Event Nominalizations in French and Modern Standard Arabic: A Parallel*

Fayssal Tayalati  
Lille 3 University  
fayssal.tayalati@univ-lille3.fr

Danièle van de Velde  
Lille 3 University  
vanvelde@club-internet.fr

Abstract
What the comparison between event nominalizations in French and Modern Standard Arabic reveals, is a fundamental similarity concerning the concept of what an event is, and what the result of an event can be. In this article, we show first that the two syntactic types of nominalizations described in the literature exist in Arabic as well as in French with parametric differences, mainly due to the fact that Arabic deverbal nouns retain more and stronger verbal features than their French counterparts. Nevertheless, the conceptual distinction between what we call “bound” and “free” event is made in the two languages. Our decision to treat result nominals at the end of the article relies on the fact we establish, that they are built on complex (and not simple, as often argued in the literature) event nominals, in the same way in the two languages, and with the same two possible interpretations (creation by modification or representation vs. “pure” creation) depending on the meaning of the verbal root.

Keywords
bound/free event – pure creation / creation by representation or modification / result – accomplished /unaccomplished nominalization

* The data examined are all from Modern Standard Arabic.
After Grimshaw’s seminal work (1990), many studies have been devoted to explorations in syntactic and semantic theories of nominalizations, across a variety of languages (Alexiadou 2001; Baker 2011; Comrie and Thompson 1985; Iordăchioaia and Soare 2008 among others). In this article, we are building mainly on our previous work (Van de Velde 1995, 2006a and Tayalati 2013, 2014, respectively on French and Arabic)) in order to draw a parallel between syntactic and semantic properties of event meaning deverbal nominalizations in Arabic and French. Our theoretical framework includes Lexical Conceptual Structure (Jackendoff 1983, 1990; Levin 1993, 2000; Levin and Rappaport 1999, 2005 among others) and the Minimalist Program, but our conclusions could also be consistent with other frameworks, cognitivist for instance, as illustrated by the works of Heyvart (2003 among others) on nominalizations.

Our starting point will be a classification of verbal roots, based on their syntactic properties, including argument structure. Yet, since our main concern is with event meaning nominals, we will not consider the case of stative verbs like connaître-ʿarafa (know), or aimer-ʾaḥabba (love), that have no corresponding event meaning nominals. We will show that in both languages the structural properties of dynamic deverbal nouns, as well as their meanings, are strictly related to those of their verbal root. Moreover, the same types of meaning are available in both languages (from action to event, and to result), although the syntactic devices corresponding to each type are not exactly the same. However, as far as the issue at stake is the concept of event underlying the linguistic structures of event meaning expressions, the similarities are striking between these two otherwise very different languages.

Our first purpose will be to shed light on the two ways of conceiving what an event is, that are so to speak engraved in the two syntactico-semantic structures of event nominals—the ones that Grimshaw called “simple” and “complex” events. Actually, we consider the two kinds of nominals to be semantically much more different from each other than is usually thought: although both refer to abstract entities, each of them is linked with a different concept of what happens. We call the two kinds of events that our two languages equally distinguish, respectively “bound” and “free” events (Van de Velde 2013) and will explore the conditions for a nominal to refer to the one or to the other type. We do know however that if certain conditions are satisfied, a third concrete meaning can appear. This meaning (“result” meaning in Grimshaw’s terms) is often thought of as one of the meanings that the simple event structure can get. We will show that the concrete meaning of event nominals has, on the contrary, more affinities with complex than with simple event nominals. Finally, we will try to understand and describe the passage from abstract to concrete in this very particular case.
1 The Verbal Roots

In what follows, we rapidly present some well-known results from the literature (since Levin 1993) on verb classes. The classification, sufficient for our present goal, does not need to go much further than the classical syntactic distinction between transitive and intransitive, revisited in the light of what we know about argument structure and lexical-conceptual structure (LCS).

1.1 Transitive Agentive Verbal Roots

We adopt the proposal found in Rappaport Hovav and Levin (1998) and make a distinction between simple and complex lexical conceptual structures, slightly modifying their representation following Van de Velde’s proposal (2011). The simple LCS we propose remains very similar to theirs, apart for the fact that the primitive predicate act on takes the place of act, as its transitive variant. Thus, for wipe we have a structure like (1), where it is the manner of action that is lexicalized:

(1) $\text{ACT ON}_{(\text{Wipe})}, x, y$

As for the complex LCS, instead of the analysis they propose for a verb like clean, given in (II),

(II) $\langle x \text{ACT}_{(\text{Manner})} \rangle \text{CAUSE} \langle \text{BECOME } y_{(\text{Clean})} \rangle$

we adopt the following representation (III):

(III) $\langle x \text{ACT ON } y_{(\text{SO THAT})} \rangle \langle \text{BECOME } y_{(\text{Clean})} \rangle$

The main difference between (II) and (III) lies in the way of representing the causal relationship internal to the LCS: in (II), there is a “cause” relation between a fact (the fact that x acted in a certain manner) and an event (the becoming clean of y)—leaving open the possibility that the causing fact be, for instance, the fact that x sent y to someone for cleaning and pressing. In (III), the event appears to be strictly correlated with the manner in which x acts on y, and from which it derives. Thus, there is no way to interpret the causal relationship

---

1 In what follows we take “root” as referring to a categorial morphological unit that provides the basis for nominal derivation, and transmits to the resulting noun its argumental structure.
as a distant relation between two completely distinct events. On the contrary, in this case the structure remains causal, but causality appears under the form of the reverse relation of strict consequentiability between manner of action ("so") and result ("that"). We call (i) simple LCS, and (ii) complex LCS for transitive verbs.

Here are some examples of the two types of verbs in French and Arabic and of their respective nominalizations:

**Simple LCS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qaṣafa-qaṣf</td>
<td>bombarder-bombardement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣadama-ṣadm</td>
<td>heurter-heurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zāra-ziyāra</td>
<td>visite-visit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Complex LCS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tarḫama-tarḫama</td>
<td>traduire-traduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rammama-tarmīm</td>
<td>restaurer-restauration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʿaddala-taʿdīl</td>
<td>modifier-modification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of a simple LCS, the root bears the meaning of the manner of action: thus, *bombing* is a determined manner of acting (by dropping bombs). In the case of a complex LCS, the root bears the meaning of the result: to modify something is not a way of acting, it is obtaining a determined result, by acting in an undetermined way (as a result of the action, the object on which the agent acts is not the same anymore).

In both languages, the verbs of the second class, but not of the first one, have a passive participle denoting a resulting state, a contrast illustrated in the following examples:

(1) a. *Le livre est désormais / depuis longtemps traduit*

   the book is henceforth / since a long time translated

   ‘The book is translated henceforth / since a long time’

   b. *al-kitābu mutarjamun munḍu muddatin*

   the-book translated since a long time

   ‘The book is translated since a long time’

(2) a. *La ville est bombardée depuis longtemps*

   the city is bombed since long time
1.2 **Intransitive Roots**

One of the most important contributions of the theory of thematic roles to syntax has been to give a strong semantic support to a cross-linguistically well-established syntactic distinction between two kinds of intransitive verbs: unaccusative and unergative. Unaccusative verbs do not project any external argument, and can only get a subject derived by movement of their internal argument, which bears the role of “theme”. Unergative verbs do project an external argument, most of the time an agent, which functions as a “deep” subject. Although discussions on the matter are still in progress, we adopt here the most common version of the theory of linking between thematic grid and syntactic structure (Fillmore 1968; Perlmutter and Postal 1984).

1.2.1 Unaccusative Verbal Roots

Unaccusatives are prototypically verbs of existence, of coming into existence, or the opposite. They also often denote a process of change (change of state or change of place). All express what happens to an entity, be that happening the result of an external intervention, or not. Here are some French members of the class:

\[\text{Apparaître (appear), arrive (arrive), naître (be born), mourir (die), pourrir (rot), se produire (occur), se répandre (spread)}\]

In most of the studies dedicated to Arabic verb classes, the case of unaccusatives has been tackled through the intransitive use of causative alternation verbs (Al Khawalda 2011). However, taking as a starting point the result-meaning past participles of intransitive verbs that can be predicated of their subject (the latter being a derived subject, coming from the position of internal argument), one can easily constitute an independent class of unaccusative verbs in Arabic, such as \(\text{ẓahara (appear); māta (die); šā'a (spread); intašara (propagate)}\). We give here some examples of such participles:

\[(3)\] a. \(\text{š-šuqqu ẓ-ẓāhiru yuqliqunī}\)

\[\text{the-crack.Nom. the-appeared.Nom. worries me} \]

‘The visible crack worries me’

b. \(\text{kaḏḏabnā l-ḥabar l-mušā‘a}\)

\[\text{we denied the-piece of news.Acc. the-spread.Acc.} \]

‘We denied the piece of news that was spread’
The LCS of unaccusative verbs contains as their main primitive the one-place predicate *become*, meaning the change from a state to another (or from a place to another, or from non-existence to existence). Thus, their structure appears to be identical to the second part of the LCS of transitive verbs with a complex LCS. The only difference between the transitive and the intransitive *cuire / cuire* (cook) for instance, lies in the fact that the transitive version contains a causative layer, with an agent acting on the entity undergoing the change of state.

The lexical identity between the two versions is a consequence of the fact that the part of the LCS of the transitive *cuire-ṭahā* (cook) that is submitted to lexicalization is its second part, that is, the substructure expressing the change of state, common to both *cuire-ṭahā* (cook) transitive and *cuire-ṭahā* (cook) intransitive. Hence the ambiguity of the derived nominal *cuisson-ṭahyu* (cooking), meaning either a change of state occurring (or viewed as if occurring) without any external cause (4), or an externally caused change (5):

(4) a. *Cette viande a une cuisson très lente*  
   *This meat has a cooking very slow*  
   ‘This meat cooks very slowly’

   b. *adīfī z-zayta mubāšaratan baʿdā tahyi l-lahmi*  
   ‘Add some oil just after the meat gets cooked’

(5) a. *Nous avons procédé à la cuisson de la viande*  
   *We have proceeded to the cooking of the meat*  
   ‘We have proceeded to the cooking of the meat’

   b. *likay la yatimma ṭahyu l-lahmi min tarafi l-idārati wa taqdīmu-hu li-t-tālibāti, qumnā bi …*  
   *for not accomplished cooking.Nom. the-meat.Gen. on part the-management.Gen. and presentation.-Pron. to-the-students.Gen., we proceeded to*  
   ‘To avoid the cooking of the meat by the management and its presentation to the students, we proceeded to …’

---

2 Here are two sentences, illustrating the two uses of *cuire* in French: *Pierre a cuit la viande*  
   (Peter cooked the meat) / *La viande est en train de cuire* (The meat is cooking).
1.2.2 Unergative Verbal Roots

Like unaccusatives, unergative verbs are one-place predicates, but their unique argument is external and occupies in the deep structure the place of the subject. The thematic role of the subject is agentive, which implies that, most of the time, the subject of an unergative is human—but it can also be any kind of entity permanently or occasionally endowed with force: natural forces, for instance. The meaning of these verbs is always a certain way of acting, that is, exerting some force, but without any object, which makes the only difference with the transitive verbs with simple LCS, as we can see by confronting (i) with (iv), for English verb *rise*:

(i) *act* (rise up), x

(IV) *ACT* (rise up), x

Here are some examples of unergative verbs in French and Arabic:

- **French**: *danser* (dance); *se révolter* (revolt); *protester* (protest)
- **Arabic**: *raqaṣa* (dance); *intafaq* (revolt); *iḥtaǧğa* (protest)

2 Nominalizations: Syntactic Data

In what follows, we review the main syntactic constraints that the structures of nominalizations are bounded by, according to the class of their verbal base.

2.1 Nominalization of Transitive Roots with Simple LCS

Taking the verbs *bombarder* (bomb), *attaquer* (attack) for French and *qaṣafa* (bomb), *zāra* (visit) for Arabic as prototypes of the class, we find the following data: the corresponding derived nouns *bombardement-attaque* (bombing-attack) and *qaṣf-ziyāra* (bombing-visit) can head two structurally different nominal phrases, both of them containing two complements that represent the two arguments of the verb (assuming that the external subject is a true argument, which is questionable).

In the first type of NP, the internal argument remains immediately at the right of the derived noun, taking the genitive case in Arabic, and the genitival marker *de* in French. The external argument is then introduced by a preposition, but it is always optional, and in any case, has to be licensed by the presence of the first complement. The facts are summarized in the following examples:

(6) a. *Le bombardement de la ville par l’ennemi*

   the-bombing of the city by the-enemy

   ‘The bombing of the city by the enemy’
b. qaṣfu l-madīnati min ṭarafi l-ʿaduwwi
   bombing.Nom. the-city.Gen. on part the-enemy
   ‘The bombing of the city by the enemy’

(7) a. Les bombardements de l’ennemi sur la ville
   art.Plur. bombings of the enemy on the city
   ‘The enemy’s bombing on the city’

b. qaṣfu l-ʿaduwwi li-l-madīnati
   ‘The enemy’s bombing on the city’

For the time being, our examples consist only of noun phrases, which allows us to temporarily leave aside their meaning, which is ambiguous between predicative, event/situational, and propositional interpretation, depending on the propositional context.3

We call the examples in (6) “unaccomplished nominalizations”4 (UNS) because in both languages their head noun keeps certain syntactic properties of its verbal base, that is, the process of nominalization does not seem to be fully accomplished. Nevertheless, there is a difference between French and Arabic on this point: in French, the head noun is, so to say, more “nominal” than in Arabic, which means that in French, the structure of an UN phrase is less close to a clause structure than it is in Arabic. In Arabic, for instance, the modifier of the head noun in an UN cannot appear as an adjective (8a), but must take the form of an adverb (preposition+noun) (8b), like in the case of a modification concerning a verbal head (8c):

3 For the sake of brevity, in what follows, we will consider in detail neither the predicative nor the propositional interpretation. What we call “situational” interpretation corresponds to the same syntactic structure as the event interpretation, but with a stative-durative predicate like in the subject noun phrase of the following sentence: l’amour de Pierre pour Marie a duré toute sa vie (“Peter’s love for Mary lasted all his life”).

4 In Fassi Fehri’s perspective, arabic masdars are derived through a nominalization affix that bears an event meaning, and can be attached to different levels of the syntactic structure. In the case that the masdar retains some verbal properties of its basis, this affix would be attached to vp, that is, to a constituent containing v and the arguments of v. In the case that the masdar has no verbal properties any more, the affix would be attached to v. Following Kremers (2003), we don’t adopt Fassi Fehri’s perspective (1993), mainly because it leaves the polysemy of unaccomplished masdars (meaning either an action or an event) unexplained.
Moreover, unlike “true” nouns, the head noun in Arabic uns does not accept any determiner or number marker. In French, in certain determined contexts, not only can it take another article than the definite but it can also appear in the plural. However, in French the head noun of an un possesses an important feature regarding number, which clearly indicates its partly verbal nature: it can bear a plural interpretation while remaining in the singular form, or without any number mark. As noted by Grimshaw (1990) for English, it is possible to insert into these nominals, like in (10), frequency adjectives without changing the form of the head noun. This would be impossible in the other structure illustrated in (11), as it appears from the examples below:

(9) Le fréquent bombardement de la ville par l’ennemi
the frequent bombing of the city by the enemy
 ‘The frequent bombing of the city by the enemy’  

5 It seems that the indefinite article is perfectly grammatical only in contexts where the event referred to appears as a free choice referee, like in the following sentence: On craignait un bombardement de Londres par les Allemands (“There were fears about a (potential) bombing of London by the Germans”). Otherwise, it is impossible, as we can see from: *Un bombardement de Londres par les Allemands se répète chaque nuit (“A bombing of London by the Germans is repeated every night”).
In Arabic, this feature does not differentiate the two types of nominals, since it is common to the head noun of *un* as well as *ans*, as we can see in (11–12). We suggest that such a difference between the two languages is a sign that Arabic event nominals remain globally more “verbal” than their French counterparts:

(11) *qaṣfu l-madinati l-mutakarriru (min ṭarafi l-ʿaduwwi)*

‘The repeated bombing of the city by the enemy’

(12) *qaṣfu l-ʿaduwwi l-mutakarriru ʿalā l-madinati*

‘The enemy’s repeated bombing on the city’

Another propositional property of the *un* phrases in French lies in the fact that they can take in a directly introduced temporal adverbial, like in a full clause, as in the following sentence (Van de Velde 2006):

(13) *Le bombardement de la ville hier par l’ennemi*

‘Yesterday’s bombing of the city by the enemy’

The only available interpretation here is factual, precisely because the structure of the nominal phrase is close to a clausal structure. The same is true for the interpretation of a kind of Arabic *un* (Fassi Fehri 1993; Bardeas 2009; Kremers 2003, 2007 among others) that mostly resembles verbal English gerundives, but has no equivalent in French, where the “object” of the head noun bears the accusative case, as in the following example:

(14) *qaṣfu l-ʿaduwwi l-madinata*

‘The enemy(’s) bombing the city’

To sum up, we can say that French and Arabic *uns* share a number of structural properties derived from the still verbal character of their head nouns, a characteristic however more prominent in Arabic, than in French, as it is also in English.
We call the nominal phrases in (7) “accomplished nominalizations” (ANS), meaning that in this case the process of conversion of a verbal root into a noun is complete, although the interpretation of such nouns remains abstract, in the sense that it still has a predicative, not a substantive interpretation: in Arabic, determination and pluralization become possible, and in both languages the number of the complements is free, so that we can have the agent without the theme, and the reverse. When two complements are present, their respective order is inverted in comparison with the one in (6): the agent comes first, so that the theme does not occupy the first place to the right of the noun any more, a clear sign that the noun itself has lost all its verbal syntactic properties, and has no argument structure any more.

The latter point can also be established for both languages on the basis of a striking fact regarding the expression of the agent in the nominal phrase. When a group adjective is available in French, it can replace the genitive agentive complement (15) (Alexiadou 2001; Alexiadou and Stavrou 1998; Oersnes and Markantanatou 2002; Van de Velde 2006a, 2006b; Tayalati 2014). In Arabic, such a substitution leads to the introduction of a (unconstrained) determiner (16), and imposes pluralization (17), which indicates, even more clearly than in French, that the process of nominalization is achieved. The facts are assembled in the following examples:

(15) Les bombardements ennemis sur la ville
art.Plur. bombings enemy on the city
‘The enemy bombings on the city’

(16) a. al-qasfu l-ʿudwāniyyu li-l-madīnati
‘The enemy bombing on the city’

b. yatarāqqabūna z-ziyārata l-malakiyyata li-l-madīnati
‘They attend the royal visit of the city’

(17) a. al-qasafātu l-ʿudwāniyyatu li-l-madīnati
‘The enemy bombings on the city’

b. yatarāqqabūna z-ziyārāta l-malakiyyata li-l-madīnati
‘They attend the royal visits of the city’
Now, it can be established (in fact it has been by Van de Velde 2006b) that a group adjective cannot, due to its very weak referential power, replace an agent argument (nor any other argument): even if it retains the agentive interpretation of such an argument, as it is often (but not always) the case after a deverbal noun, the group adjective is syntactically nothing but a modifier of the noun. The weakness of the referential power of group adjectives is clearly brought out in French by the comparison with possessive adjectives. Consider the following example:

(18) *Les Français, étaient les agresseurs. Mais leur écrasement par les armées prussiennes fit d’eux des victimes*  

‘French were the aggressors. But their crushing by the Prussian armies turned them into victims’

In the second sentence of (18), the possessive leur is a relational adjective that “contains” an anaphoric referential pronoun. However, the anaphoric value of leur cannot be borne by the semantically equivalent group adjective français, as shown by the agrammaticality of (19):

(19) *Les Français étaient les agresseurs. Mais l’écrasement français par les armées prussiennes fit d’eux des victimes*  

Arabic data show the same contrast: the anaphoric referential pronoun -hum can be bound by the nominal agent complement (20a) due to its strong referential power, but not by the semantically equivalent group adjectives (20b):

(20) a. qasfu l-inɡlizi, li-l-madaniyyina  
    afqadahum, l-miṣdāqiyyata  
    made lose-Pron. the-credibility.Acc.  
    ‘English bombing of the civilians made them lose their credibility’

b. *al-qasfu l-inɡliziyyu, li-l-madaniyyina  
    afqadahum, l-miṣdāqiyyata  
    made lose-Pron. the-credibility.Acc.
In the same line of reasoning we can see that a group adjective, unlike a possessive, cannot provide an antecedent for a reflexive pronoun, hence the contrast between the following examples:

(21) *Leurs plaisanteries sur eux-mêmes
their jokes on themselves
‘Their jokes about themselves’

(22) *Les plaisanteries belges sur eux-mêmes
the jokes Belgian on themselves

(23) intiqādātu-humli-ʾanfusihim
‘Their criticisms about themselves’

(24) *l-intiqādātu l-inġlīziyyatu li-ʾanfusihim

When only one complement is present, and it is the theme, one could ask if and how it is still possible to distinguish ANS from UNS. As a matter of fact, that is very easy to do in Arabic, because the theme complement when appearing alone, takes the genitive case in a UN, but is introduced by a preposition in an AN, as illustrated in the following examples:

(25) a. kullu-nā nudīnu qasfa l-madīnati
all-we condemn bombing.Acc. the city-Gen
‘We all condemn the bombing of the city’

b. tawāṣala l-qasfu ʿala/li-l-madīnati
‘The bombing on/of the city went on’

In French, if we are in an AN, and the theme is the unique complement, it can be either in the genitive (that is, introduced by de (of)), or introduced by a preposition whose choice depends on the construction of the appropriate support verb, as illustrated in the following sentences (Van de Velde 2006: 112):
(26) a. Les deux derniers bombardements de Londres ont fait de
the two last bombings Prep. London made Prep.
nombreuses victimes
numerous victims
‘The last two bombings of London made numerous victims’

b. Les deux derniers bombardements sur Londres ont fait de
the two last bombings on London made Prep.
nombreuses victimes
numerous victims
‘The last two bombings on London made numerous victims’

Thus, in both languages, the obligatory or even optional introduction of the
theme complement of the head noun by a preposition, clearly shows that in
ans the syntactic relationship between the deverbal noun and its comple-
ment is not the same as it is in uns, which means it is not an argument any
more.

2.2 Nominalization of Transitive Roots with Complex LCS
Leaving semantics aside for the moment, the most striking syntactic fact about
nominalization of verbal complex roots is that they seem to allow only uns.
Actually, with nouns like destruction or abolition,7 inasmuch as only one com-
plement is present, it must be the theme, and cannot be the agent. Consider
the following examples:

(27) a. La destruction du palais (par l’ ennemi)
the-destruction of palace (by the enemy)
‘The destruction of the palace (by the enemy)’

6 There is a difference between French and Arabic concerning the use of the definite article in
nominalizations: in French, definiteness always has to be marked by the definite le, possibly
justified afterwards by a determinative identifying complement (du Palais in (26a)); if there
is no such complement in the structure, as in (26b) where sur Londres does not entail
definiteness, it is the definite article itself that presupposes existence and unicity. In Arabic, a
determinative complement is sufficient by itself to indicate definiteness, hence the absence
of any article in (26a), contrasting with the presence of the definite determiner in (26b).

7 For the sake of simplicity, we choose here two nouns whose meaning is such that it, perforce,
remains abstract and cannot give rise to a result interpretation.
b. *L’abolition de l’ennemi  
the-abolition Prep. the-enemy 

b. *L’abolition du général en chef  
the-abolition Prep. the general-in chief 

With the nouns destruction and abolition, unlike what is the case in (6) with bombardement (bombing), the first complement can only be interpreted as the victim or patient of the destruction, never as its agent.8 

Although the importance of this fact has been underlined in a number of studies in our opinion it has not until now received any complete explanation. The one we will try to give is complex. Here is the first stage of our argument: if nominalization in general is a syntactically based process, if the syntactic substructure this process applies to is a vP (Van de Velde (to be published)), and if any syntactic structure essentially mirrors the corresponding LCS (a hypothesis common to many works in the Distributional Morphology theoretical frame), then we are led to the following conclusions: 

8 Here we deliberately chose a noun that cannot have but an abstract meaning, the meaning of an event or a fact. Later on, we will consider more complex cases, where the noun can take upon the sense of a concrete result, or of a product.
– The basis of the nominalization of a simple LCS is a unique vP, mirroring the simple structure of the verbal root. It can have an active form (for the AN in examples like (7)), or a passive form (for the UN in examples like (6)). In both cases, the first complement of the noun is the external (original or derived) argument, that is, the subject of the corresponding clause. Thus, to the active type corresponds an AN where the first (or the only) complement is the agent, projected by an active v; to the passive type corresponds an UN, where, since v does not project any external argument, the first complement is the theme, promoted into the position of an external argument, from its internal original position.

– The basis of a complex LCS is made up of two distinct vPs. Returning to (111) above, we can see that the first part of the complex LCS is of an active type, while the second is passive, meaning that it describes the process that an entity is subjected to. Now, only the second part provides the basis of the nominalization, since it contains the lexical root. Hence, the only available type of syntactically based nominalization is passive, and must provide an UN.

At this point, we can specify the syntactic difference between ANs and UNs: the head noun of an AN does not undergo a really complete nominalization, since it still is the product of the categorial change of a verbal syntactic substructure. Nevertheless, contrary to the head noun of an UN, it has lost the argument structure—if we agree with Williams (1981), Grimshaw (1990) and many others, in saying that the original external “argument”—the agent—is not an argument at all. In the case of an UN, by contrast, the complement of the noun is a true (internal) argument, which gives the noun itself a more verbal character.

2.3 Nominalization of Unaccusative and Unergative Roots

The reason why we consider these two types together is that it is possible to make a parallel between: the LCS of an unaccusative root with the second part of the LCS of a transitive verbal root with complex LCS, on the one hand, and between the LCS of an unergative root and the first part of the LCS of the same transitive verbal root, on the other hand. Or, put in another but equivalent way: the unaccusative root is of the passive type of the transitive root with a simple LCS, the unergative one is of the active type.

In Arabic as well as in French, the nominalization of unergative roots can produce exclusively ANs, since these roots lack the internal argument necessary to the formation of UNs. Therefore, in both languages, the properties of a nominal phrase whose head is derived from an unergative verbal base are the
same as the ones we found for the “active” nominalization of transitive roots with simple LCS (see the examples in (7)).

In Arabic, the aspect or manner modifier of the noun must take the form of an adjective, not of an adverb, a clearly nominal property, illustrated by the contrasts in the following examples:

(31) *nuḥayyi ʿintafāzāta š-šaʿbi š-šuḡāʿata
/ *bi-šaḡāʿatin ḍida ʿt-ṭāḡiyati
‘We greet the courageous uprising of the people against the tyrant’

Also, the head noun can be pluralized when a complement is present, as in (32):

(32) nuḥayyi ʿintafāzāta š-šuʿūbi l-ʿarabiyyati
‘We greet the uprisings of the Arabic people’

In French, with the same type of deverbal nouns, the main characteristic of uns, namely a plural interpretation with the noun in the singular, is not to be found in ans, as illustrated by the following contrast:

(33) *La fréquente révolte du peuple
the frequent revolt of the people

As for the nominalization of unaccusative roots, we find that, being of the passive type, they predictably produce only uns, where the unique possible complement remains a true argument of the head noun, which clearly keeps verbal properties.

In Arabic, the modification of the head noun is adverbial, not adjectival, and it can only appear in the singular form, as it is the case for the derived noun of a transitive complex base. The facts are summarized in the following examples:

(34) zuḥūru ʿulā l-ʿarāḍi bi-surʿatin
/ *s-sarīʿi
/ the-rapid.Gen.
‘The rapid appearance of the first symptoms’
In French, the nominalization of an unaccusative root always produces a noun phrase that can bear a plural interpretation in the singular form combined with a frequency adjectival modifier, as illustrated in the following examples:

(36) L’ incessant décollage des avions / Le fréquent départ
the continual take off of planes / the frequent departure
de navettes pour l’aéroport
of shuttles for the airport
‘The continual take off of planes / The frequent departure of shuttles for the airport’

Thus, Arabic and French present the same distribution of the two types of intransitive roots between ans and uns, and the same affinity between unaccusative roots and transitive roots with complex LCS. It is time now to examine the semantic meaning of these syntactic facts.

3 Nominalizations: Interpretation

3.1 The Triple Ambiguity of Event Nominalizations
Any “event” nominalization has actually at least three interpretations, depending on which part of the syntactic substructure of the sentence it is based upon (Van de Velde (to be published)). Since only the context can lift this ambiguity, from now on we will insert the nominalizations we describe into full sentences.

First, we have the predicative interpretation, corresponding to a VP (v and the internal argument, if any, with possible modifiers), and illustrated for both languages in the following sentences:

(37) a. Ils ont procédé à la destruction totale de la ville
they have proceeded Prep. the destruction complete of the city
‘They accomplished the complete destruction of the city’

b. qāmū bi-tadmūri l-madinati kulliha
they accomplished Prep.-destruction.Gen. the-city.Gen complete
‘They accomplished the complete destruction of the city’
In (37), the phrases *la destruction de la ville* and *tadmūrī l-madinatī* are not strictly speaking event noun phrases, due to the fact that they do not include the agent of the action: the latter in fact appears as the subject of a support verb construction, *procéder à la destruction* and *qāmū bi-tadmūrī*. The choice of the support verb, here, is consistent with an action interpretation: in fact, the adjective *totale / kullīha* qualifies a manner of acting, not an event. In other cases, the support verb can be stative, with a “passive” meaning, like *subīr-ḥaḍā‘a‘a*, or *connaître-‘arafā* in the following examples:

(38) a. *La ville a subi une destruction totale*
   the city has undergone a destruction complete
   ‘The city has undergone a total destruction’

   b. *ḥaḍā‘ati l-madinatū li-tadmīrin*
   was subjected the city.Nom. Prep-destruction.Gen.indef.
   *kāmilīn*
   ‘The city was subjected to a total destruction’

(39) a. *La ville a connu un changement spectaculaire*
   the city has known a change spectacular
   ‘The city underwent a spectacular change’

   b. *‘arafāti l-madinatū taġyīran muḏhilan*
   ‘The city underwent a spectacular change’

We call this first kind of interpretation “predicative” because its variants (an action accomplished or inflicted, a change of state or place) depend on the aktionsart of the predicate. The event nominalizations, syntactically based on a vP (v and vp, with the subject projected by v), always include, explicitly or not, the subject of predication, be the latter an agent or a theme, a deep or a derived subject. However, there are two kinds of semantically different events that can be referred to, depending on which syntactic structure we are dealing with, UN or AN.

The existence of two kinds of events not only in French and Arabic but in many others languages is easy to show relying on the two uses of the existential event verb *happen*. If someone asks:

(40) What happened to the army?
One can answer by saying:

(41) They were attacked from the rear (by the enemy) / they all died

But it would be bizarre to say:

(42) ??They attacked the enemy from the rear / they rose in revolt against their officers

Conversely, the sentences in (42) would be appropriate answers to the more simple question:

(43) What happened?

The two kinds of events we are talking about are respectively events that happen-to somebody or something, and events that happen, “tout court”. If the event nominalization is an un, the event may be called “bound”, which means that, when expressed through an un, the event is conceived as depending on a certain entity—or bound to it, in the sense that it constitutes a change affecting that entity. Put in other words, the event in this case is something that happens TO a determined entity. This interpretation is clearly linked to the fact that in uns, in Arabic and French as in English, the complement is a true argument of the noun, and is, as such, obligatory, so that the one cannot exist without the other. We can observe, in this case, a complete parallelism between syntactic and semantic structure: just as the nominal predicate calls for a theme argument, the corresponding event cannot be viewed without the substance it affects.

There is another syntactic property of uns that indicates that the event they refer to is bound to the affected entity: in Arabic, uns are perforce in the singular, and in French they can remain in the singular, while containing a frequency adjective, that is, while referring to a plurality of events (Grimshaw 1990). Actually, this plurality is of a complex type, being the repeated occurrence of one and the same event. For instance, in the following sentence:

(44) La destruction répétée de leurs récoltes est une catastrophe pour les paysans
    the destruction repeated of their harvests is a disaster for the farmers

‘The repeated destruction of their harvests is a disaster for the farmers’
The event referred to is an individual event uniquely identified by the complement of the head noun, and remaining one and the same (la destruction de leurs récoltes) through its multiple occurrences. In Arabic, the absolute impossibility of the plural in uns means nothing else but the absolute unicity of the event they refer to, this unicity being itself ensured by its individualization through the theme argument.

To these “bound events”, we oppose “free events”, meaning events that are not repeatable, not dependent on any particular substance they happen to. Free events are expressed by ans, where there is no theme argument in the strict sense of the term “argument”.

The third interpretation of nominalizations is based on a larger syntactic structure than the event nominalizations, that is an (almost) full CP, meaning that they can contain circumstantial adverbials, of date and place in particular. Their meaning is therefore the meaning of a fact or another abstract entity of the same “level”: possibility, necessity, proposition, for instance. In the following sentence:

(45) Le bombardement de la ville le jour même de la fête a suscité l'indignation générale

‘The bombing of the city the very day of the feast aroused general indignation’

The subject noun phrase could be:

(46) Le fait que la ville ait été bombardée le jour même de la fête

‘The fact that the city was bombed the very day of the feast’

This sentential interpretation is common to French and Arabic, but Arabic has in addition a form of nominalization where the deverbal noun takes an accusative complement, as does one of the English gerunds, as in the following sentence:

(47) qaṣfu l-ǧayši l-madīnata yawma l-ʿīdi ḥallafa stiyāʾan kabīran

‘The army’s bombing the city during the feast caused big displeasure’
The striking fact about this kind of structure, where the deverbal noun keeps more verbal properties than in any other nominalization, is that its only possible interpretation is of the sentential type—as demonstrated by the agrammaticality of (48):

(48) *qaṣfu l-ǧayši l-madīnata waqaʾa
    bombing.Nom. the-army.Gen. the city.Acc. took place
    s-sanata l-māḍiyata
    the-year the-last

At this point, we may conclude that, in Arabic as well as in French:

- active deverbal nominalizations have three interpretations corresponding respectively to a vp, a vP, and a cp, and therefore that they always bear an abstract meaning: for instance the nouns attaque (attack) and qaṣf (bombing) can mean an action, or an event, or a fact9;
- the two structurally different structures (ans and uns) of the event meaning noun phrases clearly mirror two ways of conceiving an event: as something that happens (in the world) or as something that happens to a substance.

### 3.2 From Abstract to Concrete

There are a variety of concrete uses of event-meaning nominals. In what follows, we will limit ourselves to a few points about result interpretations, trying in particular to describe the passage from the (abstract) event-meaning to the (concrete) result one.

In Grimshaw’s view, the two syntactic structures she calls “simple” and “complex” nominals are said to have respectively a “result” and an “event” meaning. However, it is clear from her comments that the “result” category covers event as well as resultative interpretations. So we can reassume her view by saying that, for her, there exist two event-meaning nominals: simple and complex, and that the result-meaning nominals are structurally undistinguishable from simple event-meaning ones. In our perspective, this conclusion appears to be very questionable.

---

9 A cp has to be assumed in order to explain the factual interpretation: a fact is an event or a situation that has been bound to the real world through an illocutary act. Therefore the left periphery, being responsible for the illocutory force and the linking of the sentence to the real world, must be present in the underlying structure. But, of course, in this case we must assume what Haegeman (2012) calls, talking about adverbial clauses, an “impoverished periphery”, since it lacks some important constituents like “focus” and others.
Actually, what we are prepared to discover, through the analysis of French and Arabic examples, is that the semantic and maybe also the syntactic condition for a nominal to have a result interpretation, is to be linked to a verbal root with a complex LCS. In doing so, we will be led to differentiate two kinds of verbal roots with complex LCS, and correspondingly two kinds of results, depending on the LCS of the verbal basis.

3.2.1 Verbal Roots Again
The first question to be asked about the result interpretation of deverbal nouns is: what properties must a verbal root have in order to give rise to a result nominal? It seems clear that the LCS of such a root must possess at least a subpart signifying a final or resulting state of a patient or theme. Among the various kinds of roots we distinguished there seems to be two candidates capable of giving rise to result nominals: transitive roots with complex LCS, and unaccusative roots.

3.2.1.1 Several Meanings of “Result”
Even if we take result as meaning “concrete entity whose existence implies the accomplishment of a process producing a resulting state”, still we can conceive the result of the process that is always implied in the occurrence of an event, in various ways.

To our knowledge, the first researchers who have tried to classify various kinds of results were Bisetto and Melloni (2007) and Melloni (2010). Their work has resulted in a triple taxonomy of Italian verbal roots giving rise to result nominals, where we find: “result-object verbs”, “creation-through-representation verbs”, and “creation-through-modification verbs”. Here are some verbs of each class:

\[
\text{comporre (make up), edificare (build), inventare (invent);}
\text{copiare (copy), rappresentare (represent), tradurre (translate);}
\text{corregere (correct), modificare (modify), rompere (break).}
\]

We adopt these three classes as a starting point, even if we think that a more detailed study ought to take into account other cases, for instance cases linked with the notion of “product”, rather than with the one of “resulting state”, that is central here.11

10 We do not take into account the change of place, because such a change does not produce any modification in the moved substance itself.

11 One can think of products of mental acts such as judgement, or of speech acts like speech.
The main proposal of Melloni (2010) is to introduce in the description of event nominals with result interpretation a +/- “LOC” feature, responsible for the concrete meaning of the noun. We do not adopt this feature here for two reasons: first, this descriptive choice implies a conception of “concrete” as “physical”, which may seem very questionable. She herself is uncomfortable with nouns like *translation*, since there is no doubt that a translation, even as a result, is primarily a non-physical object. Second, even if it were not questionable that “concrete” is “physical”, such a feature as +/- LOC has but a purely descriptive value, not the explicative one we are looking for.

3.2.1.2 Two Main Kinds of Result Interpretations of Event-Meaning Nominals

Even if it seems intuitively right to distinguish between the second and the third class of Melloni’s, we propose that the most important distinction should be between the first class and the other two. The reason why it is so is that the LCS of “creation” verbs is not exactly the same as the one of “change of state” verbs, so that we will have to add one formula of LCS to (iii) below, or, rather, to divide (iii) into two formulas.

Taking the verbs *construire* (build) or *composer* (compose) in French and *banā* (build) in Arabic as examples of the first class, it is easy to see that the formula III is not suited to the meaning of such verbs, since it would imply that the agent acts on the patient so that the latter becomes constructed or composed, a patent absurdity. So we propose to split III into III-a and III-b:

\[
\begin{align*}
(\text{III})-\text{a} & \quad (x \text{ act} (\text{so that}) (\text{become} y (\text{constructed}))) \\
(\text{III})-\text{b} & \quad (x \text{ act on} y (\text{so that}) (\text{become} y (\text{clean})))
\end{align*}
\]

Both formulas correspond to complex LCS, but they differ in the fact that in the first one the theme argument (y) does not appear in the first part of the structure, where it would be the patient of the action. This difference mirrors the opposition between a “creation” and a “transformation” meaning, an opposition very well marked in French as well as in Arabic nominalizations, as illustrated in the following contrast:

\[
\begin{align*}
(49) & \quad \text{a.} \quad *\text{La construction de cette maison est au bout de ma rue} \\
& \quad \text{the construction of this house is at the end of my street} \\
& \quad \text{b.} \quad *\text{binā’u hāḍa l-manzili yūḡadu fī āḥiri} \\
& \quad \text{construction.Nom. this the-house.Gen. stands at end} \\
& \quad \text{š-šāri’i} \\
& \quad \text{the-street.Gen.}
\end{align*}
\]
In both languages, the nominalization of a creation verbal root may have a result-interpretation only under the condition that the complement, if any, should not be the internal argument of the verb. In fact, the noun phrase subject of (49) is grammatical in itself, but it must be interpreted as referring to an event (or an action), as in the sentences:

(51) a. *La construction de cette maison a eu lieu il y a deux ans*
    ‘The construction of this house took place two years ago’

   b. *binā’u hāda l-jāmiʿi istaʿraqa sinān*
    ‘The construction of this mosque lasted for years’

Otherwise, if the complement represents the agent, the noun cannot refer to an event, and must be interpreted as a result nominal, as it is the case in the following sentences:

(52) a. *Cette construction de Le Corbusier est un chef d’œuvre*
    ‘This construction of Le Corbusier is a masterpiece’

   b. *hāda l-binā’u li-Sinan tuḥfatun*
    ‘This construction of Sinan is a masterpiece’

These facts, common to both languages under examination, have to be explained, even it seems intuitively clear why a sentence like (49) is unacceptable. The explanation we are about to propose will combine the LCS III-a above, with a hypothesis concerning the passage from abstract to concrete in general.

Before doing so, we will say a few words about the other two categories of result nominals of Melloni’s 2010: “creation-through-representation” and
“creation-through-modification” nominals. If we take *traduction-tarǧama* (translation) and *modification-taʿdīl* (modification) as representatives of each one, it appears that in their result meanings these two kinds of words have similar syntactic properties, very different from the properties of nouns derived from “result-object verbs”. They can freely take complements representing either the agent or the theme, or both, as illustrated in the following examples:

(53) a. *La traduction de Nerval est la plus belle*  
the translation of Nerval is the most beautiful  
‘Nerval’s translation is the most beautiful’

b. *tarǧamatu nervāl tabqā l-ʾafḍalu*  
translation.Nom. Nerval remains the most beautiful  
‘Nerval’s translation remains the most beautiful’

(54) a. *Il existe plusieurs traductions de Faust*  
it exists several translations of Faust  
‘There are several translations of Faust’

b. *tūjadu ʿiddatu tarǧamātin li-faust*  
locating several translation.Plur.Gen. Prep.-Faust  
‘There are several translations of Faust’

(55) a. *Il existe une belle traduction de Faust par Nerval*  
it exists a beautiful translation of Faust by Nerval  
‘There is a beautiful translation of Faust by Nerval’

b. *tūjadu tarǧamatun ġamilatun li-kalila wa dimna li-andre mikel*  
‘There is a beautiful translation of Kalila and Dimna by André Miquel’

(56) a. *Les modifications des députés sont judicieuses*  
the modifications of the deputies are judicious  
‘The deputies’ modifications are judicious’

b. *taʿdīlātu l-barlamāniyyīna ḥakīmatun*  
‘The deputies’ modifications are judicious’
The modifications of the project are judicious

The modifications of the project by the deputies are judicious

The modifications of the project by the deputies are judicious'
with a problem, since their structure is apparently the same as the structure of (5) and (18), where the verbal noun has an event meaning. Nevertheless appearances here are once more deceptive: in (5) and (18) the only way of introducing the agent is through the preposition par (“by”) in French, and min ṭarafi (“on the part of”) in Arabic, the agent cannot be the unique complement, and the possessive form is impossible as one can see in (61):

(61) a. *La destruction du palais de l’occupant
the destruction of-the palace of the occupier
/*La destruction de l’occupant / *Sa destruction du palais
/the destruction of the occupier / his destruction of-the palace

b. *tadmīru l-qaṣrī li-l-ʾaduwwi
b’. *tadmīru l-ʾaduwwi musajjalun
destruction.Nom. the-enemy.Gen. recorded
b’’. *tadmīru-hu l-qaṣrī₁²
destruction.Nom.-Poss.Pron the palace

By contrast, all the structures in (53) are possible with traduction, so long as it has a result meaning. In particular, the preposition introducing the agent may be de (“of”) in French and li- (“of”) in Arabic as we can see in the following sentences:

(62) a. La traduction de Faust de Nerval
the translation of Faust of Nerval
‘Nerval’s translation of Faust’

b. tarḏamatu kalila wa dimna li-andre mikel
‘André Miquel’s translation of Kalila et Dimna’

₁² In Arabic it is possible to have a possessive clitic referring to the agent when the deverbal noun is still maximally verbal, and takes an accusative complement, like an English verbal gerund—or when it is maximally nominal (but still with an event meaning), with a genitive complement.
Here we could draw an interesting parallel between result nominals and iconic nouns (Milner 1982), confronting the examples above with the following ones:

(63)  
Le portrait de Dora par / de Picasso  
the portrait of Dora by / of Picasso  
‘Dora’s portrait by / of Picasso’

(64)  
lawḥatu l-monaliza li-davinši  
painting.Nom. the-Mona Lisa Prep.-Da Vinci  
‘Da Vinci’s painting of the Mona Lisa’

So it seems clear that “creation-by-representation” and “creation-by-modification” nouns are true nouns. Both types have a strong semantic relationship one could express in saying that they both mean “identity through change”: a translation of a text is but the same text under another form—hence another text, or rather another token of the same type; a modification of a project is but the same project whose parts or properties13 have been modified—but not another project. Therefore, the only difference between the two types seems to lie in the treatment of sameness and otherness.

3.2.2 From Abstract to Concrete

From what we said below, it follows that:

– the lexicalized subpart of the LCS of transitive complex verbal roots is the one embedded under the consecutive device “SO THAT”;
– this subpart express the resulting state of an entity that has undergone a change of state (including the change from non-existence to existence);
– the corresponding interpretation is eventive, therefore abstract, if the deverbal noun retains the argument structure of the verb, namely if the internal argument remains “visible” as argument in the lexicalized substructure;
– the interpretation may be “substantial”, meaning that the noun refers to a substance, in the case the argument structure it inherited from the verb is lost.

13 This is what Melloni (2010) seems to suggest when she says: “Verbs in this class lexicalize events that bring about a modification in / into an existing object by addition or substraction of material, breaking or fracturing of the referent of the patient / theme, etc.”. This could also explain why nouns of that class appear mostly in the plural.
3.2.2.1 Building Results

We already know that the loss of argument structure is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a nominal to get a result meaning: in fact, a deverbal noun whose verbal basis has a simple LCS, like *attaque* (attack), keeps its event meaning even in ANS, where there is no argument structure anymore, because the LCS of *attaquer* (attack) does not contain any subpart expressing a resulting state. The lexicalization of a simple LCS therefore cannot help giving rise to an event reading, retaining the active, exclusively predicative, sense of the root.

This is why only verbs with complex LCS can give rise to deverbal nouns with result meaning: the substructure expressing the change of state, as formulated in III above, contains the predicate "become", a complex predicate that has to be split into two true primitives: the aspectual "begin" and the stative "be". The first bears the dynamic meaning implied in the concept of any event as a change, the second is responsible for the stative semantic component implied in the notion of "resulting state". Now we can be more precise about the domain of the lexicalization: in the case of an event interpretation, this domain must include the aspectual dynamic part of the lexicalized subpart of the LCS: become. For instance, the noun phrase *the translation of the novel* means in its event reading "the becoming translated of the novel", as in the following sentence, where the context, containing an event existential predicate, excludes the result meaning:

(65) a. *La traduction du roman a eu lieu pendant la première guerre*  
the translation of-the novel took place during the first war  
‘The translation of the novel took place during the first war’

b. *tarjamatul r-rivāyati waqa‘at ibbāna l-harbi l-ūlā*  
translation.Nom. the-novel.Gen. took place during the-war the-first  
‘The translation of the novel took place during the first war’

---

14 For the sake of brevity, we adopt the classical definition that is to be found in the Oxford dictionaries. This definition may be questionable, but in any case the stative *be* would have to be included.
What does it mean exactly in its result reading? First we have to recall that in this case the novel is not an argument of the noun translation any more, but an optional adjunct. Second, in the concrete result reading the same noun phrase does not have the stative meaning that would correspond to the event dynamic one, namely: “the being translated of the novel”, a still predicative abstract meaning, but the substantial meaning “the novel (that is) translated”. In other words, not only has it lost its dynamic semantic component, but it has also undergone a process of transfer from a certain property (of a thing) to a thing (with a certain property), that is, a passage from abstract to concrete. In the following sentences, it is not the property of being translated of the novel that is qualified as “shorter than the original”, but the novel itself, the same thing, under its new appearance:

(66) a. *La traduction du roman est plus courte que l’original*
    "The translation of the novel is shorter than the original"

b. *tarǧamatu r-riwāyati aqṣaru mina n-naṣi*
    "The translation of novel is shorter than the original"

Now, such a transfer is far from being unique in French as well as in Arabic. Both languages frequently use abstract nouns derived from adjectives, to refer to things, or substances, a use already described in the GPR and the LPR. Consider the following sentences:

(67) a. *Je suis étonné de la saleté de ces rues*
    "I am amazed at the dirtiness of these streets"

b. *adhašat-nī wasāẖatu š-šawārī‘i*
    "I am amazed at the dirtiness of the streets"

(68) a. *Enlevez ces saletés!*
    "Throw out these filthy things!"
b. ʿirmū hāḏihi l-awsāḥa!

throw out these the-filthy-things.Acc.Plur.

‘Throw out these filthy-things!’

In (67) saleté refers to a quality, therefore to an abstraction, in (68) the same word refers to a qualified thing: after having been separated (literally “abstracted”) from the thing it qualifies, the quality reintegrates the thing, the latter remaining completely unspecified, except for the fact that it is the bearer of the quality saleté\textsuperscript{15} (filth). We will assume that the process coming into play in the building of the result meaning of event nominals, is essentially the same we just described for the concrete interpretation of de-adjectival nouns like saleté (filth), whose basic sense is abstract. Such an assumption is not without posing some difficult problems, for instance the theoretical problem of deciding if the change of meaning at stake is a strictly grammatical, or rather a rhetorical phenomenon. However, for the time being, we will content ourselves with an assumption that has, at least, a good descriptive adequacy, and the merit of not being “ad hoc”.

3.2.2.2 The Exception of Creation

We may now return to the case of pure creation deverbal nouns, like construction, composition, and others, and to the contrast between (49) and (50) above, repeated here as (69) and (70):

(69) a. *La construction de cette maison est au bout de ma rue

the constrution of this house is at-the end of my street

b. *bināʾu hāḏa l-manzili yūǧadu fī āẖiri

construction.Nom. this the-house.Gen. stands at end

š-šāriʿi

the-street.Gen.

(70) a. La traduction de ce texte est confuse

the translation of this text is vague

‘The translation of this text is vague’

\textsuperscript{15} This process is very different from the one known as “object incorporation”: when the internal argument of a verb is incorporated, and so deleted, the result of the process is still a verb, with the same type of meaning as before. In the process under consideration, the “absorbed” argument gives its own ontological type to the predicative noun into which it merges, and the meaning of the noun becomes, from eventive, substantial.
At first sight, the unacceptability of (69) is very easy to understand: the subject of the sentence must refer to an event, but the predicate it receives is suitable for a physical object only. Now we have to answer the question why the sentence *la construction de cette maison* (the construction of this house) cannot get a result meaning, as does *la traduction de ce texte* (the translation of this text). The explanation we propose for this fact combines what we said about the “domain” of the lexicalization and the process of change from abstract to concrete meaning, with the assumed structure of the LCS of the corresponding verbs in II1a and II1b. Remember that for both types only the subordinate part of the LCS, which contains the result of the action, is lexicalized. In the case of an an, the argument structure of the head noun disappears, and in the process of change of sense as we describe it, the head noun itself “absorbs”, so to speak, the object: so *la construction de quelque chose* (the construction of something) becomes *une construction* (a construction) and *la traduction de quelque chose* (the translation of something) becomes *une traduction* (a translation). If one wants to be more specific about the translation he is speaking about, he/she can resort to mentioning one or the other or both of the participants that remain available in the first part of the LCS: the agent and the patient, since the patient appears twice in the LCS as shown in the following formula:

\[(71) \text{(act Nerval on Faust (so that) (become Faust (translated)))}\]

Thus, even if, through its absorption by the predicate, the patient has disappeared from the second part of the LCS, it remains in the first part and can be used, as well as the agent, as a descriptive adjunct to the head noun.

However in order to be more specific about a construction, one can only mention the agent, because the first part of the LCS does not mention any patient, the action itself being entirely underspecified, as shown in II1a. Therefore, from the following LCS

\[(72) \text{(act Le Corbusier (so that) (become This house (built)))}\]

we can obtain (52) repeated here under (73):

\[(73) \text{a. Cette construction de Le Corbusier est un chef d’œuvre} \]

‘This construction of Le Corbusier is a masterpiece’
b. hāḍa l-binā’u  li-Sinan  tuḥfatun
   ‘This construction of Sinan is a masterpiece’

but not (49) repeated here under (74):

(74) a. *La construction de cette maison est au bout de ma rue
   the constrution of this house is at-the end of my street

b. *binā’u  hāḍa l-manzili  yūǧadu fī āẖiri
   construction.Nom this  the-house.Gen. stands at end
   š-šāri‘i
   the-street.Gen.

The reason for the unacceptability of this sentence is that, once the patient-object in the second part of the LCS has been absorbed as it must be in the process of changing the meaning, there is no other mention of it left in the first part, capable of providing an adjunct complement for the head noun: the only participant now available is the agent, whose descriptive use is illustrated in (72).

Finally, a close examination of the conditions for a French or Arabic event nominal to get a result meaning led us to:

– an explanation of the particular syntactic behavior of pure creation nouns in both languages;
– the conclusion that there exist two main classes of result nouns, each of which is related to a particular subtype of complex LCS.

Conclusion

The parallel we drew between event nominals in Arabic and French leads us to the conclusion that both languages make essentially the same conceptual distinctions, by means of slightly different grammatical devices. Let us first sum up the concepts at stake in our investigation field.

The syntactic properties of the two kinds of event nominals we called “ans” and “uns” reveal that in both languages a distinction is made between “bound” and “free” events. Bound events are referred to by uns, and are uniquely identified by the unique argument of the head noun, the latter retaining the argument structure of its verbal root. Free events are referred to by ans, where there is no argument left, all the complements of the head noun being optional.
Turning towards the concrete result meaning of event nominals, we argued that their verbal basis has to have a complex LCS, but also that there are two main kinds of result nominals. Actually, creation and modification nominals behave in very different ways: the former cannot keep the internal argument of their verbal root as complement, while it is possible with the latter (remember the contrast for which we provided an explanation between: *(la construction de cette maison est au bout de la rue) (the construction of this house is at the end of my street) / *(bināʾu hāḍa l-manzilīyūǧadu fī āẖīri š-šāriʿi (the construction of this house stands at the end of my street) and la traduction de ce roman est plus courte que l’original (The translation of this novel is shorter than the original) / tarǧamatu r-rīwāyati aqṣaru mina n-naṣī l-ašliyyi (The translation of the novel is shorter than the original)).

All the differences between the grammatical devices the two languages make use of, in order to differentiate the concepts of bound event and free event, on the one hand, and of creation-result nominal and modification-result nominals on the other hand, can be summarized in a few words: Arabic event nominals remain more verbal than their French counterparts. In both languages, the head noun of uns has relatively more verbal properties than the head noun of ans, but on the whole the verbal properties of Arabic uns are more numerous than the verbal properties of French ones. Even in ans, where in both languages the head noun keeps very few verbal properties, we have seen that for the head noun of an Arabic an to be bound to receive a determiner, it has to be modified by a group adjective representing the agent. In short, things are as if the categorial nominal feature was stronger in French than it is in Arabic. But in spite of these parametric differences, both languages share a basically identical conception of what an event is, and what the result of an event can be.

References


