



Der Sonderforschungsbereich 991 "Die Struktur von Repräsentationen in Sprache, Kognition und Wissenschaft" lädt herzlich ein zum Vortrag von

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French 2nd group verbs as an inflectional & lexical class: an aspectual survey

The present investigation aims at showing that so-called 2nd group verbs in French (an inflectionally well-defined class of some 350 verb roots, depending on dialectal/sub-language factors) are a semantically coherent lexical class, on top of being a morphologically coherent inflectional class of verbs. Capitalizing on existing resources such as the *Flexique* (Bonami, Caron, & Plancq, to appear) and *Devoir Conjugal* (Beaudoin, 2001) verbal morphological databases, an extensive (though not comprehensive from a dialectal/sociolectal point of view) database of some 350 second group verbs was constructed. And from this database, a detailed lexical survey was conducted, yielding some 434 semantically distinct lexical entries, associating each separate, arbitrarily conventionalized meaning (i.e. not produced by means of regular polysemy, metaphor or metonymy), with a (i) a fine-grained aspectual characterization and (ii) a certain amount of morpho-syntactic annotation (morphological class of the root, theta-grid, and other relevant information).

On the basis of quantitative results garnered through this survey, it will be argued that the inflectional thematic augment *-i(ss)-* (with variants *-i-* and *-iss-*) characterizing the class, and which is derived from the Latin verbal affix *-esc-*, acted (and might still act) as a morphological, grammatical ‘flag’ within a lexical semantic convergence process (and probably was a verbal affix at some early OF stage, with an aspectual role not unrelated to its Latin ancestor). This puts *-iss-* in some ‘gray zone’ of the semantics/morphology interface: while it almost certainly is ‘morphologized’ (Joseph & Janda, 1988) and does not appear to contribute a meaning of its own, cf. e.g. (Allen, 1995; Detges, 2004; Klausenburger, 2000; Ramat & Hopper, 1998), merely calling it ‘bleached’ misses its global form/meaning function, namely that the ‘stem extender’ *-i(ss)-* serves as a formal marking helping reinforcing the semantic convergence exhibited by 2nd group verbs. The survey reveals that 2nd group verbs, while pointing to a remarkably complex and subtle set of aspectual meanings, overwhelmingly tend to cluster around two aspectual meanings,

namely telic atomic meanings (i.e., achievement-like verbs), and gradual change-of-state telic verbs (i.e. accomplishment-like verbs, with and without incremental theme arguments). As an aside, some interesting consequences for formal accounts of aspect *qua* scalarity-based theories will be discussed.

It will be argued that such a ‘gray zone’ situation is in fact, rather common in Romance. (Rainer, 2005) thus shows how certain Latin affixes have regrammaticalized (‘exaptated’) as semantically novel derivational affixes. And while they did not always achieve a straightforward compositional semantic function, they nevertheless act like formal pointers towards some converging meanings. This combined *flectional* and *lexical semantic* basis of 2nd group verbs will also be shown to be reminiscent of phenomena found outside the Romance area (Caudal, Dench, & Roussarie, 2012).

Finally, by showing how a former morphological grammatical phenomenon can survive as an almost (but not quite) covert driving force in lexicalization processes, I intend to present the lexicon-morphology interface and lexical classes with a morpho-semantic basis as a major, grammatically organized locus for language change – against impoverished views of the lexicon in the *Distributed Morphology* style.

References

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Studierende und andere Interessierte sind herzlich willkommen.