

# Spatial Stative Constructions and Nominalization

Bernard Fradin

*Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle, CNRS & Paris-Diderot Paris 7*

1. **The issue** Ordinary stative verbs, which are [–dynamic] in the Vendlerian classification of predicates, can be nominalized without any problem, as (1b) shows. On the other hand, nominalizations based on stative spatial verbs are unpalatable in French in most cases, as attested by (2b) and (3b) (cf. also Kerleroux 2004).

- (1) a. *Mary connaît le théorème de Pythagore.*  
'Mary knows Pythagora's theorem'  
b. *La connaissance du théorème de Pythagore s'avère indispensable.*  
'Knowledge of Pythagora's theorem proves to be indispensable'
- (2) a. *La mer Baltique borde l'Allemagne au nord.*  
'Baltic sea borders Germany at North'  
b. *\*Le bordement de l'Allemagne (par la Baltique) au nord. . .*  
'The bordering of Germany (by Baltic sea) at North'
- (3) a. *La maison comporte une terrasse.*  
'The house includes a terrace'  
b. *\*Le comportement d'une terrasse est apprécié.* (Kerleroux 2004)  
'The inclusion of a terrace is appreciated'

The ungrammaticality of (3b) sharply contrasts with the acceptability of (4b), although *comportement* is formed upon the same morphological verb *COMPORTER* in both cases. As for (2b), it contrasts with example (5b), where *contournement* is the nominalization of a V which occurs in the same type of spatial construction as verb *border* (cf. (6a), §2 below).

- (4) a. *Elle s'est bien comportée à ton égard.*  
'She behaved well toward you'  
b. *Son comportement à ton égard fut exemplaire.* (Kerleroux 2004)  
'Her behaviour toward you was a model'
- (5) a. *La voie ferrée contourne le lac.*  
'The railway skirts the lake'  
b. *Le contournement du lac par la voie ferrée rallonge le voyage.*  
'The skirting of the lake by the railway makes the journey longer'

I will argue that these contrasts can be accounted for if we assume (i) that derivational morphology operates upon lexemes, (ii) that the meaning of lexemes is dependent on the construction they occur in, and (iii) that nominalization has to be somehow connected to dynamicity (Minimal Dynamicity Hypothesis cf. §2).

**2. The proposed account** In its provisional form, the MDH says that the argument of a nominalization (= Davidson's *e* argument) (a) must denote an event or (b) must be involved in a relationship emanating from a sentient being. Clause (a) covers all cases where the predicate is [+dynamic] and passes the tests discriminating events (Godard and Jayez 1993). If we discard lexical gaps, nominalization is always possible in this case e.g. (aa) *Les tomates mûrissent* 'Tomatoes are riping', (ab) *Le mûrissement des tomates* 'The riping of tomatoes'. Clause (b) covers cases where the predicate is stative and aims at capturing what seems to be a very weak form of agentivity (cf. Dowty 1991). It allows nominalizations such as (1b) insofar as the NP0's referent in (1a) has a notion of what the NP1 denotes. Transitive spatial stative verbs do not share this property however, since they appear in constructions where the NPs are interpreted either as Figure or Ground (Talmy 2000).

(6) a. (A) NP0[= FIG] V NP1[= GRND] (cf. (2a))

b. (B) NP0[= GRND] V NP1[= FIG] (cf. (3a))

Nominalizations formed on verbal lexemes whose NP0 is interpreted as GRND are uniformly ungrammatical (cf.(3b)), and this ban seems to be universal. As for construction (A), no nominalization can be formed on their V whenever its semantics expresses a purely spatial relationship between the referents of NP0 and NP1, as in (2a). It will be argued that this constraint does not hold in (5a), where we have a kind of 'disguised dynamicity' insofar as the railways can be considered as a means to skirt the lake. Hence the grammaticality of (5b). It does not hold either in indirect spatial stative constructions such as (7a) (cf. §3), because additional information is provided in those cases (here 'great number'). Hence the acceptability of (7b).

(7) a. *Les erreurs pullulent dans ce texte.*

'Errors are swarming in this text'

b. *Un tel pullulement d'erreurs est surprenant.*

'Such a swarming of errors is surprising'

**3. Extensions** (a) The issue of spatial stative constructions where the V occurs with a locative PP will be addressed too, and it will be shown that MDH governs the existence of nominalization in this case as well. (b) In the present approach, the contrast between (3b) and (4b) directly follows from the fact that two distinct lexemes COMPORTER are involved, albeit from the point of view of inflection there is one V only. This directly supports point (i). (c) Data investigated here require a fine-tuned analysis of the various constructions, which supports claim (ii) above (Fradin and Kerleroux 2003) and means that morphology is semantically construction-based.

**4. References** Dowty 1991. Thematic proto-roles and argument selection. *Language* 67 : 547-619. Fradin, Kerleroux. 2003. Troubles with lexemes. In *Topics in Morphology*, Booiij et al. (eds). 177-196. Barcelona : IULA. Godard, Jayez. 1993. Toward a proper treatment of coercion phenomena. *EACL* 8 : 168-177. Kerleroux. 2004. Classes de verbes et règles morphologiques de construction. *Lacunes dans la nominalisation? Deverbal nouns* 23-25 sept. 2004, Lille 3. Talmy. 2000. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*. Vol. 1. Cambridge.