

Denominal verbs at the syntax-semantics interface

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Denominal verb formation has been tackled from different theoretical perspectives, with respect to a great variety of languages (cf. among many others, Kiparsky 1997; Hale & Keyser 1993; Clark & Clark 1979; Lieber 2004; Aikhenvald 2011; Bleotu 2018; Baeskow 2006; Harley 2005). The present paper focuses on Latin and Ancient Greek and has two main goals: 1) clarifying the patterns of acquiring syntactic-semantic properties by denominal verbs; 2) identifying which grammatical and semantic features of the lexical base project into the derived verb, affecting its actionality, argument structure, voice and degree of telicity.

In Latin and Ancient Greek, the suffix **-ye-/-yo-* was usually added to either nouns, adjectives or adverbs to derive verbs (cf. Meillet 1908; Szemerényi 1984):

Latin

1. NOUN *arbiter, -is* ‘judge’ → *arbitrōr* ‘I judge’;
2. ADJECTIVE *novus, -a, -um* ‘new’ → *novō* ‘I renew’;
3. ADVERB *autem* ‘but’ → *autumō* ‘I argue’

[Mignot 1969]

A. Greek

1. NOUN *phúlaks, -os* ‘guard, watcher’ → *phulássō* ‘I keep guard; I watch for’
2. ADJECTIVE *atásthalos, -on* ‘presumptuous’ → *atasthállō* ‘I am presumptuous’
3. ADVERB *pélas* ‘near’ → *pelázō/pelázomai* ‘I come near/I bring near (caus.)’

[Fraenkel 1906; Barber 2013]

Since **-ye-/-yo-* did not convey any specific semantic value (cf. Meillet 1908: 185), it is left to find out how a denominal verb acquires its syntactic-semantic properties. This study attempts to show that the actionality, argument structure, voice

and degree of telicity of a denominal verb are related to the following semantic and grammatical features of the lexical base:

- a) \pm mass/count (cf. Chierchia 2010; Rothstein 2010a, 2010b; Doetjes 2019: 29-56; Harley 2005; Bleotu 2018);
- b) \pm abstract/concrete (cf. Schmid 2000; Aikhenvald 2006);
- c) degree of animacy (cf. Dahl 1996, 2000, 2008) and individuation (cf. Timberlake 1975, 1977; Silverstein 1976);
- d) type of word class: *i.e.*, noun, adjective, adverb (cf. Aikhenvald 2011: 221-290).

To conduct the analysis, we apply the syntax-semantics interface framework (cf. Van Valin & La Polla 1997; Van Valin 2005; Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2016).

We test our hypothesis on two *corpora*:

1. Latin c.: 400 denominal verbs (3rd century A.C. - 1st century D.C.) collected from Mignot (1969), Flobert (1975) and by using the DELL and the TLL;
2. Ancient Greek c.: 400 denominal verbs (8th century A.C. – 4th century A.C.) collected from Fraenkel (1906), Barber (2013) and by using the DELG and the TLG.

Our results show that:

1. Latin and Ancient Greek possess nine main classes of denominal verbs, characterized by the thematic role of their lexical base: AGENT, QUALITY, PRODUCT, SCOPE, SOURCE, LOCATUM, LOCATION, DURATION, DIRECTION (cf. Fillmore 1968; Clark & Clark 1979; Aikhenvald 2011; Luján 2010, 2014);
2. there are no variations within class in actionality, argument structure, voice and degree of telicity;

3. the above-mentioned features of the lexical base (*a, b, c, d*) govern the selection of the verb semantic class, thus constraining its actionality, argument structure, voice and telicity in an orderly way.

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TLL – Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: <https://thesaurus.badw.de/tll-digital/tll-open-access.html>

TLG – Thesaurus Linguae Graecae: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/>