

Italian *-ata* event nouns and the *nomen vicis* interpretation

Lucia M. Tovena¹ and Marta Donazzan²

¹ Université Paris Diderot-Paris 7, UFR Linguistique <tovena@linguist.univ-paris-diderot.fr>

² Universität zu Köln, Institut für Deutsche Sprache und Literatur <mdonazza@uni-koeln.de>

Nomina vicis are nouns that denote in a domain of acts, free from considerations of temporal localisation. This paper tries to substantiate this notion by looking at Italian *-ata* event nouns, and deriving features of this reading from characteristics of these nominalisations. Event nouns ending in *-ata* are simple event nouns with no argument structure and yet they are endowed with the capacity of characterising an act, which is a dynamic, durative and bounded manifestation of an event property, and of affecting the full expression of such a characterisation when the noun is inserted in argumental position or under a light verb. A detailed examination of the semantic trace of an initiator within the nominalisation, and of aspectual and eventive conditions associated with it leads us to propose that the *-ata* suffix contributes an active semantic constraint on potential external arguments that, in turn, supports the eventive only and referential only reading of the nominal.*

KEYWORDS: *ata*-nominalisation, *nomen vicis*, event participants, semantics

1. Introduction

1.1. The issue

Event nouns ending in *-ata* in Italian,¹ e.g. *sciata* (act of descending on skis), *mangiata* (act of eating), are nominal forms that denote in the event domain and are traditionally analysed as deverbal nominalisations.² Our interest in this group of Italian nominalisations was sparked by their ability to exhibit a *nomen vicis* reading, i.e. they are not simply event nouns, but specifically nouns that denote in domains of event occurrences. For example, *sciata* is a count noun that denotes acts of descending on skis, not the activity of skiing that is instantiated by events.

The notion of *nomen vicis* is intuitively clear, but formally difficult to capture, as it calls for the definition of a domain of event occur-

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rences or acts that is not a type of structure available for a nominal in current semantic formalisations. A noun like *sciata* would be a property that denotes in a domain of acts, if it is possible to spell out the difference with a property of events formally. In this paper, we try to derive the other characteristics of the deverbal nominalisations ending in *-ata* from the notion of *nomen vicis*. We study their distribution in order to reach a better understanding of the semantics of these event nouns, and to contribute to developing an explanation of the peculiarities of their behaviour. Nominalisations ending in *-ata* are not complex event nouns in the terms of Grimshaw (1990), and yet they seem to impose constraints on potential arguments. Moreover, these are the event nouns that are used with light verbs to form sentences with episodic interpretation, i.e. they are the nominals that get inserted in a construal that allows the expression of the initiator of the event. We derive such behaviour and distribution from the presence of aspectual and thematic constraints in the semantic content of the suffix.

At this stage, the *nomen vicis* reading is an operational concept, as it corresponds to an interpretation that is tied to event boundedness. There is something reminiscent of an episodic reading in nominalisations ending in *-ata*, but these are event nouns and not full sentences, and the event occurrences do not have explicit temporal anchoring.

1.2. Background

Italian nominalisations ending in *-ata* have been said by Mayo et al. (1995:912) to be derivations that ‘cannot normally be interpreted as types of actions, but only as individual or instantiated events’. Gaeta (2000, 2002) reinforces this observation with the remark that they cannot be accompanied by the definite article in the generic meaning. Such behaviour, illustrated by the marginality of (1a), is not shared with other nominalisations with eventive readings, cf. (1b).

- (1) a. #*La letta è un'attività solitaria.*
‘Reading(ATA) is a private activity’.
- b. *La lettura è un'attività solitaria.*
‘Reading(URA) is a private activity’.

According to Gaeta, genericity is blocked because the domain of denotation of these nouns is discretised by perfective aspect and the resulting single units cannot be used to refer to the process. The singularisation of the occurrences of events that characterises the inter-

pretation of these event nouns is ascribed to the *-ata* derivational morpheme, but the idea is not developed further.

An inflectional form could be at the origin of the word-formation pattern of these event nouns - the feminine form of the (Latin) past participle - although the diachronic process of re/grammaticalisation is not yet entirely understood. Two main hypotheses have been proposed in the literature. The pattern is viewed as the result of a reanalysis of a form associated with a change of semantic function (Meyer-Lübke 1890; Rohlf's 1969), or it is viewed as a form that adopted the functions of another Latin suffix, the ending *-tus* of *nomina actionis*, with a change in gender (Collin 1918). As for the specifics of the interpretation as *nomina vicis*, Ippolito (1999), Gaeta (2000) and Tovena (2014) underscore that traditional contributions of perfective aspect are the possibility of viewing events as complete making endpoints visible, and of focussing on the event as a bounded entity. Alternatively, discretisation has been ascribed to feminine gender. This recalls the fact that feminine forms can be morphologically more marked and be used for singulative meaning in several languages from different families. This proposal is mentioned by Gaeta (2002) and adopted by Acquaviva (2005).

Event nouns ending in *-ata* are relevant not only in the context of the discussion of nominalisations, but also in the context of the discussion of light verb constructions. These event nouns share common features with other forms used to delimit and circumscribe events across languages, such as the *ism al-marra*³ use of cognate objects in semitic languages or event nominals in light-*v* constructions (i.a. Mittwoch 1998; Pereltsvaig 2002; Al Zahre 2003); see the English example in (2) and the Italian example in (3), and the contrast (4a) vs. (4b).

- (2) *Daniel took a walk down the lane.*
- (3) *Daniele ha fatto una passeggiata nel parco.*
'Daniel took a walk in the park'.
- (4) a. #*Walk is a healthy activity.*
b. *Walking is a healthy activity.*

In previous work (Tovena & Donazzan 2015), the aspectual properties of reference to occurrences of events and of boundedness, were expressed as two pieces of information contributed by the entry of the suffix *-ata*; see the semantics for the suffix in (5).

- (5) $\lambda\text{Root } \lambda e [\text{Root}(e) \wedge \text{INITIATOR}(e)=x \wedge \text{DELIMIT}(e)]$

In prose, (5) says that the suffix combines with Root, which is an a-categorial root, and yields a predicate of events. The predicate INITIATOR ensures the dependency of the event e from a causing entity. DELIMIT ensures its boundedness. The event is associated with an initiator by a function that takes the event variable as its argument and returns an individual that is assigned as a value to variable x . This variable x is not bound by a lambda operator, because the nominalisation does not have a syntactically realised external argument. The free individual variable x can be identified by virtue of there being a unique event: an event that has an initiator. The end result is that whenever the Davidsonian variable gets instantiated, the event is associated with a particular individual. This infeasible and specific association between event and initiator right from the beginning is at the base of the *nomen vicis* reading. The presence of the initiator contributes to the eventive reading of the nominalisation. The definition of the properties of such an initiator is a delicate issue. We will discuss this further in section 2.2.

Representation (5) is shown to capture two characteristics of *ata*-nouns, by transposing characteristics of a participial form to a noun suffix. One goal was to cover the intrinsic boundedness of the denoted events. The second characteristic intended to be captured is that *ata*-nouns are the only derived event nouns that are used in light verb constructions such as in (3).

1.3. The foreground

In this paper, we pursue our exploration of a constructionist approach, and elaborate on the thematic and aspectual constraints to which the nominalisation ending in *-ata* is subject. We work under the assumption that nouns can denote events without necessarily being deverbal. This implies that we assume that roots have some lexical information, an assumption that is currently under discussion within the community of Distributed Morphology; see the paper by Harley (2014) and its related commentaries (within the same journal issue).

The relevant roots entering the derivation of nouns ending in *-ata* have interpretations as predicates of events. We might refer to them as verbal roots and as lexical bases in what follows, without implying that they have a verbal syntactic category. The nominalisation is obtained by suffixing a root with the derivational suffix *-ata*, and in line with our previous work, cf. (Tovená & Donazzan 2015) in particular, we assume that the base is a root; hence it is a-categorial. We explore the hypothesis that it is lexically specified for denoting in the event domain, but it does not contribute structure for the projection of arguments, as illustrated in (7) for the root $\sqrt{\text{mang}}$ ‘eat’.

(6) [NP -ata [RootP $\sqrt{\text{mang}}$]]

(7) [[mang]] = λe [$\sqrt{\text{eat}}(e)$]

By representing a root as in (7), we assume that roots do have some lexical content, and that interpretive constraints following from lexical specification play a role before PF/LF, cf. Harley (2014) for relevant discussion. In this sense, we can suppose that the nominalisation imposes some constraints on the participants in the event, in spite of their being devoid of argument structure.

The derivation proposed via the suffix in (5) differs from Ippolito's (1999) proposal insofar as the steps where the root receives a thematic vowel and participial morphology are not separated, and it is assumed that *-ata* is an autonomous derivational suffix in today's Italian, with specific restrictions. The suffix merges at the sublexical level, assuming that the notion of word still has some content. It contributes a form of perfective aspectual information that is standardly associated with the past participle, but that is reshaped by Tovena (2015, 2017) so as to account for the absence of an outer aspectual level inside the nominalisation; see section 4.3 below. This proposal finds partial motivation in the hypothesis of a diachronic development of the *-ata* suffix from an inflectional suffix to a derivational one, as mentioned in the preceding section.

Before turning to the details of the analysis, let us add one last qualification. The general goal of this paper is to provide a characterisation of the constraints of the nominalisation that may be useful to predict its productivity and the contexts in which it can be used. The pattern is very productive and there are exceptions to the aspectual restriction, as correctly pointed out by one of the reviewers. Our characterisation applies to the prototypical behaviour, and cases such as *scoperta* (discovery) and *entrata* (entry) are put among the odd number of exceptions that we must leave aside for the moment.

The paper is organised as follows. The expression of the participants to the event is discussed in section 2. We start by briefly recalling previous syntactic analyses of *ata*-nouns in light verb constructions. Then, we review evidence supporting the assumption that these are built with roots denoting dynamic events that at least presuppose initiators, and that the presence of initiators is relevant for their use in light verb constructions. The realisation of a potential *undergoer* is also submitted to constraints, since *ata*-nouns denote bounded instances of necessarily atelic event properties, and undergoers can be expressed provided they do not measure out the event. The *nomen vicis* reading in argument position and in the light verb construction

is then examined in section 3. Finally, section 4 is devoted to aspectual issues. After discussing restrictions on the lexical aspect of roots and forms of aspectual coercion, the perfective contribution of the suffix is detailed. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Event participants

2.1. Key elements from previous syntactic proposals on *ata*-nouns event structure

Previous proposals on the argument structure of *ata*-nouns primarily focused on the occurrence of these nouns in light verb constructions. A descriptive generalisation about *ata*-nouns that enter light verb constructions is presented in (8). The arity of the verbal base is taken to correlate with the selection of the light verb (Samek-Lodovici 2003). The case in (8a) is illustrated in (9), and sentence (10) illustrates the case in (8b).

- (8) a. *ata*-nouns construed on transitive verbs occur with light-*v dare* 'give'
b. *ata*-nouns construed on intransitive verbs occur with light-*v fare* 'do'

(9) *Mario ha dato una mescolata al minestrone.*
'Mario gave a stir to the soup'.

(10) *Gianni ha fatto una camminata.*
'Gianni had a walk'.

Samek-Lodovici (2003) relates the selection of the light verb with the arity of the lexical verb through a mechanism of transfer and suppression of indices. In order to form a complex predicate, a verb is turned into a light verb by erasing the indices of its arguments. The thematic indices of the arguments of the nominalised lexical verb get transferred to the arguments of the light verb. In sum, in the style of approach adopted by Samek-Lodovici (2003), the bulk of the information comes from the nominalisation, and light verbs provide just some structural instructions.

On the contrary, Folli & Harley (2013) argue that *ata*-nouns do not contain an internal verbal structure, nor do they contain an argument structure, but they must nevertheless realise event participants in a light verb construction (cf. the issue of the selection of the light verb below). Here is where their proposal somewhat rejoins Samek-Lodovici's, and its internal coherence is weakened.

In the specific of *ata*-nouns, Folli & Harley (2013) follow Ippolito (1999) and assume that a non-categorised root attaches to a the-

matic projection that yields an inflected verbal stem. A nominaliser feminine suffix *-a* closes off the derivation of the nominalisation. The participial suffix *-ata* is added at the level of a participial phrase PrtP together with event-denoting semantics. Importantly, for Folli & Harley the nominalisation is built by attaching the participialising projection to a thematic vowel projection ThP, not to a vP. Recall that in this framework, a fully verbal form must include a vP. Consequently, the existence of a nominalisation that is a form carrying an inflectional suffix of the verb, such as a participial form, does not imply that such a nominalisation has the potential for projecting an argument structure.

The output of this derivational pattern is however not consistent with the mechanism that the authors propose for composing the complex predicate. The lack of verbal structure does not prevent the nominal from having some form of argument structure, since, according to Folli & Harley (2013:94), when the nominalisation merges as the complement of a functional vP projection headed by the light verb, ‘the properties of the light verb [...] and the semantic and *argumental properties of the event nominal* itself compose to derive the complex characteristics observed in these constructions’ (emphasis added). The part of generalisation in (8) that concerns internal arguments is therefore captured by what appears to be an implicit pairing between the transitivity of the lexical base with the presence of an Applicative projection. *Dare* (and *fare*) is the spell out of a light-*v* structure with (respectively without) the Applicative head.

As for the external arguments, Folli & Harley (2013) claim that ‘the complex predicates formed with both *fare* and *dare* are agentive, and both these light verbs select an external argument of their own’ (Folli & Harley 2013:102). This assumption is in line with the generalisation stated in their previous work on Italian causative verbs. Folli & Harley (2005) propose a system according to which *fare* lexicalises light verbs with different semantic flavours. In this system, the causative *fare* that selects a nominal argument is necessarily formed on an agentive light verb v_{DO} ; as a consequence, in the complex construction where *fare* embeds the *-ata* nominalisation, the interpretation of the construction with *fare* is ‘X agentively does V-*ata*’ (Folli & Harley 2013: 102).

In sum, Folli & Harley (2013) strive to capture Samek’s insight that the choice of the light verb is dependent on the number of arguments in the construction, but they implement it in a constructionist framework. The underlying causative verb always has the same semantic flavour: it is an agentive light-*v*, whose lexical realisation as *fare* or *dare* reflects the result of incorporating an Appl head in the latter case.

There are two points in Folli & Harley's proposal that urgently call for discussion. Firstly, it is not clear how the spell out of the light verb as *fare* or *dare* can possibly be motivated by the need to realise different argumental properties if neither the nominalisation nor the root have syntactic argument structure. Secondly, if *ata*-nouns, despite their lack of vP structure, are still predicates of events, they must contribute a Davidsonian argument. However, its composition with the event argument introduced by v_{DO} is not explicitly discussed in the analysis they propose.

The construction of this form of complex predication is a tough issue in itself, with at least two components. On the one hand, the selection of the light verb may well go beyond a mere issue of number of arguments that have to be transferred or licensed, contra (Grimshaw & Mester 1988; Samek-Lodovici 2003; Folli & Harley 2013), but in agreement with what has been said about other languages (Butt & Geuder 2001). On the other hand, the contribution of the event noun may go beyond the role of restrictor. Indeed, the characterisation of the event denoted by the complex predicate is the result of composing the information contributed by the nominalisation with that of the light verb, and this is also reflected in the selectional requirement on the external argument of the complex predicate.

The proposal put forth in (Tovenà & Donazzan 2015) fits in this thread. *Ata*-nouns are viewed as particular event nouns that can enter a light verb construction and that, in such an environment, contribute information on the essence of the events but also bring in constraints on the argument structure, namely restrictions on the participants that are acceptable. Moreover, this proposal is intended to contribute to the general debate on this type of nominalisation, including cases where the nominal is used outside of a light verb construction.

An important piece of data on the complex behaviour of *ata*-nouns is represented by the contrast between the pairs of sentences in the English and Italian examples from (11) to (14) from (Donazzan & Tovenà 2016b). All these sentences display the unaccusative verb *fall* (in Italian, *cadere*). They differ in the type of entity referred to by the noun phrase in subject position, and in the verbal or nominalised form the occurrences of *fall* and *cadere* take in the sentences.

- (11) a. *Yesterday, Mario fell down.*
b. *Ieri Mario è caduto.*
- (12) a. *The Berlin Wall fell in 1989.*
b. *Il muro di Berlino è caduto nel 1989.*

- (13) a. *Yesterday, Mario had a (great) fall.*
b. *Ieri Mario ha fatto una (brutta) caduta.*
- (14) a. *#In 1989, the Berlin Wall had a (great) fall.*
b. *#Nel 1989, il muro di Berlino ha fatto una (brutta) caduta.*

This contrast cannot be exclusively imputed to properties, such as animacy, that the entities participating in the event are expected to exhibit in regards to the particular verbs *fall* and *cadere*. The sentences in (11) have an animate subject, while the subject is inanimate in (12). This difference does not affect the status of the sentences, which are in all cases perfectly acceptable. On the contrary, differences appear when the verbal predicate is nominalised and is embedded in a complex predication headed by a light-verb, respectively *have* and *fare*, litt. ‘do’; see the sentences in (13) and (14). Here the animacy difference seems to be of importance, and sentences (14) with inanimate subjects are unacceptable, whereas (13) are fine.

The representation (5) intends to capture the restriction illustrated by the unacceptability of (14) via the property *INITIATOR*, which is understood as being more abstract and general than animacy, i.e. like a cover term for semantic roles such as Agent and Cause. The property represents a thematic trace of the external argument of the eventive base that yields a constraint on individuation of single instances of events, and shapes the denotation of the nominalisation. It is worth underscoring that *INITIATOR* is a predicate that constrains the event, but does not introduce a semantic role nor does it license a syntactic argument. Therefore, *ata*-nouns are simple event nouns and take no arguments. Technically, the effect of introducing just a semantic trace is implemented by the fact that the value returned by *INITIATOR* is assigned to a variable that remains free. This semantic trace is an important characteristic of *ata*-nouns and surfaces in their use in light verb constructions, as illustrated by the sentences in (13) and (14). The definition in (5) is also intended as a semantic counterpart of remarks made on the relevance of the external argument in syntactic discussions of eventive participles across languages; see the terms ‘semantically active’ (Cornilescu 2001) or ‘syntactically interpretable’ (Lundquist 2011) used by these authors. The external argument is the participant that identifies events lacking a thematic argument. These proposals do not contradict Grimshaw’s (1990) claim that nominalisations remove the external argument, but rather they complement it by showing that some information can be admitted inside the nominalisation without having a syntactic direct counterpart.

In sum, representation (5) encodes information needed to differ-

entiate the behaviour of *ata*-nouns – within light verb constructions and outside of them – in a compositional way. If it is recognised that the nominal itself contributes some information about the participant initiator of the denoted event, only then does composing the constraints on the external argument realisation become possible.

Section 2.2 is intended to corroborate our proposal. Evidence for a semantically active initiator is presented for cases where *ata*-nouns occur within light verb constructions, and for occurrences in argumental positions. Next, section 2.3 recalls some semantic constraints on the realisation of the participant acting as the initiator of the complex predicate, captured in terms of *agentive dispositions*, i.e. qualified properties that are seen as forces for the realisation of a class of events. Finally, section 2.4 presents restrictions on the realisation of a potential undergoer of the event, thus introducing the issue of aspectual restrictions developed in section 4.

2.2. Initiator of the event

As stated above, ‘initiator’ is a cover term for semantic roles such as Agent and Cause, and we shall discuss different types initiators irrespective of the properties of the entity that instantiate this role, e.g. animate entities, instruments and natural forces. These semantic constraints are certainly relevant for the felicity of the light verb construct with *ata*-nouns and we will discuss them in detail in section 2.3. In this section we present evidence that points to the existence of an initiator in the semantic content of the nominal.

We start with the case of *ata*-nouns in light verb constructions. As pointed out by Tovenà & Donazzan (2016), the existence of the initiator of the event denoted by the *ata*-noun seems to at least be presupposed by a Root denoting a dynamic event. Evidence for a trace of the conceptual semantic role of initiator comes from comparison with other causative constructions construed with a light-verb in Italian. The sentence in (15) is the Italian version of so-called *faire-par* causatives (Kayne 1975).

- (15) *Mario ha fatto potare la siepe (dal giardiniere).*
‘Mario had the bush trimmed (by the gardener)’.

The embedded infinitive in Romance *faire-par* causatives has been analysed as a passivised clause by Donazzan (2016). Accordingly, the external argument of the embedded infinitive (also called Causee) is suppressed in syntax, and it is either interpreted as existential, or it is realised as an adjunct (Bruening 2013). In the case of the exis-

tential interpretation, we expect that the Causee should have an arbitrary interpretation, and cannot be controlled or bound by the matrix subject (Williams 1987). This fact is confirmed by example (16), where the Causee is not expressed by an adjunct *by*-phrase. The sentence is naturally understood as meaning that Mario had someone else trimming the bush. The Causee cannot be Mario himself.

- (16) *Mario ha fatto potare la siepe.*
'Mario had the bush trimmed'.

On the contrary, note that the initiator of the *ata*-event noun is always interpreted in a non-arbitrary way in complex predicate constructions headed by the light-verb *fare*. Namely, the initiator of the drinking event in (17) is necessarily co-identified with the subject of the light verb; cf. also (Alba-Salas 2004). This is so despite the fact that in *ata*-nouns the initiator can, but need not, be expressed when the noun is used in argumental position. Sentence (18) is about Gianni's act of drinking, and the initiator is expressed by a genitive PP. The contrast between the interpretation of (16) and (17) suggests that the syntactic realisation of the initiator of the passivised clause event is not the same as in the *ata*-nominalization under a light verb.

- (17) *Mario ha fatto una bevuta (*di Gianni).*
'Mario had a drinking (*of Gianni)'.
- (18) *Quanto ci è costata la bevuta di Gianni!*
'How much did it cost us the drinking of Gianni!'

The transfer from the root to the support verb is the natural output of the syntactic construction with a light verb, where the *ata*-nominalisation is the direct complement of *fare* and *dare*. However, this is a special direct complement because it denotes an act, with its specificity and its participants. The traditional role of a direct object is not to introduce an argumental structure or some constraints on the external argument of the predicative structure. The proposal put forth by Samek-Lodovici (2003) was tantamount to a schematised rule of transfer following this logic. We work within a different framework, with different constraints to satisfy, and we preserve the semantically active role of the various elements. Our proposal is an attempt to treat this form transfer in a compositional way.

Let's turn now to occurrences of *ata*-nouns outside of light verb constructions. Empirical evidence supporting the existence of the ini-

tiator of the events denoted *ata*-nouns in all their occurrences comes in various forms. First, the semantic trace of the initiator inside the nominalisation can license purposive clauses, see data like (19).⁴

- (19)
- a. *Durante una nuotata per levarsi di dosso rabbia e cattivi pensieri, Montalbano si imbatte in un cadavere [...]*
'During a swim to wash off anger and bad thoughts, Montalbano comes across a corpse'.
 - b. *Questa è una bellissima giornata che inizia con una piacevole camminata per abituarti all'altitudine.*
'This is a wonderful day that starts with a pleasant walk to get used to altitude'.
 - c. *Quella scivolata per destabilizzare Rossi gli è costata la squalifica.*
'That slide for unbalancing Rossi costed him a disqualification'.

Second, the contrast between (12) and (14) tells us that if the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 it is because someone felled it. This piece of information is lost if the event noun has only an anticausative reading, for example *crollò* ('fall/crumbling') in (20). The two event nouns behave differently with respect to the same participant in events that otherwise are quite similar. The initiator of the event is conceptually required to exist for the use of a nominalisation ending in *-ata* to be used felicitously, even though no argument is expressed and no overt realisation of the participant is expected.

- (20) *la caduta del muro di Berlino ≠ il crollo del muro di Berlino*
'the fall of the Berlin Wall ≠ the crumbling of the Berlin Wall'

INITIATOR works like a *passé-partout* component with multiple functions. It allows us to explain interpretive preferences of the nominalisation when it occurs outside the light verb construction and no participant is realised; being a simple event noun it has no arguments. In this case, the event noun reading of the nominalisation is still that of an act, i.e. an abstract dynamic entity with participants, and the participants can provide an interpretation for the complements of the noun, if these exist. This situation can be likened to that which one finds when interpreting the complements of event nouns, which are not deverbal and cannot be said to have inherited an argument structure. For instance, the PP *degli operai* introduces a potential argument of the event noun *sciopero* in *lo sciopero degli operai* ('the strike of the workers'), contrast it with *la fabbrica degli operai* ('the factory of the workers') where *fabbrica* is not an event noun (Huyghe et al., this volume). This difference is independent from the question of the status of the genitive, namely whether syntactically it is an argument or an adjunct. Analogously to what was just said

about *sciopero*, in *la caduta del muro* ('the fall of the wall'), the *muro* can be understood as a participant in the event of falling even though it does not instantiate an argument of the noun, which has no arguments and is a simple event noun.

INITIATOR also allows us to capture the observation that a constraint on a participant is visible when there is an argument structure, due to the fact that the nominalisation is part of a light verb construction; recall the contrast between (12) and (14). When the nominalisation is part of a light verb construction, it becomes the complement of a predicative head that realises one of the participants as its external argument. Not all participants in the event can discharge the role associated with the position of external argument of *fare*. Our claim is that the restriction is more visible in the light verb construction, but is associated with the nominalisation in all its occurrences.

In order to account for the pattern illustrated in (11) to (14) in a compositional way, we used the INITIATOR predicate in the entry of the suffix. Moreover, this predicate is present only in *ata*-nominalisations, and these nominalisations are the specific event nouns that are used in light verb constructions. The constraint of co-identification in complex predicates, illustrated by example (17), has been captured in (5) by assuming that the nominalisation itself imposes a constraint on one of the participants of the event that it denotes. The possibility to bind the semantically active initiator motivates its identification with the agentive subject of the light-verb, and drives the interpretation of the construction as expressing a complex predicate. Details about the compositions are provided in section 3.2. Prior to this, we will continue our discussion about the expression of the participants.

2.3. Semantic constraints on the realisation of participants

As indicated several times in this section, initiators are discussed because we are not committed to the presence of properties traditionally associated with agents, such as volitionality, animacy and the like. The term *initiator* has the quality of being relatively vague. As a matter of fact, a quick examination of the data shows that the relevant roots entering the derivation of nouns ending in *-ata* can be the base of verbs of various types. For example, some verbs traditionally classified as unaccusative in Italian allow *ata*-nominalisation, as we have seen in (11) to (14). Also, typically non-volitionally ergative verbs are found in the nominalised form ending in *-ata*, e.g. *sudare* 'sweat' (21a) and (22a). What drew our attention to the need to investigate the properties of the subject was the fact that constraints 'suddenly'

become visible when the nominalisation is in a light verb construction. The observations made for unaccusative *cadere* apply to ergative *sudare*. This type of verb can have a subject that is human (21a) or non-human (22a), and when the nominalised verb is inserted into a complex predication headed by a light-verb, inanimate subjects are no longer acceptable (22b). The contrast may well be due to the light verb, but not entirely due to this, because of the restrictions on the form of the event noun allowed in a light verb construction.

- (21) a. *Mario sta sudando.*
'Mario is sweating'.
b. *Mario sta facendo una sudata.*
'Mario is having a sweating'.
- (22) a. *Il salame sta sudando in questa fase di stagionatura.*
'The salami is sweating in this phase of the curing'.
b. **?Il salame sta facendo una sudata in questa fase di stagionatura.*
'The salami is having a sweating in this phase of the curing'.

Animacy, along with volitionality and sentience, has been used as a cognitive primitive defining the properties associated to argument positions, as in e.g. Dowty (1991). However, the animate/inanimate opposition that the data in (11) to (14), and in (22), suggest is empirically too rough. Examples (23) and (24) show that volitionality and sentience can be suspended with no consequences on grammaticality.

- (23) a. *Mario ha sudato senza saperlo.*
'Mario sweated without noticing'.
b. *Mario è caduto senza farlo apposta.*
'Mario fell without doing it on purpose.'
- (24) a. *Mario ha fatto una sudata senza neanche accorgersene.*
'Mario had a sweating without even noticing'.
b. *Senza volerlo, Mario ha fatto una brutta caduta.*
'Involuntarily, Mario had a bad fall.'

Animacy of the subject cannot be equated with volitionality or control, since unaccusative and ergative verbs are not (necessarily) volitional. In their standard form these verbs accept animate and inanimate subjects; see the examples (11), (12) and (24a). Both in their standard form (23) and as complement of complex predications (24), they accept modifiers that enhance non-sentience - the (a) sentences in (23) and (24) - and non-volitionality - the (b) sentences in (23) and (24) - of the animate participant in subject position.

Overall, the essential of the matter is that the agents can be characterised as volitional and sentient, not that they are volitional and sentient in the specific situation. An intensional definition of

agentivity was introduced in (Donazzan & Tovena 2016b) in order to capture these fine-grained distinctions, and define Dowty's (1991) Proto-role entailments as qualified properties ascribed to an entity rather than to an argument position. Assuming the association of a causal process to an event-type, agentive properties are relativised to types of events and called *agentive dispositions*. The definition in (25) makes explicit the link between the property and the manifestation that gives the property the status of a power.

- (25) agentive disposition = a property that has the status of a causal power with respect to a manifestation, and more generally with respect to a characterisation of events, making its bearer the first element in the causal chain leading to events under this characterisation.

Dispositions are seen to express a type of potentiality, i.e. a possibility rooted in objects and manifested as properties anchored to individuals. In the context of argument selection, an agentive disposition is a property that holds of the instantiator of the external argument and is understood as a causative power by which the bearer of the disposition has the potential to be the causer of the event described by the event predicate of the clause.

This is not to say that we rule out the case of a person that falls accidentally. A person may fall intentionally or accidentally, but a person has the potential to initiate an event of falling. On the contrary, in any possible situation, there is nothing in the properties attributed to an entity such as a box or a book, which may license its being the sole initiator of its falling.

2.4. Undergoer of the event

The realisation of a potential *undergoer* is also submitted to constraints. These *ata*-nouns denote necessarily atelic events, modulo some exceptions. The telicity constraint can be read from different points of view. It can be seen as following from a structural constraint on the introduction of an internal argument. Alternatively, it can be seen as deriving from a semantic selectional constraint for atelic and dynamic events. Structural constraints could in principle explain why telic intransitive events can enter *ata*-nominalisation, provided they are interpreted as dynamic and extended events, e.g. *entrare* 'enter'; cf. section 4.2.

The semantic constraint seems to somewhat override the structural one. The event denoted by the root can have a participant acting semantically as an undergoer. The undergoer however can never be understood as an incremental theme. Potentially telic events are de-telicised by expressing the undergoer with an indefinite bare noun, cf. (26) vs. (27).

- (26) *Gianni ha fatto una bevuta di vino.*
'Gianni had a drink of wine'.
(27) **Gianni ha fatto una bevuta del vino.*
'Gianni had a drink of the wine'.

More generally, the nominalisation does not denote events that necessarily imply an (incremental) theme, such as *break*-type verbs; see (28)-(30).

- (28) **Gianni ha fatto una spaccata di bicchieri.*
'Gianni made a break of glasses'.
(29) **Gianni ha fatto unabruciata di giornali.*
'Gianni made a burn of newspapers'.
(30) **Gianni ha fatto una spalancata di finestre.*
'Gianni made an open of windows'.

To sum up, events in the denotation of *ata*-nouns always have initiators. They may have undergoers, provided they do not measure out the event.

3. Nomina vicis *in context*

3.1. Interpretation of *ata*-nominalisations in argument position

Ata-nominalisations can be an argument of a lexical verb, in which case the event variable is existentially closed or bound by an operator. In cascade, the free variable *x* of the initiator in (5) gets instantiated.

- (31) a. *Una / La nuotata (di Luisa) era stata breve.*
'a/the/Louise's swimming had been short'.
b. *La nuotata lo aveva rilassato.*
'The swim had relaxed him'.
(32) *Luisa ha commentato la sbandata della Ferrari di Xxx.*
'Louise commented the skid of Xxx's Ferrari'.

As specified in the introduction, the nominalisation resists generic interpretation. We assume that the generic operator can bind the event variable, but leaves the individual variable free, and this results in an uninterpretable sentence, see (1a).

The habitual reading is accessible if the habit is ascribed to someone in particular; see the contrast in (33). An impersonal subject

gets a backgrounded referent interpretation, see (34).

- (33) a. *La mia nuotata quotidiana non si discute.* (Folli & Harley, 2013)
 'My daily swim is not to be discussed'.
 b. ?? *La nuotata quotidiana non si discute.*
 The daily swim is not to be discussed'.
- (34) *Nel pomeriggio si fa una nuotata.*
 'In the afternoon, we are going/go for a swim'.

3.2. Interpretation in light verb construction

As seen in the preceding section, *ata*-nominalisations can be used as nominal arguments in predicative structures with lexical verbs. They can also be inserted in light verb constructions. In either case they support referential readings, as opposed to generic ones. In this section, the interpretation of *ata*-event nouns in light verb constructions is to be discussed. In such a case, *ata*-nouns combine with a numerical predicate imposing a specific or vague cardinality requirement on the variable, and then with the light verb.

The task of the light verb is understood as bringing the event denoted by the nominal, with its properties, into the main predication. The nominalisation that occurs in a light verb construction merges with the head *v* via the rule of composition in (35).

- (35) Event Identification with Role Composition
 If *Z* is a binary branching structure with daughters *X* and *Y*, and
X is of type $\langle e, \langle v, t \rangle \rangle$ and
Y is of type $\langle v, t \rangle$,
 where 'e' is the type of individuals, and 'v' is the type of events, then:
 $[[Z]] = \lambda x \lambda e [[[X]](x)(e) \wedge [[Y]](e)]$
 a. $[[X]] = \lambda x \lambda e [\text{Agent}(e, x) \wedge \text{event}(e)]$
 b. $[[Y]] = \lambda e [\text{R}(e) \wedge \text{INITIATOR}(e)=x \wedge \text{DELIMITED}(e)]$
 c. $[[Z]] = \lambda x \lambda e [\text{R}(e) \wedge \text{DELIMITED}(e) \wedge \text{event}(e) \wedge \text{Agent}(e, x)]$

The first node *X* in (35) contributes the possibility of having an external argument *via* the agentive role and a Davidsonian argument for a dynamic eventuality. This is the contribution of the light verb. The second sister node *Y* in (35) is the contribution of the nominalisation. *Y* contributes a predicate of events that characterises the eventuality. It contributes to lexical aspect *via* constraints on the event atelicity and boundedness, and contributes a characterisation of the eventuality as an activity *via* the requirement that it be associated with an entity that is an initiator. Finally, the mother node *Z* is the complex predicate that is being built and that can apply to the exter-

nal argument. The requirements on the event coming from the two sisters are combined. The free individual variable in Y is identified and brought into the domain of the lambda operator that binds the individual variable argument of Agent in X. The role composition in (35) is licensed in virtue of the fact that the role contributed by the nominalisation is (either equal or) subsumed by the role contributed by the head daughter. The weaker specification is assumed to be subsequently deleted. In a second step, the complex predicate built via (35) composes with the expression that provides a value for the external argument position associated with the agentive role.

In the light verb structure, *ata*-nouns can be preceded almost uniquely by *un* ('a'), which is a cardinality predicate rather than a determiner, and a few other numerals and expressions that provide vague cardinality. The situation is different in the case of *ata*-nouns occurring in argument position, where a broader spectre of articles and quantifiers is available and their analysis as determiners is plausible.

4. Aspectual constraints

This final section is devoted to some aspectual issues. We present restrictions on the lexical aspect of roots that the prototypical nominalisations ending in *-ata* satisfy, and forms of aspectual coercion. Finally, the perfective contribution of the suffix is detailed.

4.1. Inner aspect: aspectual constraints on the eventive base

The condition INITIATOR ensures agent dependency. The requirement of a specific role for the external argument can be read into the restriction on the potential events that are denoted by the nominalisation. There is a ban on stative predicates, illustrated in (36).

- (36) *Mario conosce il francese / *ha fatto una conosciuta di francese.*
'Mario knows French/did a knowing of French'.

There is also a ban on (non-gradual) change of state predicates, such as *ammalarsi* 'get sick' that describe events that have undergoers.

- (37) *Mario si è ammalato / *ha fatto un'ammalata.*
'Mario got sick/did a getting sick'.

More generally, the aspectual constraints that concern the lexical base on which *ata*-nouns are construed can be described as a constraint of dynamicity [+dynamic], durativity [+duration] and atelicity

[–telic]. Taken together, these features license only activity predicates as possible aspectual class, cf. (38d).

- | | | |
|------|---|-----------------|
| (38) | a. <i>amare</i> ‘love’, <i>credere</i> ‘believe’, <i>conoscere</i> ‘know’
una amata, #una creduta, #una conosciuta | states |
| | b. <i>raggiungere</i> ‘reach’, <i>vincere</i> ‘win’, <i>riconoscere</i> ‘recognize’
#una raggiunta, #una vinta, #una riconosciuta | achievements |
| | c. <i>costruire una casa</i> ‘build a house’, <i>mangiare la pizza</i> ‘eat the pizza’, <i>scrivere un libro</i> ‘write a book’
#una costruita della casa, #una mangiata della pizza, #una scritta del libro | accomplishments |
| | d. <i>nuotare</i> ‘swim’, <i>correre</i> ‘run’, <i>dormire</i> ‘sleep’
una nuotata, una corsa, una dormita | activities |

However, telicity is not a semantic feature that can be easily associated with a verb, rather it characterises VPs. Moreover, the roots used for building *ata*-nominalisations are not just those of activities, as discussed in the next section. Note also that there is an element of idiosyncrasy in the productivity of this type of nominalisation, to which one must ascribe gaps that cannot be explained in a principled way.

4.2. *Forms of coercion*

Attributing durative, atelic and dynamic features to the event in the course of the nominalisation would result in what is traditionally called aspectual coercion in semantic literature. Aspectual coercion is not confined to verbs. Let’s consider the various aspectual classes and the forms of coercion.

Roots for predicates of accomplishments are detelicised. No quantized definite incremental themes are allowed, as pointed out above. Given that the telos cannot be easily suppressed with predicates of breaking, collapsing or sinking, *ata*-event nouns cannot be constructed.

- (39) *Mario è annegato!* **ha fatto un’annegata*.
‘Mario drowned/did a drowning’.
- (40) *Il vaso si è spaccato!* **ha fatto una spaccata*.
‘The vase broke/did a break’.

Roots for predicates of semelfactives have only processive readings (Donazzan & Tovenà 2016a). Arguably, this is no coercion. Not all semelfactive predicates will suffice.

- (41) *Ha fatto una lunga tossita che sembrava quasi che soffocasse*.
‘He coughed for a long time so much that it looked as if he was stifling’.

Roots for predicates of achievements are durativised, which also defocusses telicity. That is, coercion does not take the form of a slow-motion reading, nor does it focus on a preparatory phase, as is usual, cf. (42) and (43). Two components are modified by coercion of achievement predicates, because the event becomes durative, and the location is no longer a point where a transition takes place, but an extended space where the process unfolds. This yields an ‘event expansion’ effect that is free from ‘slow motion’ qualities, cf. (44).

- (42) ‘standard’ coercion focussing on the preparatory phase
- a. *sto arrivando*
‘I am coming (but I am still on my way to there)’.
 - b. # *arrivata* (‘arrival’), # *esplosa* (‘explosion’)
- (43) ‘standard’ coercion focussing on the resultant state
- a. *siamo partiti per un mese*.
‘We left for a month’.
 - b. # *partita* (‘leaving’)
- (44) ‘event expansion’ coercion
- Luisa fa un’entrata (nella stanza) / (?? attraverso il punto di accesso)*
‘Louise’s entering (the room)/(through the access point)’.

There may still be a resultant state, but it is no longer clearly identifiable as distinct. In particular, it does not identify a transition point as in the inchoative reading. For instance, in change of location verbs such as *entrare*, the ‘being inside’ state holds for the duration. Duration of the event may exploit the extent of the participant, cf. (45).

- (45) *L’entrata del treno in stazione*
‘The train entering the station’.

Aspectual coercion can be captured by adding a homogeneity constraint on the event in the semantic definition of the suffix.

4.3. Outer aspect within the nominalisation

We endorse the assumption that the derivational suffix *-ata* originates in past participle morphology, and it has specialised in becoming a nominalising suffix. Past participle formation in Italian is not sensitive to aspectual classes in the same way as for *ata*-nominals (Tovenà 2014), as the data discussed in the first part of this section have confirmed. Nowadays, *-ata* is a derivational suffix with aspectual

content. It contributes the operation that actualises the discretisation of the domain of a potential event predicate.

The perfective aspect contributed by the suffix *-ata* is necessarily adapted to the context of a nominalisation. Tovena (2015, 2017) has assumed that the semantic content of perfectivity is reshaped, as regards the existential status of the event and the fact that no temporal contextual information will be available. Grammatical aspect specifies the relation between topic time and event time, and event time is required to be a subinterval of topic time in the specific case of perfective aspect. Moreover, its semantic contribution is usually taken to be the existential closure of the event and the creation of a predicate of intervals (46).

$$(46) \quad \lambda P \lambda t \exists e [P(e) \wedge \tau(e) \sqsubseteq t]$$

P in (46) is the predicate of events, t is the temporal variable that is instantiated by contextual information and τ is the trace function that when applied to an event returns its running time. Tense specifies the relation of topic time to utterance time. There is no tense inside the nominalisation and, by definition, the variable t in (46) would not be instantiated. In a constructivist approach to nominalisation, the suffix *-ata* closes a derivational phase.

The suffix *-ata* is analysed as an event predicate modifier. The variable of the event is not existentially closed, and perfectivisation does not yield a predicate of intervals. The suffix expresses a perfectivity condition that is independent from temporal information by comparing the temporal trace of the event with a minimal instantiation. A measure function is a way of enforcing boundedness without tense information. The suffix *-ata* combines with a verbal root and works like an event predicate modifier that measures the event using contextual information; see the entry in (47) from (Tovena 2015, 2017). In other words, it is a modifier of event predicates that measures a P event by applying a function μ to the temporal trace of the event, and requiring the measure to be superior or equal to the minimal duration of events of type P .

$$(47) \quad \lambda P \lambda e [P(e) \wedge \text{INITIATOR}(e) = x \wedge \mu(\tau(e)) = d \wedge d \geq \text{Min}(\mu(\tau(e)))]$$

According to definition (47), a contextually determined measure function μ , which is a variable over measure functions for times such as hours or minutes, is applied to the temporal trace of the event, and the result is collected in d . The suffix is sortally restricted to apply to roots of processive predicates, which are homogeneous. A homogeneous dynamic predicate (activity) can be divided down to

minimal intervals (Dowty 1979) and can preserve its nature. The duration of the minimal interval is in most cases underspecified and depends on the particular predicate, but via $\text{Min}(\mu(\tau(e)))$, the minimal duration of an event of type P is related to the actionality restrictions in the input and to restrictions related to world knowledge. Events referred to via *-ata* nominals do not have to be short and can vary in duration. This fact is captured by specifying that the value of *d* is superior or equal to the relevant minimal duration.

Delimiting an event is a temporal issue, independent from the internal structure of the event. The presence of an initiator in the entry of the suffix licenses the implicit measuring as ‘arbitrary perfection’ of the event without outer aspect projection.

4.4. Aspect of the nominalisation

The end result is that the events denoted by nominalisations ending in *-ata* are delimited, not telic. The measure introduced by the suffix delimits the event in the absence of a topic time. This gives meaning to Gaeta’s (2000) intuition that the suffix contributes external aspect, which is thus captured within a nominal projection. Next, whatever aspectual operation is executed inside the nominalisation, it is closed off by the boundary of the phase. Therefore, merge under a light verb means that the aspectual properties of the nominalisation become part of the inner aspect contribution to the complex predicate.

5. Conclusions

The aim of our analysis had been to account for the specific interpretive properties of *ata*-nominalisations, namely their *nomina vicis* reading, in their uses as nominals that can be the argument of a full verb as well as the complement of a light verb. We have analysed *-ata* event nouns as simple event nouns, with no argument structure. Yet, they are endowed with the capacity of characterising the event, which is dynamic, durative and bounded, and of affecting the full expression of such a characterisation when inserted in argumental position, and under a light verb. For instance, it is observed that participants with potentially measuring out roles are confined to indefinite non-quantized nominals.

We have proposed that the *-ata* suffix, which by hypothesis is participial and carries grammatical aspect information, impacts on the Aktionsart of the deverbal noun, which is often believed to be inherited from the base/root. A detailed examination of the aspectual

and eventive conditions associated with *-ata* event nouns has motivated our proposal for a formal representation. In particular, it is proposed that the active semantic constraint that the suffix contributes on potential external arguments supports the eventive-only and referential-only reading of the nominal.

Our study of *-ata* nouns raises challenging questions for the framework of Distributive Morphology, concerning if and how semantics participates in constructing event nouns. We submit this analysis as a contribution to a more general discussion of the notion of *nomen vicis* which would include forms with different morphological makeups.

Notes

¹ Hereafter, the suffix that forms these nominalisations in contemporary Italian is referred to as *-ata* throughout the text, because this is the productive derivational suffix, with allomorphs that are no longer productive. Under the hypothesis that the nominalisation originates from a participial form, the first vowel would correspond to the thematic vowel of the verb in the inflexional function. Such a vowel may vary depending on the declensions to which verbs belong, e.g. *sciare* 'ski' yields *sciata*, and *cadere* 'fall' yields *caduta*. Irregular verbs may have specific forms, e.g. *leggere* 'read' has the form *letta* exemplified in (1a).

² In this paper we are interested in the event reading of *ata*-nouns and the characterisation of the potential participants in the events they describe. We will not consider derivations with nominal roots and derivations that do not denote in the event domain, namely the patterns in (i) – (iii) below.

i) *cucchiaio* ('spoon') – *cucchiata* – blow with an N / the quantity of *x* carried by N

ii) *notte* ('night') – *nottata* – the time span covered by N

iii) *peperone* ('pepper') – *peperonata* – food obtained by grinding/smashing N

Also, we do not specifically discuss the case where the output denotes an act of prototypical behaviour (e.g. *ragazzo* 'boy' – *ragazzata* 'childish act'). For a broader survey see e.g. Gatti and Togni (1991) von Heusinger (2002), Acquaviva (2005), and references therein.

³ This term, whose literal meaning is 'name of one time', belongs to the tradition of Arabic grammarians, where it is opposed to the notion 'name of the species'. The term *nomen vicis* that we adopt is an equivalent.

⁴ Most of the examples provided in section 2 are attested sentences coming from the web corpus ItWaC <https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/itwac-corpus/>.

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