Competing affixes as aspectual morphemes: The case of deadjectival nominalizations

Introduction. The phenomenon of deriving sets of two or more (near) synonymous words from the same stem with different affixes is rather common crosslinguistically (Booij 1977, Scalise 1984). The relation between rival morphological processes can be complex and very diverse (see e.g. van Marle 1985, 1986) and raises the following concern. Given the Blocking Effect (Aronoff 1976) and that competing affixes regularly differ regarding their productivity and distribution (Corbin 1984, van Marle 1985), the occurrence of doublets or triplets of this type is in principle predicted to be marginal. This paper focuses on one striking counter-example to this prediction, namely deadjectival nominalizations in French. Our main hypothesis is that the most productive deadjectival suffixes in French, namely *-ité*, *-erie* and *-isme* functionally differ from each other in terms of their respective aspectual values: they play with respect to the adjectival stem a role similar to inflectional aspectual morphemes (the productivity of each affix was estimated through an automatic extraction of neologisms derived from a list of 1000 adjectival stems performed with Webbafix (Hathout & Tanguy 2002)).

Aspectual readings of adjectival stems. As is well known, adjectival sentences have either a permanent (individual level, IL) reading and a temporary (stagel level, SL) one. Tense and aspect morphology disambiguates: (1) *Oscar est*-PRES. *bizarre* 'Oscar is bizarre' preferrably receives the IL reading, and (2) *Oscar a été*-PERF. *bizarre* 'Oscar was bizarre' the SL reading. By default, (2) is interpreted as denoting an occurrential manifestation of the quality denoted by (1), i.e. the occurrential state Oscar is in while performing an action (*Oscar was bizarre when he did x*). As Geuder (2000) among others signals, (2) is semantically different from (3) *Oscar a agi bizarrement* 'Oscar acted in a bizarre way' – in other words *être bizarre* does not have an eventive reading (rather, it presupposes the occurrence of the action manifesting the occurential state, cf. also Barker 2002).

Aspectual reading of deadjectival nouns (DNs). In addition to the dictionary word *bizarrerie*, *bizarrité* and *bizarrisme* are regularly produced by native speakers. The three nominalisations do not have the same range of aspectual readings: *sa bizar**rerie*** nominalizes preferrably (3) or (2) but can also correspond to (1); *sa bizar**rité*** nominalizes preferrably (1), but can also express (2) (and marginally (3)); *son bizar**risme*** only nominalizes (1). Since this paradigm can be replicated for many of DNs, it suggests that the three deadjectival affixes contribute in a different and competing way to the aspectual composition of the N which contains them: *-erie* DNs primarily have the eventive reading, but can also have a stative one; *-isme* DNs univoqually have the IL reading; *-ité* DNs prefer the IL reading, but the other two can also be derived. There are several pieces of evidence in favour of this claim. **1.** While *-erie* DNs can all pluralize without exception, *-isme* DNs cannot (except on a marked subkind reading), cf. *bizarreries/*bizarrismes*. This is expected, since contrary to permanent properties, events easily pluralize. *-ité* DNs sometimes *require* the plural to get the eventive reading, which suggests that this reading is derived with this suffix (while it is basic for *-erie*) **2.** *-erie* DNs always embed under *faire*, while *-isme* DNs never do (*Il a fait une bizarrerie/*un bizarrisme* 'He did an eccentricity/ a bizarrism'); facts vary depending on the stem for *-ité* DNs (and again the plural is sometimes required). **3.** *-erie* DNs are all acceptable with perception verbs, while no *-isme* DNs are (*J'ai assisté à sa bizarrerie/*à son bizarrisme* 'I witness his eccentricity/ his bizarrism'); again, data vary with *-ité* DNs.

Analysis. Given that (i) *-erie* DNs have the eventive reading (3) that the adjectival root cannot have, and that (2) *-erie* creates eventive Ns out of individual denoting stems as well (e.g. *ânerie* 'rubbish/ stupidity' > *âne* 'donkey', c.f. Drapeau & Boulanger 1982), we assume that it is the suffix itself that introduces the event argument of the N. We propose that *-erie* can be decomposed into the infinitival morpheme *-er,* that brings about event implications, and the nominalizer *-ie*. From this perspective, *-erie* nouns primarily denote events, as they contain an event introducing functional projection in their morpho-syntactic make-up (4a). The other two nominal affixes do not embed such a projection:

(4) a. [Adj stem[$_{Inf}$er [$_N$ ie]]] b.   [Adj stem[$_N$ isme]]]   c. [Adj stem [$_N$ ité]]]

While *-ité* is aspectually underspecified (and prefers the IL reading, because it is the default reading of the adjectival root), *-isme* has its own aspectual feature, namely a PERM feature. This explains why *-isme* DNs are interpreted as permanent properties and resist pluralization. On this view, nominalizing deadjectival affixes classify the stems they apply to in terms of aspectual oppositions.

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