

## French verbalization with *-iser* and *-ifier*: uncertainty on meaning and form

**Issue:** Interaction between morphology, phonology and semantics leads to consider word formation mechanisms as the result of constraints, which entail the meaning of complex units to be disambiguated only in context. Under such conditions, choosing a base/affix combination is not so much a question of category and semantics selection, as a tendency due to user internalized habits. This claim is illustrated in French by a double uncertainty case, that can be found in several languages ([15] for French, [3], [4], [10] and [11] for English, [14] for Spanish): the *-iser* and *-ifier* verbs formation. There, the suffix chosen to derive such verbs, from noun or adjective bases is determined neither by semantico-categorical base properties, nor by the derived verb semantic type: rather, *-iser* and *-ifier* verbs often belong to the same semantic pattern, and select the same base types ([8]). Forming complex verbs comes to solve two questions: the former has to do with the verb base semantic value (does it refer to an individual or to a property), the latter deals with the suffix choice (*-iser* or *-ifier*).

**Methodology:** Within a corpus made up with 789 *-iser* verbs and 151 *-ifier* verbs recorded in the TLF dictionary, we see that the choice of each affix is generally semantically and/or categorically determined (Table). Mainly, *-iser* forms transitive verbs (6 and 7 rarely occur), which instantiate various semantic pattern. When the adjective base ends with *-ique*, be it simple (5) or complex (9), the verb construction requires the *-ique* sequence to be truncated, for dissimilative reasons ([12], [13]). When the *-ique* ending adjective is denominal ([2]), the context is crucial to determine the base category, and thus the verb meaning (8, 9). The opposite phenomenon is illustrated in (10, 11): when they are used as *-iser* verb bases, both the noun (10) and the related denominal adjective (11) take the same form, that of the adjective ([9]). The *-ifier* suffix offers syntactic variability: verbs are either transitive (2) or intransitive (6). From other viewpoints, *-ifier* is more constraint than *-iser*. The number of verb semantic patterns is smaller (2)-(6), and the verb base is never categorically ambiguous. Finally, in TLF, *-ifier* keeps exclusiveness on monosyllabic bases ([6] for the same phenomenon in English), and on those whose stem ends with a sibilant (3)-(5) ([5]). The content of real, Web extracted data ([7]), show a different distribution: *-iser* tends to hegemony, which makes *-ifier* become almost unproductive ([1]). We propose a pragmatic-like explanation to this discrepancy. The speaker has two almost identical concurrent affixes at his/her disposal, and prefers the one that is the most represented in the lexicon of recorded verbs, produces the less semantic precise derivatives, and is able to select rather underspecified bases. The consequence is that even the strongest formal constraints (sibilant endings, monosyllabic base) do not block the choice of *-iser* to create novel verb forms.

	<b>X: N or A</b>	<b>Xiser/Xifier</b>	<b>Semantic pattern</b>	<b>transitivity</b>
1	<i>hôpital</i> 'hospital'	<i>hospitaliser</i>	X put w into a N	trans.
2	<i>ion</i> 'ion?' / <i>or</i> 'gold'	<i>ioniser</i> / <i>aurifier</i>	X provide w with a N	trans
3	<i>chloroforme</i> 'chloroform' / <i>croix</i> 'cross'	<i>chloroformiser</i> / <i>crucifier</i>	X uses N on w	trans
4	<i>cristal</i> 'crystal' / <i>os</i> 'bone'	<i>cristalliser</i> / <i>ossifier</i>	X turns (w) into a N	trans/unacc
5	<i>dynamique</i> 'dynamic' / <i>opaque</i> 'opaque'	<i>dynamiser</i> / <i>opacifier</i>	X makes w become A	trans.
6	<i>algèbre</i> 'algebra' / <i>nid</i> 'nest'	<i>algébriser</i> / <i>nidifier</i>	X does/performs N	unerg.
7	<i>agonie</i> 'death throes'	<i>agoniser</i>	X is at N	unacc.
8	<i>aristocrate</i> 'aristocrat'	<i>aristocratiser</i>	X turns w into a N	trans.
9	<i>aristocratique</i> 'aristocratic'	<i>aristocratiser</i>	X makes w become A	trans.
10	<i>province</i> 'province'	<i>provincialiser</i>	X submit w to N	trans.
11	<i>provincial</i> 'provincial'	<i>provincialiser</i>	X makes w become A	trans.

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