

PRAGMATIC CONNOTATIONS OF VERB 'TOURNER' DERIVATIVES

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Abstract: The strict application of suffixation constraints in evaluative derivatives and the notable acceptance of certain suffixes by specific stems suggest a competition among evaluative endings. This quasi-complementary distribution creates opportunities for semantic differentiation. Empirical evidence indicates that speakers indeed tend to establish distinctions in meaning among various endings. However, these distinctions seem subtle and may not necessarily be grounded in the arbitrary linking of semantic instructions with these particular endings.

Keywords: *derivation, suffixation, semantic field, pragmatic connotation, verbal evaluative suffixes*

It's not uncommon for the same verbal lexeme to be followed by different evaluative suffixes, such as *gambergeouiller*, *gambergeailler*, and *gambergeasser*. Deciding whether these or other derivatives of the same root convey distinct meanings can be challenging. To clarify this, we devised a test presented to two groups of speakers. The results of these experiments suggest that the evaluative suffixes do have semantic differences. However, the differentiation is somewhat unclear, and it remains uncertain whether it should be attributed to semantic instructions specifically linked to the suffixes.

To elucidate the distinctions that intuition might discern among deverbal evaluative suffixes, Pichon provides his readers with a text he crafted. This text includes eight derivatives of the verb 'tourner,' situated in various contexts. The utilization of each of these derivatives is intended to be dictated by linguistic consciousness in accordance with the context: "Some time ago, we compiled an array of verbo-verbal suffixes. However, the true measure of a French speaker's perception of their semantic diversity becomes apparent when these suffixes are applied to the same base verb. In a typical household scene, a child playfully turns (*tourne*) here and there in whimsical games, while the housewife aimlessly turns (*tourne*) around, lacking a purposeful activity. At times, she engages in the swirling (*tourne*) of soup simmering on the stove or examines leftover milk that appears to have twirled (*tourne*) around in the cupboard. She also playfully whirls (*tourne*) around her husband, bombarding him with observations and questions when he seeks a moment of quiet work. Meanwhile, outside, a partially deserted fairground unfolds: a dilapidated merry-go-round spins (*tourne*) almost bereft of customers. Nevertheless, a prostitute persists in wandering

(tournasse) stubbornly, and mischievous boys meander (tournaillent) about, seeking mischief.»

This illustrative example did not entirely persuade us, particularly considering the unequal availability of all derivatives and some appearing to have questionable acceptability. Except for instances closely tied to lexicalization (e.g., "tournicoter," which is often constructed with "around," and "tourniquer," which frequently takes on the meaning of 'turning on itself'), it appears that evaluative suffixes exhibit a distinct preference for the meaning of "turning" (tourner), which involves one or more changes in the orientation of the agent of the action. The T.L.F. defines the primary meaning of "tournailler" through the periphrasis 'to come and go in all directions, generally without apparent purpose [...],' listing "tournasser," "tournicoter," "tournailler," and "tourniquer" as synonyms for this verb. This predominant meaning is evident (the child 'tourne,' the housewife 'tourne,' the prostitute 'tournasse,' the mischievous boys 'tournaillent'). However, other meanings are also found in this text, such as 'performing a rotational movement around an axis' (the merry-go-round 'tourne'), 'stirring' (the housewife 'tourne' the soup), and 'becoming corrupted' (the milk 'tourne'). It's noteworthy that these somewhat semantically deviant derivatives with rounded vowel suffixes (-ot(er), -ouill(er), and -och(er)) do not appear with "turn" in the TLF or Frantext. Ultimately, this text appears somewhat unnatural.

In our view, these examples do not convincingly demonstrate that each evaluative suffix is linked to a specific semantic instruction. The usage appears to fall short of reflecting a free and spontaneous application of language. Moreover, the choices seem to be influenced more by associations rather than a nuanced understanding of the semantic diversity of suffixes. For instance, we were informed that if the prostitute "tournasse," it is because she is a pétasse; if the bad boys "tournaillent," it is because they are scoundrels; and the housewife "tourne" her soup as she stirs her ratatouille or noodles. This recurring observation suggests that the association is less with semantic instructions tied to suffixes and more with semantic fields associated with endings. Lastly, on a subjective note, it appears to us that the type of evaluation implied by these derivatives is closely tied to the vowel sounds of the respective suffixes.

This contribution convincingly establishes that the distribution of verbal evaluative suffixes in French is primarily governed by euphonic constraints, particularly dissimilative constraints. Togeby's observations need to be expanded and refined: evaluative suffixes exhibit a strong aversion to attaching to a stem that concludes with a consonant identical to their own, regardless of the specific consonant. This aversion also extends to the closest phonetic relatives of that consonant and diminishes as the resemblance fades. Additionally, though less pronounced, the incompatibility between identical vowels is also evident. This quasi-complementary distribution creates opportunities for semantic differentiation.

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