

Chapter 7

Some remarks on clipping of deverbal nouns in French and Italian

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This chapter deals with the restricted class of clipped deverbal nominals in French (e.g. *introduction* → *intro*) and especially in Italian (e.g. *giustificazione* → *giustifica*) and aims to show that subtle semantic restrictions seem to constrain such clipping, although there are some differences between the two languages. First, I introduce the well-known distinction between event (E) and result/referential (R) nouns that has been further elaborated by Melloni (2006, 2007, 2011). I then proceed to discuss a class of formations where clipping seems to be sensitive to a special result/object meaning which is very close to what Pustejovsky (1991: 174; see Melloni 2011: 109, 111, 142) calls *information object*. On the basis of a limited class of examples (both attested and hypothetical, e.g. *quantificazione* → *quantifica*), I argue that where there is such an information object reading available to the relevant nominal, the clipping rule may apply. I take these phenomena to be relevant for Fradin & Kerleroux's (2009: 84–86) *Maximal Specification Hypothesis*, according to which word-formation rules can apply, especially in the case of polysemous lexemes, to specific semantic features inherent in the overall meaning of the base. I demonstrate that clipping can have access to precisely these semantic features.

1 Introduction

It is widely held that morphological phenomena such as clipping (or truncation and blending) can be well explained within a sociolinguistic or pragmatic framework where specific stylistic, diaphasic and/or diastratic factors are at work. Under this view, the only morphologically relevant issue would be that of phonological conditions and constraints on the bases. Nevertheless, there have recently been some attempts to show that there might also be specific semantic constraints that, in some cases, rule out the possibility of such morphological reduction, regardless of any pragmatically constrained context. Such studies demonstrate that truncation may operate in a highly systematic way that involves access to specific semantic information of a given base.



In this chapter, I intend to show that, within the restricted class of clipped deverbal nominals in French (e.g. *introduction* → *intro*) and especially in Italian (e.g. *giustificazione* → *giustifica*), which will be the focus of the present text, special and subtle semantic restrictions seem to constrain the availability of these formations, though the two languages do not cover exactly the same group of formations.

In what follows, I will assume the traditional, though much debated, distinction between inflection and derivation (see, e.g., Spencer 2013: 38–43). Such a distinction is fundamental in that it posits two different roles of morphology: inflectional morphology is supposed to realize the inflected forms of a given lexeme, while derivational morphology serves to create new lexemes.¹ However, the difficulty of the topic to be tackled in the following pages lies precisely in the fact that *clipping* (or *truncation*) does not always seem to deliver an entirely new lexeme.

I shall argue, following Fradin & Kerleroux's (2009: 84–86) *Maximal Specification Hypothesis*, that word-formation rules apply, especially in the case of polysemous lexemes, to specific semantic features inherent in the overall meaning of the base, and that clipping can have access to precisely these semantic features.

The text is organized as follows. In Section 2, I first lay out the well-known distinction between event (E) and result/referential (R) nouns that has been further elaborated by Melloni (2006, 2007, 2011) and that, at first sight, seems to capture some of the known cases. In Section 3, I briefly comment on the French data taken from Kerleroux (1997), Fradin & Kerleroux (2003), and Fradin (2003). In Section 4, I take up the Italian data, based on Thornton (1990, 2004), Štichauer (2006), and Montermini & Thornton (2014) which are, in some fundamental aspects, different with respect to French. In Section 5, I conclude by putting forward a (falsifiable) hypothesis according to which such deverbal nouns are liable to undergo clipping only when special semantic and pragmatic conditions are met. I point out that, contrary to what is usually assumed (especially for Italian), the shortened forms may not always be completely synonymous with their “full” parental nominals.

2 Event/Referential nouns and clipping

Since Grimshaw (1990), the distinction between *complex event nouns*, *simple event nouns* and *result nouns* has become widely accepted, though there has been much critical discussion about the various criteria that Grimshaw herself proposed to individuate the three groups (see Melloni 2011: 21–34).

It has also been thought that only *complex event nouns* can give rise to various result interpretations where the result reading is normally associated with the outcome of the

¹Inflectional morphology provides the word forms inhabiting the cells in the lexeme's paradigm. [...], a derivational process defines a new lexeme, which may well have a completely new set of inflectional properties. Therefore, derivational morphology cannot be defined using the same machinery as inflectional morphology, because a derived lexeme is not paradigmatically related to its base and cannot be considered a word form of anything. Rather, it defines an entirely new set of (possibly inflected) word forms. (Spencer 2013: 2).

corresponding complex event noun. Traditional examples of such event/result (E/R) ambiguity are given in (1), where the English examples (1a., 1b.) are given an equivalent version in Italian (1c., 1d.) and French (1e., 1f.).

- (1) a. The construction of that house (by the company) took place forty years ago
→ E
b. The construction is breathtaking → R
c. La costruzione di quella casa (da parte dell'impresa) ebbe luogo quarant'anni fa → E
d. La costruzione è molto bella → R
e. La construction de la maison (de la part de la compagnie) a eu lieu il y a quarante ans → E
f. La construction est très belle → R

Simple event nouns (e.g. *party*), instead, do not have an associated event structure, so that the event/result polysemy is not available. Moreover, simple event nouns are said to pattern with result nouns in that they share the same set of properties (see Melloni 2011: 24–25). In what follows, I will assume the general divide between an event-based reading and result-based reading of the derived nominals, discussing various problems in due course.

When it comes to clipping, the general divide between E/R nominals turns out to be relevant as there are specific constraints on the semantic status of the deverbal noun. In fact, as Kerleroux claims (1997: 155), “nouns denoting complex events may not be apocopated”.

However, as we shall see, the situation is more complicated since there are more subtle semantic conditions that allow for clipping. More precisely, the clipping rule seems to eliminate the possibility of event noun interpretation (E) regardless of the fact whether the affected noun is a complex event or simple event nominal. Rather, what is required is a specific result/object – or *referential* (R) denotation of the corresponding deverbal noun, as illustrated in (2).

- (2) French
- a. La récupération des naufragés fut longue → E
b. *La récupe des naufragés fut longue → *E²
‘The rescue operation of the shipwrecked was long’
c. J’ai des récupérations à prendre avant Noël → R
d. J’ai des récupés à prendre avant Noël → R
‘I have some extra days of holiday to take before Christmas’
e. Il s’oppose à l’introduction du loup à Paris → E

²Georgette Dal (p.c.) observes that, on the Internet, we can easily find some examples of the eventive reading as well, such as “*La recup(e) a été longue car j’avais une centaine de courriers à récupérer.*”

- f. * Il s'oppose à l'intro du loup à Paris → *E
'He is against the introduction of the wolf into Paris'
- g. Il a apprécié l'introduction de ton livre → R
- h. Il a apprécié l'intro de ton livre → R
'He enjoyed the introduction of your book'

As far as Italian is concerned, the situation is more intricate. Following Thornton (2004) and Montermini & Thornton (2014), a distinction must be made between those deverbal nouns in *-a* which are the result of the unproductive process of conversion (e.g., *la conquista*, *la sosta*, *la firma* etc.), and the apparently identical deverbal nouns in *-a* such as *bonifica*, *condanna*, *conferma* whose (diachronic) origin is to be sought in the truncation of the actional suffix *-zione* (see Montermini & Thornton 2014: 187 ff.).

Although the diachronic account is surely on the right track, synchronically the behaviour of pairs of full vs. clipped formations is far from being identical. As I will argue below, it is worth drawing a distinction between three groups.

The first group comprises the pairs of formations which seem to be totally interchangeable displaying (purportedly) absolute synonymy, such as *modificazione* / *modifica* (3), where both forms display regular E/R ambiguity:

- (3) Italian
 - a. La modificazione del testo (da parte dell'autore) è stata molto lunga → E
 - b. La modifica del testo (da parte dell'autore) è stata molto lunga → E³
'The modification of the text (by the author) took a long time'
 - c. La modificazione del testo sarebbe subito saltata fuori → R
 - d. La modifica del testo sarebbe subito saltata fuori → R
'The modification of the text would have surfaced immediately'
 - e. La modificazione (del testo) è sul tavolo → R
 - f. La modifica (del testo) è sul tavolo → R
'The modification (of the text) is on the table'

The second group involves partly synonymous formations in which the difference is claimed to lie exclusively at the stylistic level, such as *giustificazione* / *giustifica* (4), but which may display deeper semantic differences, as I will show, especially when it comes to the difference between an event vs. referential reading. In fact, as the examples in (4) show, the event reading of the clipped form tends to be rather unacceptable.

- (4) Italian
 - a. Le ripetute giustificazioni dell'assenza (da parte degli studenti) sono intollerabili → E

³In French, the clipped form *la modif* would also seem to be possible as some examples from the Internet show, such as "*ceux qui sont grisés apparaissent comme dégrisés après la modif du texte.*" (Georgette Dal, p.c.).

- b. * Le ripetute giustificiche dell'assenza (da parte degli studenti) sono intollerabili
→ *E
'The frequent justifications for absence (on the part of the students) are intolerable'
- c. La giustificazione dell'assenza è falsa → R
- d. La giustifica dell'assenza è falsa → R
'The justification for absence is false'
- e. La giustificazione è sul tavolo → R
- f. La giustifica è sul tavolo → R
'The justification is on the table'

Finally, a third group, explicitly not addressed in the literature, would involve impossible, unacceptable formations where the clipping of the suffix is disallowed even when the full noun in *-zione* displays some referential reading. The examples in (5) illustrate.

- (5) a. La riunificazione delle due Germanie è stata un processo complesso → E
- b. * La riunifica delle due Germanie è stata un processo complesso → *E
'The reunification of the two Germanies was a complex process'
- c. Questo sedimento è la stratificazione di rocce diverse → R
- d. * Questo sedimento è la stratifica di rocce diverse → *R⁴
'This sediment is a (result of the) stratification of various rocks'

In what follows, I shall concentrate precisely on these two groups where we find, on the one hand, some attested pairs of full vs. clipped formations with presumably slightly different semantics, and, on the other hand, unattested, yet possible or impossible clipped forms. To begin with, I posit that what the two clipping rules, in French and in Italian, respectively, seem to have in common is a sort of (partial) elimination of event reading of the deverbal noun in favour of a salient referential interpretation. At the same time, a specific semantic condition on the kind of object (i.e. the type of referential reading) is required for the rule in question. In the next sections, after first considering some French and – in more detail – Italian examples, I will argue that a special typology of result nominals (elaborated by Melloni 2011) is needed in order to account for the phenomena in question. I intend to show that a lexical semantic typology of the base verbs will be able to predict, to a large extent, the possibility of clipping.

3 Clipped deverbal nominals in French

In this section, I briefly review the French data, taken from the literature, focusing on the general condition for the clipping rule, which will turn out to be useful in the discussion of the Italian examples as well.

⁴I owe this example to Fabio Montermini.

In French, the clipping rule, as far as deverbal nouns with the suffix *-tion* are concerned, may apply to a number of formations.⁵ When clipped, the noun receives a special result/object reading although some aspects of event interpretation are maintained. The clipped nouns thus become similar to *simple event nouns*. The internal arguments of the base verb are, in such a formation, excluded (see Kerleroux 1997: 171):

- (6) a. La manifestation de la vérité aura pris cinquante ans → E
- b. *La manif de la vérité aura pris cinquante ans → E
 ‘The demonstration of the truth will have taken fifty years’
- c. La manifestation (des étudiants) a duré cinq heures → E
- d. La manif (des étudiants) a duré cinq heures → E
 ‘The demonstration (of the students) took five hours’

According to Kerleroux (1997: 155), already cited above, the difference lies precisely in the complex / simple event dichotomy. Complex event nominals, which maintain their internal argument structure, cannot undergo clipping, whilst in the case of simple event nouns, such as *manifestation* in the sense of ‘demonstration’, clipping is allowed.

In the following example, the possibility of clipping is limited to a more concrete (and not *eventive*) interpretation of ‘introduction’, that of *information-object*.⁶ This notion will be of great importance in the discussion of the Italian data.

- (7) a. L’introduction du lynx dans le massif du Vercors par les responsables de l’ONF → E
- b. *L’intro du lynx dans le massif du Vercors par les responsables de l’ONF → *E
 ‘The introduction of the lynx into Vercors Massif by the authorities of the ONF (National Forest Office)’
- c. L’introduction (de ton livre) compte quatre pages → R
- d. L’intro (de ton livre) compte quatre pages → R
 ‘The introduction (of your book) has four pages’

The important point is that clipping in French does not seem to eliminate eventive readings altogether. In the case of event nouns, the difference between pure transpositions (complex event nominals) and what we might call “names of specific events” is relevant. Indeed, as Fradin states, the condition on clipping seems to be that

⁵I deliberately leave aside the general context for truncation which, in French, is not limited to complex words (having as its target only the suffix) but may be applied to a wide range of bases, such as *documentation* – *doc*, *information* – *info*, *actualité* – *actu*, etc. As Montermini & Thornton (2014: 183) point out, in cases where the truncated material coincides with the suffix (e.g., *invitation* – *invite*), the coincidence is to be taken as purely fortuitous.

⁶As Fabio Montermini notes (p.c.), such an information-object feature does not prevent, in principle, an event-based reading, as witnessed by the acceptability of *l’intro de son discours a duré une heure*, where *discours* ‘speech’, being a simple event noun, enables clipping.

(...) d'une manière générale, ne peuvent être raccourcies que des expressions nominales fonctionnant comme des dénominations (*names*) d'entités diverses (individu, objet, comportement...). [Generally, what can be shortened are the expressions functioning as denominations, names of various entities such as individuals, objects, behaviour]. (Fradin 2003: 250)

I now turn to the Italian data in order to see further semantic constraints on what kind of entities these generally need to be for clipping to take place.

4 Clipped deverbal nominals in Italian

According to Thornton (1990, 2004: 519), the Italian shortened forms are to be taken simply as stylistic variants of their corresponding full nominals. Furthermore, as Montermini & Thornton (2014: 193–194) show on the basis of corpus frequency, many shortened forms (especially those in *-ifica*) have by now become far more frequent than their full counterparts.

Štichauer (2006) proposes, as already mentioned above, to distinguish three groups of such clipped nominals that behave differently with respect to the original deverbal nouns with the suffix *-zione*.

The first group comprises the pairs such as *modificazione-modifica* (3) or *verificazione-verifica* (8) in which the clipped form has already assumed the same syntactic distribution; moreover, in this case of *verificazione/verifica*, the clipped form is far more acceptable because of its increasing frequency of use.

- (8) a. La *verificazione* della teoria (da parte degli scienziati) è stata affrettata → E
 b. La *verifica* della teoria (da parte degli scienziati) è stata affrettata → E
 'The verification of the theory (by the scholars) was hasty'
 c. La *verificazione* (della teoria) va pubblicata su una rivista importante → R
 d. La *verifica* (della teoria) va pubblicata su una rivista importante → R
 'The verification (of the theory) is to be published in an important journal'
 e. La *verificazione* (della teoria) è sul tavolo → R
 f. La *verifica* (della teoria) è sul tavolo → R
 'The verification is on the table'

In the second group of formations we should take into consideration cases in which, on the contrary, we find a shortened form that has a specialized meaning with respect to the noun in *-zione*, e.g. *permutazione* - *permuta*. While the former noun is a normal event nominal, the latter refers to a specialized type of property exchange.⁷ (9):⁸

⁷Montermini & Thornton (2014: 196–198) rectify Štichauer's (2006: 33) incorrect claim about the loss of a transpositional relation between the verb *permutare* and *permuta*. In fact, *permuta* clearly functions as an event noun being thus similar to the relation between, say, the French verb *manifestar* with respect to *manifestation* and *manif*. Moreover, Montermini & Thornton (2014: 198) suggest that *permuta* is to be taken as a converted form rather than a clipped formation.

⁸The examples are taken from the corpus *La Repubblica* and slightly modified.

- (9) a. Questo poemetto (...) si fonda sulla permutazione dei ruoli tra l'uomo e l'animale
b. Questo poemetto (...) si fonda sulla *permuta⁹ dei ruoli tra l'uomo e l'animale
'This short poem is based on the permutation of roles between man and animal'
c. Che dire poi di coloro che cedono la propria auto in permuta?
d. Che dire poi di coloro che cedono la propria auto in *permutazione?
'What can we say then about those who trade in their cars?'

Finally, the third group of nouns would be the one in which clipping is impossible. Although this question is not directly addressed in the literature, I maintain that it is interesting to uncover the constraints that seem to regulate the possibility or impossibility of a hypothetical nonce-formation. In fact, if only stylistic constraints were at work, we should find many more examples in various administrative texts than we actually encounter.¹⁰ Moreover, if only such diaphasic differences were responsible for the clipping rule, many a nonce-formation, e.g. *la continua desertificazione del pianeta – la continua *desertifica del pianeta* ('the continuous desertification of the planet'), might become acceptable under specific stylistic circumstances. However, this does not seem to be the case.

I will limit my analysis to a narrow sample of nouns in *-ificazione* that seem to be the most frequent deverbal nominals that might, under specific conditions to be stated below, undergo clipping of the suffix *-zione*. For the present, I will assume that where clipping is allowed, a special result/object denotation is required or imposed by the mechanism in question; at the same time, the complex or simple event reading is, in some cases, partially eliminated.

I shall consider the following six examples: *riunificazione*, *mercificazione*, *reificazione*, *quantificazione*, *giustificazione* and *falsificazione*. I will employ roughly the same "diagnostic" contexts also used by Melloni 2011. This step is obviously problematic for the simple reason that the diagnostic contexts do not always yield an entirely natural example, attested or "attestable" in the corpora. I attempt to remedy this shortcoming by modifying or integrating the examples according to real data present in the corpus CORIS/CODIS¹¹, *La Repubblica*,¹² or on the Internet (by a general search on google.it). When necessary, I also add a clarifying footnote (especially when native speakers' judgements tend to give variable results).

⁹In fact, web search on google.it (<http://www.ilcovile.it/news/archivio/00000420.html>) provides one example of the shortened form *permuta* in precisely this context. The sequence *permuta dei ruoli* can be found in the Italian translation of Jankélévitch's book *Le Paradoxe de la morale*.

¹⁰For instance, in the corpus of *La Repubblica* (330 million tokens), we find about 150 different types in *-ificazione*, and about 90 forms ending in *-ifica*, where after careful post-processing, about a dozen formations remain and virtually no *hapax* qualifying as a real neologism can be found (*la chiarifica* being probably the only exception).

¹¹Accessible at: <http://corpora.dslo.unibo.it/TCORIS/>. Accessed September-October, 2016.

¹²Accessible at: <http://dev.sslmit.unibo.it/corpora/corpus.php?path=&name=Repubblica>. Accessed September-October, 2016.

I begin with *riunificazione*. In (10), we see that the only available reading is that of an event, all possible result/referential readings are excluded simply because *riunificare* does not belong to any product-oriented verbs (in the sense of Melloni 2011: 184 ff.):

- (10) a. La riunificazione delle due Germanie ha richiesto molto tempo → E
 b. * La riunifica delle due Germanie ha richiesto molto tempo → *E
 ‘The reunification of the two Germanies took a long time’
 c. * La riunificazione è falsa → *R
 d. * La riunifica è falsa → *R
 (intended) ‘The reunification is false’
 e. * La riunificazione è sul tavolo → *R
 f. * La riunifica è sul tavolo → *R
 (intended) ‘The reunification is on the table’

In the case of *mercificazione* (‘commodification’) we find essentially the same situation.

- (11) a. Questo processo di (continua) mercificazione del corpo femminile → E
 b. * Questo processo di (continua) mercifica del corpo femminile → E
 ‘This process of (continuous) commodification of the female body’
 c. * Le presenti mercificazioni del corpo femminile non sono affatto belle → *R
 d. * Le presenti mercifiche del corpo femminile non sono affatto belle → *R
 (intended) ‘The present commodifications of the female body are not nice at all’
 e. * La mercificazione è sul tavolo → *R
 f. * La mercifica è sul tavolo → *R
 ‘The commodification is on the table’

It could be argued, however, that the verb *mercificare* is semantically close to verbs of creation (by modification). The impossibility of having an R-reading might be due to the same reasons for which *edificazione* from *edificare*, as a typical creation verb, does not display any result/object interpretation. Melloni (2011: 189) suggests that a possible R-interpretation is blocked by the existing lexeme *edificio*.

Analogous behaviour is also exhibited by *reificazione* (12) (‘reification’), which is acceptable only in the eventive reading.

- (12) a. Le osservazioni di L. C. sulla (costante) reificazione dei bambini meritano...
 → E
 b. Le osservazioni di L. C. sulla (costante) *reifica dei bambini meritano... → *E
 ‘L. C.’s remarks on the (constant) reification of children deserve...’
 c. * La reificazione è interessante → *R
 d. * La reifica è interessante → *R
 (intended) ‘The reification is interesting’
 e. * La reificazione è sul tavolo → *R

- f. * La reifica è sul tavolo → *R
(intended) ‘The reification is on the table’

In the nouns in (10-12) we thus find that the only possible interpretation is the one associated with event nominals, the result reading of the *construction*-type nouns being ruled out. Arguably, the absence of such a result/object aspect is the factor that does not allow for further clipping of the formation. Indeed, the result/object reading seems to be a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition. As we will see in the examples below (13-17), clipping seems to be sensitive to a special result/object meaning which is very close to what Pustejovsky (1991: 164; see Melloni 2011: 109, 111, 142) calls *information object*. It thus appears that where there is such an information object reading available to the relevant nominal, the clipping rule may apply.

I now pass to the discussion of such nouns. I start with *quantificazione*. In example (13b), we can see that the shortened form is less acceptable in the eventive reading.¹³ The referential reading – conveying an information-object interpretation – allows for clipping giving rise to a possible nonce-formation °*la quantifica*.¹⁴

- (13) a. La quantificazione dei costi deve essere effettuata al più presto → E
 b. ?* La quantifica dei costi deve essere effettuata al più presto → ?*E
 ‘The quantification of the costs must be carried out immediately’
 c. La quantificazione (dei costi) contiene un errore → R
 d. ° La quantifica (dei costi) contiene un errore → R
 ‘The quantification (of the costs) contains an error’
 e. La quantificazione è sul tavolo → R
 f. ° La quantifica è sul tavolo → R
 ‘The quantification is on the table’

I argue that the pair *giustificazione* / *giustifica*, seen above in example (4), repeated here as (14), shows essentially the same behaviour despite Montermini & Thornton’s (2014: 192) claim about its total synonymy.

- (14) a. Le frequenti giustificazioni dell’assenza (da parte degli studenti) sono intollerabili → E
 b. * Le frequenti giustifiche dell’assenza (da parte degli studenti) sono intollerabili → *E
 ‘The frequent justifications for absence (on the part of the students) are intolerable’

¹³Some speakers tend to accept the shortened form even in this eventive context (Fabio Montermini finds it totally acceptable without perceiving any difference whatsoever). Thus, it would be necessary to see whether all possible *eventive* contexts, offered below for *giustifica*, would equally yield a more or less acceptable formation. The corpora offer no example. However, an internet search conducted in July 2017 found 7 hits, including an example where the author puts the formation within quotation marks in order to signal its peculiar (neological?) status: *Secondo me è una discreta opportunità di lavoro con contratto biennale, ma ho bisogno di una “quantifica” dei costi che io non so proprio fare.*

¹⁴I follow here Corbin’s (1987) use of the ° sign to mark possible, yet unattested formations. However, as we have seen, the formation *quantifica* is modestly attested (albeit to a very limited extent).

- c. La giustificazione dell'assenza è falsa → R
- d. La giustifica dell'assenza è falsa → R
'The justification for absence is false'
- e. La giustificazione è sul tavolo → R
- f. La giustifica è sul tavolo → R
'The justification is on the table'

The example thus deserves more discussion. Montermini & Thornton (2014: 192) claim that *giustificazione* and *giustifica* are absolutely synonymous (differing only in the register, the latter being typical of a school jargon). To support this apparently indubitable fact, they adduce not only their native speaker judgements but also some corpus evidence, such as the (fixed) sequence *libretto delle giustificazioni* / *libretto delle giustifiche* which appears in a large number of official school rules and regulations. However, I argue that the synonymy of this pair is limited to just the *referential* reading where, indeed, the two formations are wholly interchangeable. Yet, in the eventive readings, the synonymy is far less obvious.

First, as shown above in examples (14a, 14b), if subjected to different tests of actionality, the form *giustifica* turns out to be ruled out. Drawing (loosely) on Anscombe's (1986) tests of actionality, I point out that the following constructions highlight the problems at hand.

- (15) a. Gli studenti hanno sempre trovato un metodo di giustificazione /*giustifica delle loro assenze
'The students have always found a method of justification of their absences'
- b. In caso di mancata giustificazione / ?? giustifica dell'assenza da parte degli alunni, verrà attivata un'azione disciplinare¹⁵
'Failure on the part of the student to provide justification of the absence may result in disciplinary action'
- c. Ora procediamo alla giustificazione/*giustifica delle assenze
'Now let's move on to justifying the absences'
- d. Non si può accettare una giustificazione/*giustifica così frettolosa
'It's not possible to accept such a hasty justification'

What I stress is that the clipped form, displaying a clear information-object meaning (*la giustifica* is primarily a written document), is far less acceptable in all eventive readings enhanced by the constructions of the type seen in (15). I argue that such a semantic condition, though being probably just a slight tendency, can be best seen in the example of *falsificazione*. The underlying verb, *falsificare*, can have two meanings, a material one of *falsificare la moneta, la carta di credito* etc. (to falsify the money, the credit card) and a Popperian sense of *falsificare un'ipotesi* (to falsify a hypothesis). When *falsification* is

¹⁵For some speakers, in fact, *giustifica* is acceptable even in this dynamic reading, while for others it tends to be ruled out.

understood in the “material” sense, clipping seems to be ruled out (16), but when it comes to the other meaning, an information-object reading appears to be more acceptable (17) given that the falsification of a hypothesis may in fact be a written document.

- (16) a. La falsificazione delle carte di credito (da parte di alcune persone) è sempre stata facile → E
 b. * La falsifica delle carte di credito (da parte di alcune persone) è sempre stata facile → *E
 ‘The falsification of the credit cards (by some people) was always easy’
 c. Questa carta di credito è una falsificazione → *R
 d. * Questa carta di credito è una falsifica → *R
 ‘This credit card is a falsification’
 e. La falsificazione (della carta di credito) è sul tavolo → *R
 f. * La falsifica (della carta di credito) è sul tavolo → *R
 ‘The falsification (of the credit card) is on the table’
- (17) a. La falsificazione di quella ipotesi (da parte dello studioso) non ha richiesto molto tempo → E
 b. * La falsifica di quella ipotesi (da parte dello studioso) non ha richiesto molto tempo → *E
 ‘The falsification of that hypothesis (by the scholar) didn’t take much time’
 c. La falsificazione (di quella ipotesi) è geniale → R
 d. ° La falsifica (di quella ipotesi) è geniale → R
 ‘The falsification (of that hypothesis) is brilliant’
 e. La falsificazione è sul tavolo → R
 f. ° La falsifica è sul tavolo → R
 ‘The falsification is on the table’

What the two contexts have in common is a possibility of having a result-object interpretation. But while in (16c–16f) the referential reading is more “material”, in (17c–17f), the information-object reading of *falsificazione* strongly favours the acceptability of the clipped variant *falsifica* (see also Montermini & Thornton 2014: 196, note 16 on *falsifica*).¹⁶ I take this case, along with the others discussed above, as an example of Frazdin’s hypothesis that hypothesis according to which

[...] un procédé dérivationnel donné opère de manière discriminante sur l’une ou l’autre de ces significations. [a given derivational process operates differentially on one or the other of these meanings.] (Fradin & Kerleroux 2009: 86)

¹⁶The form *falsifica* is in fact attested on the Internet only a couple of times, in a context that seems to be due to strong analogy with *verifica*: “...sostituire alle procedure rigorose di verifica e falsifica di proposizioni scientifico-sperimentali un metodo simile a quello storico-comprensivo...”; “...i dati sperimentali sono il fondamento della verifica/falsifica di ogni ipotesi scientifica...”; “...isolare e selezionare quei fatti, e quei modi di viverli, che consentono la verifica (o falsifica) di date ipotesi...”; “...Gli epistemologi hanno così iniziato a riflettere e a cercare situazioni di verifica o di falsifica di queste ipotesi...”

5 Concluding remarks

On the basis of the data so far analyzed – which represent only a very limited sample – I now conclude by summarizing my main proposal.

I maintain that the clipping rule is sensitive to the information-object meaning of the construction in *-zione*. Such an information-object meaning can be predicted from the general semantics of the base verb.

What Melloni (2011: 108) considers to be the core meaning of what she calls the R nominals may be captured in the following four or five classes based on the semantics of the underlying verb: the *product, means, path and measure, entity in state* verbs and the *sense extensions*. She shows that inside of the *product-oriented* nominals a further division is to be made between *creation/result-object* verbs (such as *costruire*), *creation-by-representation* verbs (such as *tradurre*) and *creation-by-modification* verbs (such as *correggere*). The *representation* (and also *modification*) class of *creation verbs* can, as Melloni puts it

[...] undergo a metonymic displacement and convey the concrete interpretation of its container object, (a piece of paper, for instance) [...]. (Melloni 2011: 201)

Furthermore, still inside this class of *creation verbs*, there is another non-prototypical group of *speech act verbs* (see Melloni 2011: 213–214) which convey a proposition that can be, once again, understood as *information object* à la Pustejovsky (1991), as, for example, *confessione, comunicazione* etc. In such a perspective, we could also reconsider the already lexicalized nouns as, for instance, *condanna, confisca, deroga, proroga, ratifica, nomina* etc. (see Thornton 2004: 519). But this is, of course, a matter of future research. For the present, I only wished to show that a general *information-object* meaning can indeed be a relevant factor in a (marginal) process of clipping of the Italian nouns in *-ificazione*.

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