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ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MORPHOLOGY AND SEMANTICS: THE ITALIAN SUFFIX *-ATA*

LIVIO GAETA

Abstract

Action nouns are often claimed to be sensitive to the actional properties of verbs. In this paper, an attempt will be made to consider the possible interactions between the morphological rules that form action nouns and the actional content of verbs. In this respect, a notion of internal and of external actionality of an affix will be distinguished, which are respectively responsible for the affix's selection properties and for its global semantics. The accurate analysis of the Italian suffix -ATA will reveal that both internal and external actionality play a crucial role in delimiting the input and in defining the semantics of the output.

1. Introduction

As has been pointed out by several authors (cf. Giacalone Ramat 1974; 1975; Ullmer-Ehrich 1977; Ehrich 1991; Bartsch 1981; 1986; ten Cate 1985; Brinton 1993), action nouns are sensitive to the actional properties of the verbs from which they are derived. More generally, actionality, or **Aktionsart**, is related to aspect, but refers primarily to "the type of event, specified according to a limited number of relevant properties", while aspect, in its narrow sense, refers to the "specific point of view adopted by the speaker" (Bertinetto 1994, 392). Thus, the latter is more strictly connected to sentence perspective, whereas the former represents semantic properties of verbs as lexical units (cf. Bertinetto 1986, Bertinetto–Delfitto 1992). Therefore, actionality will be extremely relevant for morphological rules. From an actional point of view, one usually distinguishes punctual vs. durative events (e.g., *to fall* vs. *to sleep*), telic or bounded vs. atelic or unbounded events (e.g., *to build* vs. *to smoke*), and static vs. dynamic events (e.g., *to believe* vs. *to run*). The combination of these actional values provides the four fundamental actional classes (states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements, cf. Vendler 1967). It is well known, however, that verbs display different actional values according to the different situational contexts (cf. Smith 1997) in which they occur (namely the presence and the type of verbal arguments, adverbials, etc.). Therefore, it can

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sometimes be difficult to establish the actional value of a predicate. Following Brinton (1993), predicates will be classified according to the denoted "prototypical" situation, which can be considered basic. For example, *smoking* is usually an atelic or unbounded activity, although *smoking a cigarette* is a telic or bounded predicate.

In this paper, I will discuss the possible interactions between the morphological rules that form action nouns and the actional content of verbs. In this perspective, an "external" and an "internal" type of actionality must be distinguished. By "external" actionality, the actional value proper of the deverbal noun is meant, which is responsible, for example, for the difference in grammaticality between the following Italian sentences taken from Castelli (1988, 346):

(1) (a) *Il dondolio della culla è stato improvviso.
'The rocking of the cradle was sudden'

(b) Il dondolio della culla è durato a lungo.
'The rocking of the cradle lasted for a long time'

In (1a), the actional value of the deverbal noun is incompatible with the predicate of the sentence *essere improvviso* 'to be sudden', in the same way that the adverb *improvvisamente* 'suddenly' is incompatible with the process *dondolare* 'to rock' (cf. (2a)), while this is not true for (2b):

(2) (a) *La culla dondolò improvvisamente (per qualche minuto).
'The cradle rocked suddenly (for some minutes)'

(b) La culla dondolò a lungo.
'The cradle rocked for a long time'

We can, however, attribute a meaning to the sentences in (1a) and (2a), when the ingressive aspect of the verb is selected:

(3) (a) Il dondolio (= mettersi a dondolare) della culla è stato improvviso.
'The (beginning of the) rocking of the cradle was sudden'

(b) La culla dondolò (= cominciò a dondolare) improvvisamente.
'The cradle began rocking suddenly'

External actionality can crucially be dependent on the morphological process forming the action noun, as in the following Dutch examples (cf. Bartsch 1986, 19):

(4) (a) De verzakking van het huis voltrok zich in twee jaar.
'The sinking-in of the house happened in two years'

(b) ?Het verzakken van het huis voltrok zich in twee jaar.

The unacceptability of (4b) reveals that in Dutch the nominalized infintive of a verb such as *verzakken* 'to sink-in' is incompatible with a bounded predicate such as *zich voltrekken*, whereas *verzakking* is acceptable in the same context. In this case, two different processes of derivation have given rise to deverbal nouns with different actional properties.

By internal actionality, the actional value of the affix proper is meant, which is revealed by the internal structuring of the deverbal noun, when for instance the actional value of an affix is incompatible with the actional value of a verb. In Thai, for example, two different prefixes select two different actional classes. According to Comrie–Thompson (1985, 351), the prefix *kaan* derives processual deverbal nouns, whereas the prefix *khwam* derives non-processual nouns:

(5) chyâ → kaan chyâ 'the believing (process.)'
chyâ → khwam chyâ 'the belief (non-process.)'

Thai does not possess adjectives; instead, verbs are employed to carry the attributive function. Notice that *kaan* is incompatible with verbs having a stative attributive value, as in (6):

(6) dii 'good' → khwam/*kaan dii 'goodness'
sŭăj 'beautiful' → khwam/*kaan sŭăj 'beauty'

In this case, the actional value of the prefix *kaan* is incompatible with the actionality of the basic verbs. In other words, *khwan* selects a particular actional class of verbs. Similarly, the Italian suffix *-za*[1] (cf. *distanza, convivenza, permanenza*, etc.) mostly selects stative verbs as possible inputs, as shown in Gaeta (1999). Moreover, the deverbal nouns formed with the suffix *-za* dis-

[1] There is no space here to discuss the format of the Italian suffix *-za* (for more details cf. Gaeta 1998; 1999). I will assume that the suffix operates on present participles (cf. *distante* → *distanza, convivente* → *convivenza*, etc.), with the supplementary addition of a vowel deletion rule wich operates everywhere in Italian word formation (cf. Scalise 1983): *distante+za* → *distant()+za* → *distan[t:s]a* → *distanza* ([*nt:s*] is morphotactically not allowed). This solution is easier than assuming a suffix *-V-nza*, where V represents the theme vowel of a verb, since this hypothesis cannot cope with cases like *preferire* → *preferenza, *preferinza*. Moreover, the format *-za* is assumed by Rainer (1989, 229) for a (semantically very close) suffix producing deadjectival nouns (cf. *elegante* → *eleganza, intelligente* → *intelligenza*, etc.).

play a stative external actionality, as they cannot be combined with bounded predicates:

(7) (a) *La convivenza di Giovanni con Roberta si compì in due anni.
'Giovanni's living-together with Roberta has been completed in two years'.

(b) *La permanenza di Antonio a Roma è stata completata.
'Antonio's permanence in Rome has been achieved'.

Therefore, internal actionality expresses the selectional properties of an affix with respect to the base verb, whereas external actionality refers to the actional values proper to an affix that emerge in the derivational process. More generally, we can imagine four types of interactions between internal and external actionality, as sketched in (8):

(8) (a) $A_i = \emptyset$ $A_e = \emptyset$ e.g. Du. *het verzakken*

(b) $A_i = \emptyset$; $A_e = F_x$ e.g. Du. *de verzakking*

(c) $A_i = F_x$; $A_e = \emptyset$ e.g. Thai *khwam suăj*, It. *permanenza*

(d) $A_i = F_x$; $A_e = F_y$ e.g. It. *la nuotata*

where A_i = internal actionality; A_e = external actionality;
F = actional feature.

In the first case (cf. (8a)), the affix does not display selection restrictions or modify the actional value of the verb. For example, the process of nominalization of the Dutch infinitive does not have any relevant effect on the actionality of an atelic verb, as seen in (4) above. On the other hand, the Dutch suffix *-ing* causes the telicization of an unbounded basic predicate. As represented in (8b), the external actionality of this suffix must be specified with the feature [+ bounded].

In the third case (cf. (8c)), the internal actionality of the affix is able to select a particular actional class of verbs, without modifying the external actionality of the nominalized predicate; accordingly, the deverbal noun preserves the selected internal actionality, as seen in (6) and in (7) above.

Finally (cf. (8d)), we can imagine that an affix displays selection restrictions and at the same time forms deverbal nouns that have a particular actional value, which is different from that of the basic verb. In what follows, I will try to show that this is the case for an Italian suffix which forms a consistent number of deverbal and denominal nouns and is quite productive (cf. Scalise 1983, Gatti–Togni 1991, Mayo et al. 1995):

(9) (a) dormire 'to sleep' → dormita
leggere 'to read' → letta
mangiare 'to eat' → mangiata
scorrere 'to run through' → scorsa

(b) gomito 'elbow' → gomitata
asino 'donkey' → asinata
giorno 'day' → giornata
sedia 'chair' → sediata

Diachronically, the suffix *-ata* that is used to form denominal nouns (cf. *gomit-ata, asin-ata*, etc.) corresponds to the feminine form of the past participle, as can be seen in the case of irregular verbs such as *leggere* 'to read' → *letta, scorrere* 'to run through' → *scorsa*, where the deverbal nouns are directly derived on the basis of the respective past participle (cf. *letto, scorso*). However, because of the huge number of regular verbs of the I inflectional class ending in *-are* such as *mangiare* → *mangiata*, the ending *-ata* was successively extended to nouns, giving rise to forms like those reported in (9b) (cf. Tekavčić 1972, 57). In what follows, I will not go into further formal problems. My purpose is to investigate the semantic content of the word formation rule forming deverbal nouns, yet I will not provide a precise format for the word formation rule. In the course of the paper, I will speak of ATA-nominals, referring generically to deverbal nouns derived from the feminine form of the past participle.

2. ATA-nominals and the "packaging" of information

With respect to other Italian nominalizations, "derivations in *-at(a)* are semantically restricted in such a way that they cannot normally be interpreted as types of actions, but only as individual or instantiated events" (cf. Mayo et al. 1995, 912). Therefore, ATA-nominals cannot be accompanied by the definite article in the generic meaning or by the null article, as is seen in (10):

(10) (a) Il nuoto/*la nuotata in piscina rilassa i muscoli.
'Swimming in the pool relaxes muscles'

(b) Domani ci sarà una gara di nuoto/*nuotata.
'A swimming competition will take place tomorrow'

Nuotata cannot denote the event or the process as such, but only a single instantiation of it. In fact, (10a) becomes grammatical, if *nuotata* is modified by a restrictive relative clause, as in (11):

(11) La nuotata che faccio di solito rilassa i muscoli.[2]
'The swim that I usually have relaxes my muscles'

In Talmy's (1988, 176) words, "a single instance of the specified equivalent units is taken and set in the foreground of attention", just as in the English examples of the kind *to breathe* → *take a breath* in the verbal domain, and *furniture* → *a piece of furniture* in the nominal domain. This is the well-known phenomenon of the packaging of the information contained in the predicate (cf. Paprotté 1988; Jackendoff 1991; Brinton 1993). More generally, we can assume a parallel between the verbal and the nominal domains. Bounded predicates can be compared to countable nouns, since they "can be directly or intrinsically counted" (cf. Mourelatos 1978, 429f). On the other hand, unbounded predicates can be compared to mass nouns, since they are subdivisible to infinity. The process of packaging allows one to express a mass noun or an unbounded predicate as a single instantiation respectively of the uncountable entity or of the process. This means that every portion of *sleeping* corresponds to the activity of sleeping, as well as every portion of *water* is still water. On the other hand, a portion of the event of arriving in Budapest cannot be considered the event of arriving in Budapest, as well as a portion of an apple, for instance its core, cannot be directly considered an apple. Thus, the process of packaging, and its opposite, i.e., the process of grinding (cf. Paprotté 1988; Jackendoff 1991; Brinton 1993), allows one to represent predicates and things in the inverse form with respect to their basic properties.

My claim is that ATA-nominals achieve the operation of packaging in the verbal domain. Unbounded predicates are transformed into single and bounded portions of the denoted activity. For this reason ATA-nominals cannot be accompanied by the definite article in the generic meaning; as single instantiations of the relevant activity, they cannot be used to refer to the process as such. Yet if in (10a) the ATA-nominal is accompanied by the indefinite article, the sentence becomes grammatical, as in (12):

(12) Una nuotata in piscina rilassa i muscoli.
'Swimming in the pool relaxes muscles'

[2] Similar considerations hold true when the ATA-nominal is used in a generic sense as in the following example:

(i) La nuotatina giornaliera che mi ha consigliato il medico mi ha fatto bene.
'The daily swim the doctor recommended to me was healthy'.

In this respect, Mayo et al. (1995, 912) observe that "this arises from an independent process of generalization that can be applied to any nominal concept".

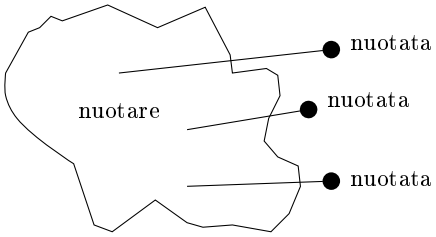
As is well known, the indefinite article is usually employed to achieve the operation of packaging in the nominal domain, rendering mass nouns countable as in (13):

(13)

il caffè	'the coffee'	vs.	un caffè	'a coffee'
l'acqua	'the water'	vs.	un'acqua	'a water'
la birra	'the beer'	vs.	una birra	'a beer'

The mass nouns are thus packaged into single instantiations, as is revealed by a sentence such as *Giovanni ha pagato un caffè, un'acqua e una birra* 'John has paid for a coffee, a water and a beer'. We can represent the operation of packaging fulfilled by the ATA-nominal by the picture in (14), in which single portions of the process denoted by a predicate without boundaries like *nuotare* 'to swim' are extracted and represented as countable points:

(14)



To describe this process in a more formal way, we can assume Jackendoff's (1991) ELT (i.e., 'element of') function. This function maps its argument onto a subentity of the larger entity denoted by the argument, as seen in (15):

(15) $$\text{nuotata} = \left[\begin{matrix} +\text{b}, -\text{i} \\ \text{ELT}\left(\left[\begin{matrix} -\text{b}, +\text{i} \\ \text{SWIM} \end{matrix} \right] \right) \end{matrix} \right]$$

From the process of swimming, which is unbounded (i.e., −b), but with an internal structure (i.e., +i), the ATA-nominal extracts a subentity provided with the opposite features, (i.e., +b, −i). Given the function of packaging operator achieved by ATA-nominals, it is not surprising that the selected predicate is durative and dynamic, i.e., a process, from which a single portion can be extracted. Thus, stative verbs cannot be the input of a packaging operator:[3]

[3] Elsewhere (cf. Gaeta 1999), it has been shown that in Italian predicates provided with the actional feature [− dynamic] are compatible in a productive way only with the suffix *-za* (cf. *distanza, permanenza*, etc.).

(16)	conoscere	'to know'	→	*conosciuta
	credere	'to believe'	→	*creduta
	giacere	'to lie'	→	*giaciuta

Before going into other selection restrictions of ATA-nominals, it is necessary to investigate another important property of them: they form a periphrasis with the support verbs *dare* and *fare*.

3. The periphrases *fare/dare una* V-ATA

Similar to English constructions like *to breathe* → *take a breath*, Italian displays periphrases involving the support verbs[4] *dare* 'to give' and *fare* 'to do', which bear the grammatical features of tense, mood, person, etc., whereas the ATA-nominals contain the lexical meaning of the verb of the basic sentence (cf. Salvi 1988, 79ff):

(17) (a) I bambini fanno una dormita.
'The children are having a sleep'

(b) La mamma dà un'ordinata alla casa.
'The mother puts the house in order'

The periphrasis with *fare* 'to do' mostly takes ATA-nominals derived from intransitive verbs[5] (cf. (17a)), whereas the periphrasis with *dare* 'to give' usually takes ATA-nominals derived from transitive verbs (cf. (17b)). According to Salvi (1988, 81), with respect to basic sentences both periphrases generally represent the event as short and occasional. Let us now investigate the Italian periphrases more deeply, by taking advantage of the very precise analysis on the similar English constructions with the support verbs *have* (or *take*)[6]

[4] For the notion of support verb, first elaborated for French, see, among others, Gross (1981), and, for Old Italian, La Fauci (1979).

[5] However, transitive verbs may also form periphrases with *fare*, e.g., *fare una mangiata* from *mangiare* 'to eat', *fare una bevuta* from *bere* 'to drink', etc. As will be shown below (cf. (25)), the relevant property here seems to be the actional characteristic of the predicates, since only activities are compatible with the periphrasis (cf. *fare una mangiata di pizza* vs. **fare una mangiata della pizza*).

[6] The difference between the two support verbs, which correspond to Italian *fare*, is partly structurally motivated (cf. Wierzbicka 1988, 337ff), partly dialectal: British (and Australian) English prefers *have*, whereas American English makes use of *take* (cf. Dixon 1991, 338).

and *give* accompanied by a converted deverbal noun as in (18), conducted by Wierzbicka (1988) and Dixon (1991, 336ff):

(18) John had a walk / a swim / a lie-down.
She gave me a push / a kiss / a look.

Notice that the English periphrases share more or less the same ditribution as the Italian one, since *have* is preferably (but not only, cf. *have a lick of the ice cream*) combined with intransitive verbs, whereas *give* usually takes transitive verbs. Moreover, the global semantics of the English periphrasis is similar to the Italian one, since—according to Wierzbicka (1988, 297)—it "presents the action (or the process) as limited in time". In other words, the periphrastic construction portrays the event as short and occasional. To distinguish between true periphrasis and other similar constructions, Dixon (1991, 339ff) adopts the four criteria listed in (19):

(19) (a) form: a periphrastic construction must show
(i) the same subject as the basic sentence;
(ii) *have, take* or *give* as the main verb;
(iii) the base form of the verb of the basic sentence as head of a post-predicate NP, preceded by the indefinite article *a* ∼ *an*;

(b) meaning: the periphrastic sentence should have essentially the same meaning as the basic sentence;

(c) adverb/adjective correspondence: the way in which an adjective provides semantic modification to the head of an NP is similar to the way in which an adverb modifies a verb, like in *Mary kissed him passionately* → *Mary gave him a passionate kiss.*

(d) preservation of peripheral constituents: all peripheral constituents of the basic sentence should be exactly preserved in the periphrastic construction like in *I always swim in the pool before breakfast on weekdays* → *I always have a swim in the pool before breakfast on weekdays.*

Space prevents me from describing the English periphrasis more thoroughly. In what follows, I will try to apply Dixon's criteria to the Italian periphrastic construction in order to distinguish it from other similar constructions, and, above all, to establish its semantic value. However, the main focus of the investigation will remain on ATA-nominals, which occupy the place of the converted deverbal nouns in the English periphrasis; we will see that compatibility with the periphrastic construction is an important test to distinguish between productive and lexicalised derivatives.

In this perspective, notice that the periphrastic construction allows us to distinguish it from the case in which an ATA-nominal is fully lexicalised, as in (20):

(20) (a) Alla festa abbiamo fatto una ballata e siamo subito andati via.
'At the party, we had a dance and went suddenly away'

(b) In ricordo della donna amata, il poeta fece una ballata molto commovente.
'In memory of his lover, the poet composed a very touching ballad'

In (20b), *ballata* has a concrete value, i.e., 'poem'; hence the sentence does not contain the periphrastic construction (apart from the obvious pun!). In fact, in (20b) the criteria seen in (19) above are violated, since (20b) does not presuppose a basic sentence such as *In ricordo della donna amata, il poeta ballò in maniera molto commovente* 'In memory of his lover, the poet danced in a very touching way'.[7] It can easily be checked how the above criteria hold true for the sentence in (20a), where we find the periphrastic construction.

Apart from this rather easy case, however, where the ATA-nominal is clearly lexicalised, the criteria in (19) help us discriminate in much more complex sentences. For example, criterion (19c), i.e., the adverb/adjective correspondence, distinguishes between the case in which we find the periphrasis and the case in which the nominal is lexicalised:

(21) (a) Gli alpinisti fecero una discesa rapida verso il paese.
'The mountaineers made a quick descent to the country'

(b) Gli alpinisiti fecero una discesa ripida verso il paese.
'The mountaineers made a steep descent to the country'

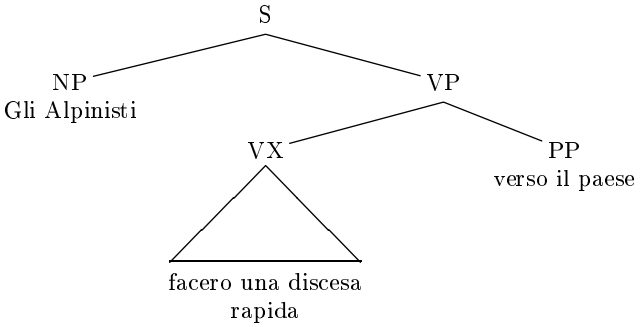
In (21b) the adjective *ripida* 'steep' does not correspond to the adverb of the basic sentence (cf. **Gli alpinisiti discesero ripidamente verso il paese* 'The mountaineers descended steeply to the country'), but refers to the path followed by the mountaineers, whereas *rapida* 'quick' in (21a) modifies as an adverb the predicate in the basic sentence *Gli alpinisiti discesero rapidamente al paese* 'The mountaineers quickly descended to the country'. Finally, (21b) also violates criterion (19d) above, i.e., the preservation of peripheral constituents. In fact, the modifier *verso il paese* 'to the country' qualifies the

[7] Notice that in the case of the lexicalised ATA-nominal (cf. (20b) above), the inflected verb can be substituted by a synonym, which is sometimes stylistically preferred as in (ii) below, while this is not the case with the true periphrastic construction:

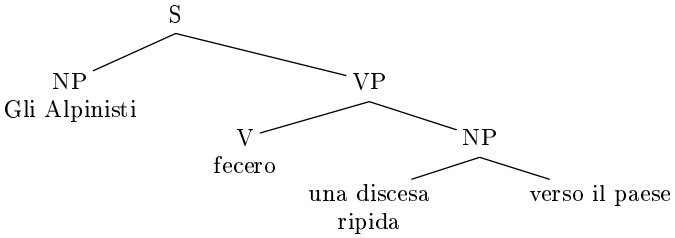
(i) *Alla festa abbiamo compiuto una ballata e siamo subito andati via.
(ii) Il poeta compose una ballata molto commovente.

concrete head noun *discesa*, by attributing a property (i.e., that of being directed to the country) to it, rather than being the goal argument of the basic predicate *discendere*. In terms of (really simplified) syntactic structure, this difference can be represented as in (22), where (22a) corresponds to (21a), and (22b) corresponds to (21b):

(22) (a)



(b)



where VX = complex verb

Another signal of a certain degree of lexicalization of the ATA-nominal is the combinability with the definite article. In fact, in (21b) it is possible to employ the definite article to modify *discesa*, whereas in (21a) this is excluded:

(23) (a) Gli alpinisti fecero la discesa rapida verso il paese.
'The mountaineers made the quick descent to the country'

(b) Gli alpinisti fecero la discesa ripida verso il paese.
'The mountaineers made the steep descent to the country'

The definite article in (23a) forces the same interpretation as in (23b), in which *discesa* is lexicalised. Therefore, we can say that *discesa* presents the ambiguity of a word undergoing a process of lexicalization. The employment of the definite article instead of the indefinite one is a good criterion to test the semantics of the periphrastic construction. Consider the sentences in (24):

(24) (a) Carlo ha raccolto materiale da riciclare.
'Charles has gathered recyclable material'

(b) Carlo ha fatto la raccolta di materiale da riciclare.

(c) Carlo ha fatto una raccolta di materiale da riciclare.

With respect to the basic sentence in (24a), the sentence in (24c), containing the periphrastic construction, represents the event as rather approximate and imprecise; its external boundary is not well-defined. In fact, from (24c)—as opposed to (24b)—we do not obtain the information that Charles has gathered all of the recyclable material, but that he has only done a very imprecise job. Notice that in this way the object of the basic verb is backgrounded; what is represented as relevant by the periphrastic construction is the approximate way in which the subject participates in the process. The backgrounding of the object is the reason why it is impossible to have the periphrastic construction with a predicate denoting an activity with a precise télos:

(25) (a) Maria ha fatto una mangiata di pizza.
'Mary stuffed herself with pizza'

(b) *Maria ha fatto una mangiata della pizza.
'Mary stuffed herself with the pizza'

This also holds true for the periphrastic construction containing *dare*. The activity is represented as imprecise and unbounded:

(26) *Sara diede una piegata ai vestiti in due ore.
'Sarah folded up dresses in two hours'

*Antonio ha dato una pettinata a Mario in due ore.
'Tony combed Mario's hair in two hours'

Thus, the periphrastic contruction as a whole achieves a detelicizing function: it selects an activity and represents it as short and occasional, in which—as Dixon (1991, 346) notes—"the subject indulges ... for a certain period". In other words, the periphrastic construction represents the activity as subject-oriented. In fact, the subject of the periphrasis must be human or intentional as shown by the following sentences:

(27) (a) ??La Gioconda ha fatto un'attesa di dieci anni prima di essere restaurata.
'The Gioconda has awaited ten years before being restored'

Tina ha fatto un'attesa di due ore prima di essere ricevuta.
'Tina has awaited two hours before being admitted'

(b) ??La pioggia diede una riempita alla piscina in giardino.
'The rain filled up the swimming pool in the garden'

Il giardiniere diede una riempita alla piscina in giardino.
'The gardener filled up the swimming pool in the garden'

Bounded predicates, i.e., in Vendlerian terms accomplishments and achievements, are excluded from the periphrastic construction and, accordingly, do not form an ATA-nominal, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (28):

(28) *fare una costruita/*fare un'arrivata/*fare una partita, etc.
lit. 'to make a build, an arrive, a leave'
*dare una costruita alla casa/*dare un'uccisa al gangster, etc.
lit. 'to give a build to the house, a kill to the gangster'

In Wierzbicka's (1988, 323) words, these predicates are excluded from the periphrastic construction since they have "an external goal and a natural boundary (reached when the goal is attained)". The case of *ammazzata* from *ammazzare* 'to slaughter' is very interesting, since it actually occurs as an ATA-nominal in the periphrastic construction:

(29) *Il macellaio fece un'ammazzata di maiali per preparare le salsicce.
'The slaughterer slaughtered up pigs to make sausages'

Il macellaio fece un'ammazzata per preparare le salsicce.
'The slaughterer worked hard to make sausages'

However, *ammazzata* does not refer to the event of slaughtering, but to the slaughterer's getting tired during his work.

4. Marginal cases, exceptions, and the productivity of -ATA

Having illustrated the basic semantics of ATA-nominals, let us now try to extend the boundaries of our investigation. There is indeed a number of verbs that do not fit into the picture sketched above. They form (roughly) two classes. First, there is a number of achievements that display an ATA-nominal which is compatible with the periphrastic construction:

(30)

caduta (< 'to fall')	entrata (< 'to go in')	salita (< 'to go up')
calata (< 'to go down')	fermata (< 'to stop')	scappata (< 'to rush off')
cascata (< 'to fall')	rientrata (< 'to go backin')	scivolata (< 'to slip')
comparsa (< 'to appear')	risalita (< 'to go back to')	uscita (< 'to go out')
discesa (< 'to go down')	riuscita(< 'to go out')	venuta (< 'to come')

There is no space to analyse the exact behaviour of these verbs (for a thorough analysis, cf. Gaeta 1998). Let me just observe that many of these derivatives are partially or fully lexicalised, since they violate the criteria established in (19) above. For example, *entrata* and *venuta* are possible only in constructions like the ones in (31a); otherwise (cf. (31b)), they are ungrammatical:

(31) (a) fare una entrata improvvisa
'to make a sudden entrance'

fare una venuta improvvisa
'to make a sudden coming'

(b) *fare un'entrata nella stanza
'to make an entrance into the room'

??fare una venuta da Roma
'to make a coming from Rome'

Thus, ATA-nominals formed on the basis of achievements that are compatible with the periphrastic construction seem to be rather marginal with respect to the large set of words derived from unbounded verbs.[8]

Second, there is a group of verbs that are incompatible with the periphrastic construction:

[8] Many verbs listed in (30) belong to the so-called class of ergative (or unaccusative) verbs (cf. Salvi 1988, 47ff). Drawing on this aspect, Bordelois (1993, 172) has claimed that in Spanish "el sufijo *-Da* ... se extiende a todos los ergativos, en sentido estricto o en sentido laxo". The Spanish suffix *-Da*, which corresponds to It. -ATA, since it also derives deverbal nouns from the feminine past participle form, would only be compatible with ergative verbs, either of the strict type (cf. *caída* 'fall', *salida* 'exit', *llegada* 'arrival', etc.), or of the loose type (i.e., in her view, verbs having a non-agentive subject, such as *vista* 'sight', *mirada* 'look', etc.). However, this analysis cannot cope with a number of activities, which, as well as in Italian, give rise to deverbal nouns such as *chupada* from *chupar* 'to suck up', *mamada* from *mamar* 'to suck', *pisada* from *pisar* 'to trample on', etc. (cf. Rainer 1993, 438ff; Lüdtke 1978, 363ff). Moreover, it seems that, at least in South American Spanish, "in Verbindung mit Funktionsverben wie *dar, echar, pegar*, u.a. kann ... in der Umgangsprache fast jedes Verb (der ersten Konjugation) durch *-da* in ein Nomen Actionis verwandelt werden: *dar cabeceadas, pegar una calentada, darse una desorientada, dar una hablada a alguien, echarse una buena investigada, echar una platicada*, usw." (Rainer 1993, 440).

(32)

aggiunta (< 'to add')	promessa (< 'to promise')
andata (< 'to go')	proposta (< 'to propose')
cacciata (< 'to chase away')	richiesta (< 'to ask for')
difesa (< 'to defend')	rimessa (< 'to put back')
durata (< 'to last')	ripresa (< 'to recover')
messa (< 'to put')	rotta (< 'to break')
offerta (< 'to offer')	scomparsa (< 'to disappear')
offesa (< 'to offend')	scoperta (< 'to discover')
presa (< 'to take')	spesa (< 'to spend')
pretesa (< 'to pretend')	

For the nominals in (32), it is easy to verify the incompatibility with the periphrastic construction, by applying the criteria in (19) above. What is relevant for our purposes is that all these nominals, listed nearly exhaustively in (30) and (32), do not usually behave as packaged pieces of the information contained in the predicate, although they may be compatible with the support verbs *fare* and *dare*.[9] In fact, they are true action nouns, as is shown in their blocking other possible deverbal nouns:

(33)

(a)	caduta	*cadimento/*cadizione
	entrata	*entramento/*entrazione
	fermata	*fermamento/*fermazione
	venuta	*venimento/*venizione
(b)	cacciata	*cacciamento/*cacciazione
	difesa	*difendimento/*difensione
	offesa	*offendimento/*offensione
	promessa	*promettimento/*promissione

Moreover, they are usually rather old: none of them is posterior to the sixteenth century. In other words, they constitute a sub-class within the ATA-nominals that cannot be considered central for determining the role of the suffix within the system. Indirectly, this confirms the importance of the periphrastic construction as a test for the investigation of ATA-nominals; only derivatives compatible with the periphrasis display the function of packaging operator.

[9] The obtained periphrases violate the criteria discussed in (19) above. For example, the following sentences do not correspond either semantically or syntactically to the respective matrix sentences **Il professore aggiunse lungamente critiche* and **Il miliardario offrì cospicuamente denaro*:

(i) Il professore fece una lunga aggiunta di critiche.
'The professor made a long addition of criticisms'
(ii) Il miliardario fece una cospicua offerta di denaro.
'The millionaire made a conspicuous offer of money'

In striking contrast to these lexicalised cases, ATA-nominals firstly attested in this century display very different properties. Recall that the suffix is quite productive. On the basis of *DISC*, I counted about 100 new deverbal derivatives only in this century, from which the ones in (34) are taken:

(34)		
	accelerata (< accelerare 'to accelerate')	1967
	aggiustata (< aggiustare 'to adjust')	1954
	foraggiata (< foraggiare 'to fodder')	1970
	insaponata (< insaponare 'to soap')	1936
	litigata (< litigare 'to quarrel')	1932
	ordinata (< ordinare 'to put in order')	1939
	ospitata (< ospitare 'to give hospitality to')	1997
	regolata (< regolare 'to regulate')	1978
	rimodernata (< rimodernare 'to modernize')	1991
	riscaldata (< riscaldare 'to warm')	1940
	scrutata (< scrutare 'to scrutinize')	1960
	stirata (< stirare 'to iron')	1960

Moreover, it is possible to form ATA-nominals from borrowed verbs like the following:

(35)			
	dribblare (< 'to dribble')	→	dribblata
	slurpare (< 'to slurp')	→	slurpata
	sniffare (< 'to sniff')	→	sniffata
	zumare (< 'to zoom')	→	zumata

They all match the type I have tried to sketch up until now. Namely, they are derived from unbounded dynamic verbs, function as a packaging operator, and are compatible with the periphrastic construction. Moreover, they usually do not give rise to lexical blocking with respect to the true action nouns:

(36)	
accelerata	accelerazione
aggiustata	aggiustamento
ammazzata	ammazzamento
foraggiatac	foraggiamento
insaponata	insaponamento
litigata	litigio
nuotata	nuoto
regolata	regolamento
rimodernata	rimodernamento
riscaldata	riscaldamento
sbrodolata	sbrodolamento
scrutata	scrutamento
stirata	stiramento
verniciata	verniciatura
vuotata	vuotamento

Therefore, it seems that ATA-nominals contain words of rather different properties; there is a central core formed by derivatives that achieve the function of packaging operator. Predicates selected by the suffix -ATA must be dynamic and durative. This productive core is surrounded by derivatives that are lexicalised since they assume the value of true action nouns. This sub-class is not well-defined, nor can it be freely enlarged. Moreover, it is extremely small compared to the productive core.

5. The denominal ATA-nominals

At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that besides ATA-nominals there is a large number of derivatives from nominal bases. According to their specific meanings, they can be grouped as follows (cf. Scalise 1983; Gatti–Togni 1991; Mayo et al. 1995):

(37)	(a)	blow of N	gomito 'elbow' → gomitata sedia 'chair' → sediata
	(b)	action typical of N	asino 'donkey' → asinata pagliaccio 'clown' → pagliacciata
	(c)	quantity contained in N	cucchiaio 'spoon' → cucchiaiata secchio 'bucket' → secchiata
	(d)	augmentative of N	cancello 'gate' → cancellata valle 'valley' → vallata
	(e)	period of time N	giorno 'day' → giornata mattina 'morning' → mattinata

From a diachronic point of view, the suffix forming denominal ATA-nominals has clearly originated from a reanalysis of the deverbal nouns. As Rohlfs (1969, 444) puts it, "per il fatto che per esempio *ventata* poteva appartenere tanto a *ventare*, quanto esser derivata direttamente da *vento*, divenne possibile ottenere anche da sostantivi dei derivati simili: *occhiata, bambinata, birbonata*". The selection of the *-ata*-variant is thus due to the high number of verbs belonging to the *-are* inflectional class, from which ATA-nominals are derived. Notice that among the several meanings listed in (37) above, the types 'augmentative of N' (cf. (37d)) and 'period of time N' (cf. (37e)) are restricted to a limited set of words, which cannot be freely extended, as is shown by the following examples:

(38) (a) collina 'hill' → *collinata
pianura 'plain' → *pianurata

(b) pomeriggio 'afternoon' → *pomeriggiata
settimana 'week' → *settimanata

Thus, they seem to be no longer productive, and I will exclude them from the rest of the discussion. As has been observed by Simone (1993, 51), the nominals in (37a–c) share the basic framework meaning, according to which the nominal denotes a single instantiation of the action in which the considered substance is involved. Schematically, one can reduce the global semantics of these nominals to the basic meaning 'a single, short and fast instantiation of an action carried by/typical of X'. Thus, a *gomitata* is a single instantiation of an action carried by an elbow (i.e., that of hitting someone), as well as an *asinata* is a single instantiation of an action typical of a donkey (i.e., metaphorically, that of acting like a lazy schoolboy). Presumably, the difference between (37a) and (37b) can be accounted for by the feature [+ human], which defines the set of bases selected by (37b) (cf. *bambino* 'child' → *bambinata, stupido* 'silly' → *stupidata*, etc.), whereas this is not the case for (37a) (cf. *ginocchio* 'knee' → *ginocchiata, martello* 'hammer' → *martellata*, etc.). (37c) also fits into this schema, if one considers that *secchiata* does not simply mean the quantity of water contained in a bucket. Much more, it denotes a single instantiation of the action in which a typical container such as a bucket is involved. Thus, *secchiata* can refer either to the action of blowing or of being blown by a bucket, or to the quantity of water contained in a bucket that can be poured onto someone:

(39) (a) Gianni ha preso una secchiata sulla testa.
'G. was hit on the head with a bucket'

(b) Gianni ha preso una secchiata d'acqua sulla testa.
'G. was hit on the head with a bucket of water'

Since a bucket is a typical container, *secchiata* can then be extended to denote the quantity of substance a bucket can contain. Notice, however, that the rough and imprecise character of the basic meaning is still present in the shifted meaning, as is shown by the following sentences (cf. Samek-Ludovici 1997):

(40) (a) Questa vasca contiene esattamente 23 litri d'acqua.
'This basin contains exactly 23 liters of water'

Un ettolitro d'acqua sono esattamente 100 litri d'acqua.
'One hectolitre of water is exactly 100 liters of water'

(b) ??Questa vasca contiene esattamente 7 secchiate d'acqua.
'This basin contains exactly 7 buckets of water'

??Una secchiata d'acqua sono esattamente 2 litri d'acqua.
'A bucket of water is exactly 2 liters of water'

Yet, the semantic shift 'blow of N' → 'quantity contained in N' is not automatic. There are nominals formed on the basis of typical containers such as *bottigliata* from *bottiglia* 'bottle', or *padellata* from *padella* 'pan', in which the shifted meaning is not attested. In these cases, the nominal only displays the basic meaning 'blow of N'.

Thus, denominal ATA-nominals share with the deverbal ATA-nominals the basic meaning 'single instantiation of an action carried out in a rather short and imprecise way'. Notice that denominal ATA-nominals are also compatible with the periphrastic constructions containing a support verb (cf. *fare una bambinata, dare una secchiata*, etc.). In certain cases (e.g., *martellata* 'blow of hammer'), it would be arbitrary to decide whether the ATA-nominal is derived from the substantive (i.e., *martello* 'hammer') or from the verb (i.e., *martellare* 'to hammer'). However, in the standard analysis adopted by Scalise (1983), the striking semantic similarities of the denominal and of the deverbal ATA-nominals are not accounted for. In order to rescue Aronoff's (1976) Unitary Base Hypothesis, Scalise (1983) proposes two different derivational rules containing two different suffixes, in which the first one deals with verbs and the second one with nouns:

(41) (a) $[V]_{PASTPART} + [\text{-a}]_{SUFF} \rightarrow [V]_{NFEM}$
$[\text{mangiato}]_{V} + [\text{-a}]_{SUFF} \rightarrow [\text{mangiat-}\emptyset]_{V} + [\text{-a}]_{SUFF} \rightarrow [\text{mangiata}]_{NFEM}$

(b) $[N] + [\text{-ata}]_{SUFF} \rightarrow [N]_{NFEM}$
$[\text{gomito}]_{N} + [\text{-ata}]_{SUFF} \rightarrow [\text{gomit-}\emptyset]_{N} + [\text{-ata}]_{SUFF} \rightarrow [\text{gomitata}]_{NFEM}$

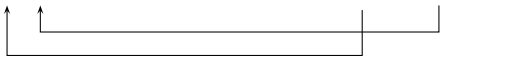
Independent of the inconsistency of assuming an inflectional suffix to form deverbal nouns in (41a) (cf. Thornton 1990), these rules do not express the similar semantic meaning we have observed previously. A unitary treatment has been recently proposed to account for both deverbal and denominal ATA-nominals (cf. Samek-Ludovici 1997).[10] In particular, this author has suggested treating the denominal nominals as derived by means of the rule in (41a) applied on a non-surfacing intermediate predicate, a so-called "ghost verb", derived by conversion from the basic noun:

[10] For a similar unitary treatment (albeit couched in a Coserian approach) of the corresponding Spanish and French derivatives, see Dietrich (1994).

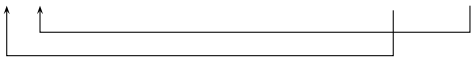
(42) gomito → *gomitare → gomitata
asino → *asinare → asinata

In Samek-Ludovici's (1997) account, postulating an intermediate false step is needed to explain the verbal properties possessed by denominal ATA-nominals. In the periphrastic construction with the support verb *dare*, the argument structure of the intermediate predicate **gomitare* would filter into the support verb as in the case of the existing verb *lavare* 'to wash' with respect to *lavata* 'wash':

(43) (a) X dà una lavata a Y
dare (X, Y) — lavata (agent, theme)



(b) X dà una gomitata a Y
*gomitare (X, Y) — gomitata (agent, theme)



Thus, the ATA-nominal would inherit its argument structure from the existing, but non-surfacing, ghost verb. However, this solution runs into troubles because of its abstractness. Postulating an intermediate false step can be wildly extended to many cases, in which a denominal noun is provided with verbal properties such as an argument structure. In fact, nothing prevents us from assuming an intermediate verbal step for agent nouns derived from nouns, as in the following examples:

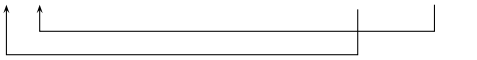
(44) (a) il mercante di fiori — mercante < *mercare[11] < merce
'the merchant of flowers'

(b) l'autista di taxi — autista < *autare < auto
'the taxi-driver'

Moreover, the postulation of an underlying ghost verb can be freely extended to any case of nouns displaying argument structure, as in *il libro di Sartre su Flaubert* 'Sartre's book on Flaubert', in which a ghost verb **librare*, derived from a basic $libro_1$, can theoretically be postulated to account for the argument structure of $libro_2$:

[11] Notice that the verb *mercare* is actually attested for Old Italian, but has now completely disappeared (cf. *DISC*, s.v.).

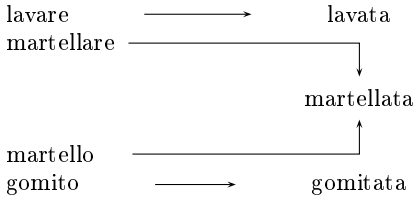
(45) il libro$_2$ di X su Y
*librare (X, Y) — libro$_2$ (agent, theme)



Finally, the ghost verb hypothesis runs against the intuition of speakers, who, at least in some varieties of Italian, do make use of verbs corresponding to a denominal ATA-nominal, such as *gomitare*[12] 'to push with elbows', reported by some Italian dictionaries, or *occhiare* 'to look' from *occhio* 'eye', heard in Rome. These cases, however, are back-formations with respect to the bases *gomitata* and *occhiata*, rather than the surfacing of the postulated ghost verb, as can be shown by applying Marchand's (1964) criterion of semantic implication.

In the absence of a convincing motivation for postulating a huge number of ghost verbs, this hypothesis must be discarded. Thus, if we want to account for the striking similarities observed earlier, we are left with a solution that violates the Unitary Base Hypothesis.[13] However, the picture of ATA-nominals appears to be semantically very coherent, so that in several cases we can speak of a double motivation (cf. Szymanek 1988, 65):

(46)



This representation also takes into consideration the diachronic origin of the suffix *-ata*, which developed, as mentioned above, from triplets such as *vento*

[12] The actual verb in Standard Italian denoting the action of pushing with elbows is the parasynthetic *sgomitare*, formed by means of the so-called intensifying prefix *s-* (for the whole question of parasynthesis in Italian, cf. the different positions expressed by Scalise (1983) and Crocco Galèas–Iacobini (1993).

[13] Notice, however, that the case of word formation rules selecting different lexical bases is anything but unusual. Among others, the German suffix *-ei* (cf. Fleischer–Barz 1992, 149f) can be mentioned, which forms denominal (cf. *Abtei, Gärtnerei*) and deverbal nouns (cf. *Aufschneiderei, Tanzerei*); or the Latin suffix *-ul-/-ol-* (cf. Plank 1981, 44), which forms diminutives from nominal (cf. *regulus, filiolus*), from adjectival (cf. *aureolus, blandulus*) and from verbal bases (cf. *misculare*). The Unitary Base Hypothesis has been recently questioned on the basis of semantic arguments by Plag (1998, 237), who puts forward the very interesting idea that "the syntactic category of potential base words is only a by-product of the semantics of the process".

'wind' – *ventare* – *ventata*, where a kind of rule telescoping seems to have taken place after (or because of) the disappearance of the intermediate verb.

6. Conclusions

To sum up, the suffix -ATA turns out to be a packaging operator. It selects a rather well-defined set of the verbal lexicon, namely durative and unbounded predicates, and produces derivatives provided with the features of boundedness and point-likeness. Following the terminology introduced in section **1** above, we can represent it as in (47):

(47) -ATA
A_i = [+ dynamic, + durative, − bounded]
A_e = [+ dynamic, − durative, + bounded]

As I noted in (8d) above, this is the most complex case of interaction between morphology and semantics. In fact, this suffix has a particular internal actionality, since it selects a particular set of the verbal lexicon on the basis of actional properties; moreover, it also has a particular external actionality, since it produces derivatives that display a rather different set of actional properties compared to the base-predicates. In this perspective, we can distinguish between true action nouns, in which the operation of transposition does not cause relevant effects on the actional semantics of the base-predicates, and the ATA-nominals, in which we find reversal properties with respect to the base-predicates. This is the reason why ATA-nominals usually do not exert lexical blocking with respect to other nominalizing suffixes. Besides this productive core, there is a set of lexicalised derivatives that do not share the properties established in (47). They behave like true action nouns; given their elevated age and their non-productivity, they apparently seem to be relics of diachronic processes of lexicalization. Finally, we have seen that similar properties hold true for the denominal nouns, which makes them almost identical to the deverbal ones, so that in several cases we are allowed to speak of a double motivation. It remains, however, a matter of further investigation how the diachronic process of affix generalization (cf. Plank 1981, 43ff) to nominal bases took place, which synchronically resulted in a kind of rule telescoping.

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Address of the author: Livio Gaeta
Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio
University of Turin
via S. Ottavio 20
I-10124 Turin
Italy
gaeta@cisi.unito.it