbs. We shall borrow from him certain denominations which correspond to possible

[6] We mainly rely on Greenberg because his paper puts into perspective some of the works which have been carried out in the domain of pluractionality, notably Cusic (1981), Lasersohn (1995) and Tovena & Kihm (2008).

glosses for certain French verbs. It is the case of the conative (= 'repetitive action which falls short of producing some desired result'), the incassative (= 'plurality of processes in which there is no attempt to do anything in particular, without any particular objective'), and the tentative (= 'the process is performed half-heartedly, with less effort than expected) interpretations. These values can all be associated with the speaker.

The examples from French in (10) illustrate some of these less canonical interpretations: *courailler* 'to run around' in (10a) denotes a process which is performed *dans tous les sens* 'in all directions' (the PP emphasizes this aspect of the incassative interpretation), and *causotter* in (10b) means 'to chat' (incassative interpretation); concerning *travailloter* (10d), it means 'to work half-heartedly, without putting much energy in the task which is being performed' (tentative value):

(10) a. Elle [une chienne] *couraillait* dans tous les sens. (Web)
'She [a dog] was *running here and there*.'

b. Après le déjeuner, on reçoit les lettres et les journaux, on lit, on *causotte*. (*TLFi*)
'After lunchtime, we receive letters and newspapers, we read, we *chatter/natter*.'

c. Elle se mit à faire cliqueter ses aiguilles tout en *mâchonnant* son chewing-gum. (*PR*)
'She began to knit while *carelessly chewing* her chewing-gum.'

d. En classe de terminale [...] ils «*travaillotent*», puis [...] deux mois avant l'examen, ils mettent soudain les bouchées doubles, travaillent comme jamais... (Web)
'When in the final year of high school [...] they work half-heartedly and then, [...] suddenly they study twice as hard and work as they never worked before...'

It seems that the three values which have been borrowed from works on pluractionality are better suited to account for the meaning of the verbs in the examples (10) than the more prototypical values, which have been mentioned before (iterativity, diminution etc.).

Even if evaluation and pluractionality are supposed to cover the same morphological and semantic facts, we argue that they should be complementary to each other. Indeed, a more thorough analysis shows that the overlapping of the two notions is

only partial: in the different languages, there are pluractional verbs which are not formed by evaluative morphology (e.g. in French *secouer* 'to shake', *frotter* 'to rub', *râper* 'to grate'), just like there exist verbs formed by evaluative morphology and which are not semantically pluralized, but merely pragmatically marked (e.g., *roupillonner* 'to nap, to grab a nap', *bavardocher* 'to prattle'; cf. section 2.2.2.) (See also Greenberg 2010, among others).

In addition to the multiplicity of the more or less canonical interpretations, two other phenomena further complicate the analysis: the intermingling of the meanings and the variability of the interpretations according to the context.

2.2.2. The intermingling of meanings

The intermingling of meanings refers to the accumulation of meanings in the same verb occurrence in a given context. The verbs *causotter* in (10b) and *mâchonner* in (10c) are representative: *causotter* combines the diminutive value (to talk about unimportant things) and the incassative value (to talk aimlessly); *mâchonner* associates the incassative value (to chew without no other objective, namely the swallowing of food, than the action of chewing), cf. *mâchonner du chewing-gum/un stylo* 'to chew chewing-gum/a pen' and the tentative value ('to chew carelessly').

2.2.3. The variability of the interpretations

The variability of the interpretations refers to the different values that can be conferred to the same lexeme in different contexts, a phenomenon which can be illustrated by *courailler* < *courir* 'to run' in (11):

(11) a. Q. [à propos d'un coureur]: Est-ce qu'il a repris ses entraînements? 'Has he resumed his training?'
R. Oh pour l'instant il couraille. (forged example)
'Well, for the time being he is just running lightly.'

b. Elle [une chienne] *couraillait* dans tous les sens, ... (Web)
'She [a dog] was *running around here and there*, [...]'

In (11a), *courailler* means that the runner has not yet regained his original level: he does not run as fast, as efficiently as before (conative and diminutive interpretations), whereas in (11b) the dog runs here and there, without any precise objective (incassative interpretation).

The complexity of the data, which is highlighted here, has already been discussed by researchers who work on evaluative morphology (for French, see Fradin 2003, among others) and on pluractionality. Indeed, Greenberg (2010: 125) notices: "The variability is witnessed not only cross-linguistically, many times within the same language, and even with the same pluractional marker." In order to identify these different values / interpretations, one should first of all set up tests which would enable us to objectivize our intuitions; secondly, one should systematically work on the basis of these contextualized uses.

3. Analysis of the suffixed verbs

According to the analysis proposed by Fradin & Montermini (2009) on *-et* suffixation, deverbal evaluatives can be linked to the referential pole, in which case the measurative dimension is involved, or to the speaker pole, in which case the axiological dimension is involved, or to both poles at the same time. This is at least what stands out from the analysis of a corpus of 171 verbs derived on a verbal base with one of the following suffixes, which are usually considered to be evaluative: *-ard(er), -ass(er), -et(er), -ill(er), -in(er), -on(ner), -ot(ter), -Vch(er)* and -V*ill(er)*. The 171 evaluative derived lexemes have been taken from the *TLF* and are divided up the following way according to their suffix:

Suffix	Number of (de)verbal evaluatives found in the *TLF*
-ot(er)	63
-Vill(er)	53
-on(ner)	15
-Vch(er)	13
-ass(er)	10
-et(er)	9
-ill(er)	4
-in(er)	3
-ard(er)	1
Total	**171**

Table 1: Quantitative composition of corpus data

The vitality of the evaluative suffixation is well-known, so the data this research is based upon should be seen rather as a sample of deverbal evaluatives. The spontaneous attested forms are certainly much more numerous than what is found in dictionaries (cf. Roché 2008 on evaluative morphology and non-conventional morphology and the vitality of this type of morphology; see also Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994, Grandi 2009).

In order to analyze these evaluative deverbals, we have coded the aforementioned values for each verb present in the corpus, that is, the diminutive, iterative / frequentative, conative, tentative, incassative and depreciative values, as well as the degree of informality (i.e., the membership or the non-membership to an informal register). The table below gives a more precise idea of the importance of the values expressed by the derived verbs with each of the evaluative suffixes:

Value / Suffix	diminutive	iterative	conative	tentative	incasative	depreciative	informal
-ot(er)	54	35	1	2	1	2	61
-Vill(er)	41	21	0	10	9	32	53
-on(ner)	7	3	1	2	1	2	14
-Vch(er)	2	3				4	14
-ass(er)	2	2		1	3	9	10
-et(er)	5	5					9
-ill(er)	4	2					2
-in(er)	2	2					2
Total	**101**	**73**	**2**	**15**	**14**	**49**	**169**

Table 2: Repartition of the coded values according to the suffixes

One can easily infer from Table 2 that diminution, followed by iteration and depreciation, are the three most frequently attested values. Another interesting observation is that the evaluative suffixes in question display different semantic profiles. As a matter of fact, verbs suffixed with *-ot(er)* and *-on(er)* have a diminutive meaning, unlike *-ass(er)*, which forms verbs with depreciative meaning. Finally, in verbs with *-Viller(er)*, the opposition of the values is much less clear-cut.

Lastly, the value 'informal' is very frequent and linked to the attitude of the speaker vis-à-vis the enunciation itself. A good example is the affective language used with children. In (12a), the locating is not made with respect to a referential norm, but with respect to an enunciative norm: the presence of the evaluative marks pragmatically the gap between the way one talks to children, close friends or relatives, and the 'normal', somewhat more formal, way of talking:

(12) a. Donne-moi ta petite main, ma chérie.
'Give me your little hand, darling.'
b. Et pourquoi elle râlichonne, la petite Clémence?
'Why is little Clémence grumbling?'

This value may appear alone (rarely with verbs), or associated with other values, as in example (12b): *râlichonner* can be used only if "Clémence" does not grumble too much.

4. Some semantic and syntactic consequences of evaluative suffixation

The analysis of our corpus quite clearly shows two tendencies, one semantic in nature and one syntactic: (a) a lot of evaluative derived verbs become either atelic or less telic than their base, and (b) some direct transitive verbs yield intransitive evaluative derived verbs. These tendencies are significant since the opposite never holds.

4.1. Evaluative suffixation and lexical aspect

In works on pluractionality, it is generally acknowledged that this phenomenon implies atelicity (cf. van Geenhoven 2004, 2005). We used Vendler's (1957)[7] well-known aspectual distinctions and examined the relationship between evaluative suffixation (which in French often leads to the pluralization of the process/es) and lexical aspect, with a double objective in order to: (a) determine which type of process better lends itself to evaluation and/or pluralization, and (b) observe their effects on the lexical aspect of the derived verb. Table 3 summarizes the obtained results.

Base verb		Derived verb			
		states	activites	accomplishments	achievements
states	11	10	1		
activities	138		138		
accomplishments	8		5	3	
achievements	14		8		6
Total	171	10	152	3	6

Table 3: Aspect of the base and the derived word

[7] Vendler (1957) distinguishes two types of telic processes, accomplishments (*cross*) and achievements (*die*), and two types of non-telic processes, states (*know*) and activities (*eat*). Such distinctions, although rather general, are sufficient for the purposes of the present work, hence we will not elaborate further.

First of all, we can see that the four Vendlerian types of processes can be concerned by evaluative suffixation. However, evaluative suffixation has obviously affinities with atelic processes: most of the base verbs are indeed activity verbs. Moreover, the wide majority of constructed verbs (163/171) denotes atelic processes, namely activities (*courailler* 'to run around') and states (*frisotter* 'to frizz a little'). The suffixation can thus transform telic verbs (accomplishments and achievement) in atelic verbs (states or activities), but the reverse is not true. This possibility can be illustrated by verbs pairs such as *mordre* 'to bite' (+telic) / *mordiller* 'to nibble' (-telic), *piquer* 'to sting' (+telic) / *picoter* 'to tingle' (-telic), *tromper* 'to cheat on' (+telic) / *trompailler* 'to cheat on several times' (-telic) where one observes the transformation of three telic verbs into atelic verbs (in each cases, activity verbs).

Interestingly, evaluative suffixation sometimes does not lead to any transformation but rather reduces the telicity of the base verb. Among the evaluative derived verbs which seem to be less transitional than their base, we can mention the movement verbs *courailler* 'to run around' and *sautiller* 'to hop', formed from *courir* 'to run' and *sauter* 'to jump', respectively. Even if these verbs describe atelic processes of the activity type, it is well-known that they can also have a telic reading (cf. Kopecka 2009) as in (13a) and (13b), where they express a transition of a spatial type:

(13) a. Dès qu'elle a vu la voiture de son papa, elle a couru dans le jardin pour lui dire bonjour.
'As soon as she saw her dad's car, she ran into the garden to greet him.'

b. Son chien a sauté dans l'eau en 2 secondes.
'Her dog jumped into water in 2 seconds.'

If we try to use *courailler* and *sautiller* in the same contexts, the result is not as good, propably due to the loss of telicity because of the suffixation:

(14) a. ??Dès qu'elle a vu la voiture de son papa, elle a couraillé dans le jardin pour lui dire bonjour.
??'As soon as she saw her dad's car, she ran around into the garden to greet him.'

b. ??Son chien a sautillé dans l'eau en deux secondes.
'Her dog hopped into the water in 2 seconds.'

Courailler and *sautiller* thus hardly acquire a telic reading, even when combined with prepositional phrases which express a goal to achieve. Unlike their respective bases, *courailler* and *sautiller* essentially express atelic processes, as in examples in (15):

(15) a. Les enfants couraillaient dans le jardin.
'The children were running here and there in the garden.'
b. Un chien sautillait dans l'eau.
'A dog was hopping in the water.'

In addition to this first observation, if we try to measure the degree of affinity between the iterative value and the lexical aspect, things are even more clear-cut. Taking the 72 verbs for which we decoded an iterative value, we thus get the following:

Base verbs		Derived verbs	
		Activities	States
Activities	61	60	1
Accomplishments	4	4	
Achievements	6	6	
States	1		1
Total	72	70	2

Table 4: Iteration and lexical aspect

When the interpretation is an iterative one, the derived verb always expresses an atelic process, which is formed on a telic (*mordre* 'to bite'/*mordiller* 'to nibble') or an atelic (*pleuvoir* 'to rain'/*pleuvioter* 'to drizzle') verb. Such a result may seem surprising, yet it can easily be explained:

- With respect to the derived verb, evaluative suffixation can lead to internal pluralization. This means that the process denoted by the evaluative derived verb is subdivided into a plurality of sub-processes; so it is homogeneous, hence atelic.
- With respect to the base, non-telic processes are mainly associated to pluralization because they refer to a set of identical action units, unlike telic processes which are composed of at least three phases: an initial state A, the transition itself and a resultative state B (cf. among others Vet 1994). The processes with a complex internal structure (achievements and accomplishments) are thus less likely to undergo pluralization.

- The fact that verbs denoting telic processes can nonetheless be the subject of evaluative suffixation can be accounted for by Cusic's (1981) connectivity constraint: the reiterated (sub-)processes must be close, and the confusion of the boundaries between the sub-processes leads to their fusion into a single process which is homogeneous.[8] Again, it is worth noticing that achievements – which have a simpler structure in that their realization is reduced to only one phase, namely the transition – lead more frequently to the formation of derived evaluatives.

The fact that certain derived evaluatives exhibit a smaller degree of telicity than their base verb thus seems to be a direct consequence of the fact that evaluative suffixes modify the internal structure of the process.

4.2. Evaluative derivation and transitivity

Our data show another interesting correlation between atelicity and intransitivity in deverbal evaluatives.[9] More specifically, among the 171 listed verbs, 49 are transitive and 15 have transitive and intransitive uses. All other verbs (approx. 67%) are intransitive. On that subject, the last two authors note: "when the semantics of the verb denotes an atelic activity, what is salient is the unfolding of the activity itself (...) which is expressed by the verb, rather than its object" (p. 3).

Given the above, it is not surprising to see that evaluative suffixation is sometimes accompanied by a change in transitivity: certain direct transitive verbs (16a) and certain verbs which can have transitive and intransitive uses (16b) may yield intransitive verbs:

(16) a. Tr→Intr: *écrire* 'to write' / *écrivasser* 'to write but not very well', *tâter* 'to feel' / *tâtonner* 'to feel around', *MANGER* 'to eat' / *mangeailler* 'to nibble', *se disputer* 'to quarrel/to argue' / *disputailler* 'to quibbel'

b. Tr/Intr→Intr: *cligner* 'to blink' / *clignoter* 'to twinkle, to blink', *causer* 'to chat' / *causoter* 'to , *vivre* 'to live' / *vivoter* 'to get by', *discuter* 'to discuss' / *discutailler* 'to quibble'

[8] In such a case, Cusic (1981: 67) talks about "event internal pluractionality": "a single bounded event on a single occasion consists of internal phases" (e.g., *to nibble, to hop*). It is opposed to "event external pluractionality": "a single bounded event (internally plural or not) is repeated on a single occasion" or "a single bounded event is repeated on different occasions", such as in the case of *refaire* 'to do again'. On this topic, cf. also Tovena (2010).

[9] The relationship between intransitivity and atelicity is well-known in the literature (see, among others, François 1999, Givón 1984, Lamiroy & Charolles 2008).

The deletion of the internal argument of the base enables to focus the evaluation on the process itself. The nature and/or the realization mode of the process are necessarily affected by this change and, as a result of this modification, such verbs are often interpreted as expressing manner. So, we may take over Lamiroy & Charolles' (2008: 3) "principle of semantic saturation", which authors make use of in order to account for the frequent intransitivity of speech verbs. This "principle predicts a reverse relationship between syntactic transitivity and semantic specification: the more specified the semantics of a verb, the more lexically saturated and the more intransitive it would be. In other words, the more the verb specifies, for example, the manner of speaking, the more it would have a tendency not to profile the object". The principle of semantic saturation is illustrated by several pairs of examples; a representative one is *dire* 'to say' (tr.) vs. *bégayer* 'to stammer'/*grasseyer*/*chevroter* 'to quaver' (intr.). As the signifié of evaluative verbs is semantically more complex and specified than the base verb, they naturally tend towards intransitivity.

5. Conclusion

In the domain of constructional morphology, evaluation and aspect are closely related to one another in the verbal domain. This is a well-known observation, but the relationship between the two notions is more complex than usually assumed, namely that the diminution often implies iteration. Such a statement, however, is too simplistic: iteration is just one of the possible interpretations of the evaluative derived verbs. Indeed, the internal pluralization of the processes, which is exhibited by evaluative suffixation, implies different values: the iterative, but also the conative, incassative and tentative values. Furthermore, it is necessary to preserve the distinction between evaluation and pluractionality because pluractionality is not always associated with evaluation, which is the case when there is simple diminution (e.g., *pleuvioter*) or mere pragmatic marking (*traînasser*).

In the case of verbs, the tight link between evaluation and aspect is because the internal pluralization of the process, whatever its form, can refer to a process which does not conform in all respects to the process denoted by the base (this is the very role of evaluative morphology) whatever the category of the base (V, N or A) or of the derived lexeme (ibid.)

With respect to lexical aspect, what characterizes the base verbs and especially the derived verbs is atelicity. We showed that this atelicity could function as a constraint on the bases and as a meaning effect of the diminution on the derived verbs: atelic processes,

which are homogeneous, indeed pluralize easily. The research on our corpus has allowed us to verify the link between atelicity and intransitivity, which we accounted for by means of Lamiroy & Charolles' (2008) principle of semantic saturation.

Finally, we emphasized that the wide majority of deverbal evaluatives express a specific unfolding mode of the process denoted by the base. It is, however, surprising to observe that the notion of manner is hardly ever mentioned with respect to these deverbals in the literature on evaluative morphology or pluractionality. The question of the presence of a manner component in the meaning of many of these verbs should be raised in order to account not only for the meaning of the verbs formed by means of evaluative morphology, but also for the concept of manner itself. The relationship between evaluation and manner is a different topic which is addressed in another study (see Stosic & Amiot 2011).

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