NOMINALIZED EXPRESSIVE ACTS IN ENGLISH [*]

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article se propose d'examiner en détail les objets de communication nominalisés dans la construction de l'objet de réaction ('Reaction Object Construction') ('He snorted his disapproval'), sur la base de l'examen de plus de 2000 constructions extraites du Corpus of Contemporary American English. La construction fusionne deux prédicats en un seul : un verbe typiquement intransitif exprimant une manière de communication non verbale (geste ou son), et un objet non sous-catégorisé conçu comme un acte de communication abrégé. La conversion de cet événement communicatif dans une unité nominale implique différents processus morphologiques, syntaxiques et sémantiques.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present a detailed analysis of the nominalized communicative objects in the 'Reaction Object Construction' ('He snorted his disapproval'), based on the examination of over 2000 constructions extracted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English. The construction fuses two predicates in one : a typically intransitive verb expressing non-verbal manner of communication (gesture or sound), and a non-subcategorized object conceived of as an abbreviated communicative act. The conversion of this communicative event into a nominal unit involves different morphological, syntactic and semantic processes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Levin (1993) distinguishes an alternation involving an intransitive manner of speaking verb or a sign verb which takes a non-subcategorized object, *Pauline smiled her thanks*, with an extended sense « express a reaction by V-ing » (1993 : 98). The object is a nominalized construction involving a recategorized component (*her thanks* ← « she thanked »). As in

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resulting constructions, the verb undergoes a conceptual subordination process, which turns it into secondary information, while the nominalized event conveys the main action, i.e. « she thanked by smiling ».

These objects show interesting syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties. They are not part of the semantics of the verb. For example, the verb *smile* does not have a sense involving a thanking act ; it is assumed that it fuses with a communicative construction from which it receives this message argument role, *her thanks*. This non-subcategorized object supplies a communicative reading to the construction, which is not predictable from the meaning of the verb. Therefore, ROCs are here understood as instances of « form-meaning correspondences that exist independently of particular verbs » (Goldberg, 1995 : 1).

A possessive determiner introduces most of them ; this possessive is the notional subject of the nominalized event. Thus (1a) implies two events with a shared subject : « Moshe snorted » and « Moshe disapproved ». But the nominalized item is sometimes introduced by an indefinite determiner, (1b), and it may also appear directly linked to the verb, as in (1c), where a greeting formula, *thanks*, is recategorized as a noun in this syntactic position.

(1) a. Moshe snorted his disapproval.
          (COCA[1], 1991, FIC, Bk: DanzigPassage)

     b. He turned and smiled a welcome at Sarla.
          (COCA, 1994, FIC, Bk: LeavingLas)

     c. I looked at the cop and tried to smile thanks.
          (COCA, 1990, MAG, Omni)

These nominalized communicative events are semantically restricted by the verb ; in order to be integrated in the construction the non-subcategorized object has to be compatible with the verb's semantics/pragmatics. For example, the act of nodding one's head is conventionally understood as a sign of assent or understanding, thus, it is easily taken for the act of transmission of a positive answer, as in :

(2) a. Marisa nods her assent. (COCA, 2004, MAG, PsychToday)

     b. At the fire John nodded his agreement.
          (COCA, 2011, FIC, Bk: AnEyeGloryCivil)

     c. Nurses and orderlies nodded their approval.
          (COCA, 2009, FIC, FantasySciFi)

However, while some of these nominalized elements are almost redundant with the verb's meaning, as in (2), others may not be so closely related to the verb's semantics ; contextual information supplies then a key for

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[1] COCA stands for Corpus of Contemporary American English, which is made available by Mark Davis at http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/.

proper understanding :

> (3)   With a resigned droop of her shoulders, Cardenas nodded her surrender. (COCA, 2001, FIC, Analog)

Little attention has been paid to these nominalized elements. English Grammars like Quirk *et al*. (1985) do not mention them, even though they discuss resultant, cognate and eventive objects (1985 : 749-52). Huddleston and Pullum (2002) only dedicate a few lines of their extensive grammar to what they term « object of conveyed reaction » as in *He grinned his appreciation* (2002 : 305). Other researchers have described these objects in relation to cognate or resultant objects (Felser and Wanner, 2001 ; Martínez Vázquez, 1998, 2005 and Mirto, 2007). More recent work has focused on the syntactic behaviour of ROCs (Kogusuri, 2009) and more specifically on the *kissing goodbye* construction (Haïk, 2011). Corpus data show that these objects are more productive and extensive than is usually believed, and they involve an interesting process of nominalization, which has not been discussed in the literature, as far as I know.

The aim of this paper is to present a detailed analysis of these nominalized communicative objects based on the examination of over 2000 constructions extracted from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*, a 450 million words corpus, parsed and made available online by Mark Davies. I hope to show that these objects are more diverse than usually assumed. Although they all share a nominal structure, their original status and degree of lexicalization varies significantly. In line with constructionist approaches (Goldberg, 2013 : 17) this paper attempts to give a full account of language, including both the 'core' and the 'periphery'. The present analysis includes some low-frequency constructions, which offer interesting examples of nominalization inside a specific syntactic context, or construction.

2. THE REACTION OBJECT CONSTRUCTION

Since the nominalized elements under consideration originate in a fixed syntactic position, a brief analysis of the construction is in order. The « Reaction Object Construction » (ROC, hereafter), as was named by Levin (1993), involves a communicative setting with at least two arguments[2], the speaker, and the information transmitted or message. The latter may either reproduce the exact words of the communicative exchange being reported,

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2   The third argument in a communicative construction is a recipient, which is sometimes optional. In fact, ROCs focus on the first part of the communicative chain, the expression of a message, which does not need to be decoded, as Croft (1991) remarks for the verbs *speak* and *talk*, which « conceptualize the speaker's activity as a relatively autonomous simple event, without necessary transmission of information », as perceived in *He's talking but no one's listening* (Croft 1991 : 175).

or summarize its content. Dirven *et al.* (1982 : 3) differentiate three formal types of message :

(4)   a. direct enunciation (*She said to me « I am 20 »*)
        b. indirect enunciation (*She told me that she was 20*)
        c. synthesis (*She told me her age*)

Quoting reports the exact speech sequence set off by quotation marks, as in (4a). The subordinate pattern found in indirect speech demands shifting person and deictics, (4b). Finally, the message may take the form of an abbreviated nominal element which summarizes the content of the communicative transfer, (4c). This synthetic nominal phrase functions as a pro-form,[3] which stands for the original exchange of information. The most basic type of message substitution is a metalinguistic noun – *message, news, facts, report* – which may stand for a simple sentence quotation, a paragraph or a larger text. However, other *pro – messages* stand for more complicated speech acts, with a specific illocutionary force as in (5a). These synthetic nouns do not normally appear with *verba dicendi* (5b) with the same illocutionary force.

(5)   a. She smiled her thanks / her agreement / her surprise.
        b. She told me her welcome / her agreement / her surprise.

The nominalized messages in (5a) are reported communicative acts : *Thanks!, I agree, I am surprised*. The speech act is reified as a resulting abstract entity. Thus, *her thanks* in (5a) refers to a single instance of a communicative act, i.e. a single « thanks », which is also personalized by the use of the possessive determiner. What makes the construction even more complex is that this nominalization of a speech act is transmitted through a gesture (smiling) instead of a linguistic sign. The speaker becomes an *expresser*, and the speech act is understood as *gesticulative* language ; it is a codified gesture with its own illocutionary force. The gesture metonymically stands for a speech act.

Gestures are conventionally associated to specific communicative acts. For instance, the act of spitting is understood as a symbol of hatred or scorn, « eject saliva forcibly from one's mouth, sometimes as a gesture of contempt or anger » (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Therefore, this act is frequently related to the expression of insults, as in (6a). This conventional association between a gesture and a speech act facilitates the metonymic transfer, which extends the meaning of the intransitive verb to express communication in its transitive use, (6b). Similarly, the waving gesture explicitly explained as a speech act in (6c) is condensed into a single event, which encapsulates the

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3   Quirk *et al.* (1985 : 76) apply the term PRO-FORM to « words and word-sequences which are essentially devices for recapitulating or anticipating the content of a neighbouring expression, often with the effect of reducing grammatical complexity ».

verb of saying, in (6d). This syntactic condensation is achieved through metonymy, which is a powerful cognitive shortening device. Metonymy uses a concept from a source domain to provide access to a concept from a contiguous target domain. In ROCs a gesture that conventionally accompanies the expression of certain messages, as in (6c), *wave (hand) to say hi*, stands for the speaking verb introducing the message, as in (6d) (*waves hi*). But, notice that although only one event is explicitly mentioned – the gesture verb – both concepts – gesture and speech events – are activated. As Radden and Kövecses (1999 : 19) informally state about metonymy : you get two concepts for one[4].

(6)   a. Fucking bastards, he spat. (COCA, 2010, FIC, NewStatesman)

        b. As the bubba-manager looked on approvingly from his throne behind the cash register, she spat her hateful words at our teammate. (COCA, 1998, NEWS, Houston)

        c. I told the kids that when they got home from school they could wave at me to say hi. (COCA, 2008, MAG, TodaysParent)

        d. Some of the kids look awestruck by the audience ; one subtly waves hi to her family. (COCA, 1999, FIC, Mov:FiftyViolins)

Some ROCs are followed by information glossing their meaning, as in (7a). But sometimes the ROC is the only expression of the reported message, (7b), and has the same illocutionary (or rather *gesticulative*) force as a linguistic message.

(7)   a. He offered his right hand and smiled his welcome to the man... « Welcome to Riverton, » Parker said. « Come inside. Rest your feet. Have some warm food. On the house. » (COCA, 2006, FIC, AntiochRev)

        b. Elle smiles her thanks and walks off with Emmett. (COCA, 2001, FIC, Mov: LegallyBlonde)

These nominals share the illocutionary force of expressive illocutionary verbs, i.e. they express mental states which are socially relevant, and which may also be expressed in a non-linguistic way :

> Expressive illocutionary verbs name forces whose point is to express (that is to say, to manifest) mental states of the speaker such as joy, approbation or discontent which are important in our social forms of life. Human beings can express their mental states in non-linguistic behavior. They can, for example, express their happiness by smiling and laughing, and their sadness by crying.

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4   Nerlich, Clark, Todd (1999) also describe this use of metonymy as an « abbreviation device », which « enables us to say things quicker, to shorten conceptual distances » (1999 : 362). An analysis of different types of metonymies involved in communicative acts is presented in Brdar, Brdar-Szabó (2003) and Martínez Vázquez (2005).

> However, when they perform expressive illocutionary acts, it is by the use of language that they express their mental states. (Vanderveken 1990 : 213)

Since these messages are not always transmitted linguistically – although some ROCs take manner of speaking verbs, as in *she mumbled her adoration* – it seems sensible to drop the term *illocutionary* and simply call them *expressive nominals*, keeping in mind that the event they name has a similar force to that of expressive illocutionary verbs.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The examples on which this paper draws have been extracted from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (Davis, 2008). This 450 million words corpus contains a wide array of texts (more than 160,000) evenly divided between five genres : spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic journals. It is updated regularly. The searches were conducted in all registers during the months of January-April 2013. At that time the corpus included data from 1990 to 2012.

 Extensive and elaborate searches for the two main lexical elements that conform a ROC were conducted. First, transitive uses of manner of speaking and gesture verbs (e.g. *murmur, scream, roar, nod, wave*) were searched for. The examples containing nominalized pro-messages were selected. A second major search for prototypical pro-messages, i.e. nouns expressing speech formulae, reaction signals or feelings, the three elements which might fuse with the participant roles of communicative verbs (e.g. *hello, agreement, annoyance*), was conducted. The results were filtered manually. A final selection of over 2000 constructions with all the varieties of objects found with a group of communicative verbs in ROCs formed our final corpus. All the examples cited have been extracted from this selection of the COCA. Some examples have been abbreviated for the sake of clarity.

4. RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

As discussed in section 2., the shift from non-nominal to nominal unit in the ROC is guaranteed by its syntactic position in a nominal function. The construction requires the conversion of a communicative act into a nominal unit. But the elements that may appear in this object position differ, as do the formal markers of the nominalization process. The results of our corpus analysis reveal three types of nominals with common features in the ROC : delocutive nouns, deverbal illocutionary nouns, and predicative expressive nouns. They all share syntactic and semantic properties inherited from the construction : they are perceived as expressive speech acts resulting from a gesture or sound performed by the subject of the construction, who expresses a mental state towards an antecedent event. Their different derivational status, however, gives them some distinctive features.

The first type involves short conventional formulae like *yes, no*, or *hello*, which are uttered in specific social contexts and can stand alone as independent utterances. These elements are not usually integrated in the syntax, but when they are, they do not need suffixation :

(8)   a. Mariah waved hello and went into the kitchen.
            (COCA, 2006, FIC, Bk:OwlMoonCafe)

        b. His wife Jenny is nodding yes. (COCA, 2002, NEWS, CSMonitor)

        c. « We want everyone to be able to afford one. » J.J. shrugs his no.
            (COCA, 1997, FIC, AntiochRev)

Most scholars distinguish at least two categories of conventional independent expressions: interjections, and routines or formulae. Ameka (1992 : 109) describes the former as « spontaneous immediate responses to situations », while the latter are viewed as « intentional and (socially) expected reactions to situations ». Formulae, as conversational exchanges, may have addressees. Interjections, on the other hand, are not addressed to specific people and are the expression of mental acts (Ameka, 1992 : 110). Quirk *et al*. (1985) define formulae as irregular grammatical forms without grammatical status :

> Most formulae used for stereotyped communication situations are grammatically irregular. Only in a very limited way can they be analysed into clause elements. (Quirk *et al*., 1985 : 852)

Aijmer (1996) considers Quirk *et al*.'s lack of grammatical definition for these formulae too simple. She argues that many routines can be grammatically analysed as sentences, verb phrases or noun phrases. But their grammatical status is controversial. For example, *thank you* is frequently analysed as elliptic – though the unexpressed subject is not easy to recover – but it can also be regarded as a verb phrase. Its one-word equivalent, *thanks*, can be classified either as a noun (*many thanks*) or as a verb (*thanks very much*) (*cf.* Aijmer, 1996 : 19).

In any case, these formulae are all independent utterances associated with specific conventional situations, which may be recategorized into different grammatical elements. Since their function in the ROC is clearly nominal, and they are derived from locutions used as formulae, I will term them « delocutive » nouns, following Benveniste :

> Un verbe est dit « dénominatif » s'il dérive d'un nom ; « déverbatif », si d'un verbe. Nous appellerons *délocutifs* des verbes dont nous proposons d'établir qu'ils sont *dérivés de locutions*. (Benveniste, 1958 : 277)

A second type of nominalization found in this object position involves nouns like *disagreement, approval,* or *assent*, which derive from expressive illocutionary verbs. These deverbal nouns, like formulae, are addressee-

oriented, but they are interpreted as a decision or declaration made by the speaker, or expresser, in response to a previous situation :

(9)   a.   « For example, you might run into your neighbors at the grocery store because people prefer to shop near home. » She frowned her disagreement at me. (COCA, 2012, FIC, Analog)

       b.   « I'll leave now, » Oscar added quickly. Lena smiled her approval. (COCA, 2008, FIC, Bk: MarriageTrueMinds)

       c.   « How's it look now? » he asked. Avery nodded her acceptance. « That's perfect, » she replied. (COCA, 2008, FIC, Bk: PlayingKeeps)

Finally, nouns like *pleasure*, *satisfaction* or *disgust* are not conceived of as a response to a receiver, but rather as the expression of an emotional state experienced by the subject. There is no commitment on the part of the speaker, and no receiver is necessarily implied.

(10)   a.   She writhed and moaned her pleasure in an ancient voice which was no longer silent. (COCA, 1997, FIC, LesbianNews)

       b.   After the first rush of excitement, he'd settled down, and, to her surprise, he'd been better than she'd expected. He had remarkable endurance. The benefits of youth? If so, she'd have to find a stable of young lovers. Ily nodded her satisfaction. (COCA, 1992 FIC, BkSF: RelicEmpire

       c.   « I'll need help, » Bates insisted. The boatswain spat his disgust. « I'll help. Just get the sextant and the clock. » (COCA, 1998, FIC, ScholScope)

4.1. Delocutive nouns

The following major types of formulae presented by Quirk *et al*. (1985: 852) have been attested in ROCs :

GREETINGS : Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening ; Hello ; Hi
FAREWELLS : Goodbye, Good night
REACTION SIGNALS :
        (a) assent, agreement : Yes, OK
        (b) denial, disagreement : No
THANKS : Thank you, Thanks
CONGRATULATIONS : Congratulations

Besides them, two other formulaic nouns, *farewell* and *welcome*, appear in this object position in our corpus.

These formulae may appear as independent direct speech segments as in (11a) or after a verb of the *verba dicendi* class, as in (11b).

(11) a. Hello, everybody. Good morning, and welcome to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
(COCA, 2012, SPOK, NBC_Today)

b. « Don't Christians pray before they eat? » I said yes, most do.
(COCA, 2011, MAG, ChrisCentury)

When they are integrated in a ROC, they take the meaning « an act of saying x ». This delocutive word-formation process shows different stages. When these formulae appear after manner of speaking verbs, as in (12), they stand in the fuzzy area between free clause elements, or quotes (especially when they appear between quotation marks), and objects.

(12) a. He shouts « hello » and the echo responds « hello. »
(COCA, 1992, ACAD, LatAmPopScult

b. Hannah murmured good-bye. (COCA, 2006, FIC, Bk: NightSins)

The same formulaic element after a gesture verb cannot be conceived of as direct speech. Instead of « an act of saying x » it acquires a different metonymic sense, « an act of gesturing x (where x is an act of saying x) », as illustrated in the following examples :

(13) a. Mind if we take it outside? Phil shrugs okay.
(COCA, 2000, FIC, Mov:Frequency)

b. Mr. Grady turns from the register and waves hi to me.
(COCA, 1998, FIC, MassachRev)

c. We bowed farewell to the last man.
(COCA, 1997, FIC, Bk:MemiorsGeisha)

d. He shrugs hello to the band. (COCA, 2000, FIC, Mov:AlmostFamous)

e. ...and then nodded good afternoon to Mary.
(COCA, 2011, FIC, Bk:LongHappyLifeNovel)

However, speakers show some hesitation about the status of these units. Thus, some formulae appear as quotes after gesture verbs, as in (14a). Notice also that in (14b), *good-bye* is the object of both a manner of speaking and a gesture verb.

(14) a. She waves « hello » to the RECEPTIONIST.
(COCA, 2004, FIC, Mov:Grudge)

b. Harush grunted and waved a good-bye.
(COCA, 2007, FIC, MassachRev)

An indefinite or possessive determiner unambiguously marks their nominal status in (15). The indefinite determiner in (15a,b,c) seems to adjust better to the impersonal nature of a stereotyped expression, which is individualized through the use of a possessive determiner in (15d,e,f).

(15)   a.   Satch shrugs a yes. (COCA, 2000, FIC, Mov:Frequency)

     b.   Buddy spotted John and smiled a hello, which John returned.
(COCA, 1992, FIC, BK:Prophet)

     c.   Another guard took his place in the chair and nodded a good morning
to Spats. (COCA, 1998, FIC, BlackScholar)

     d.   Aringarosa grumbled his hello. (COCA, 2003, FIC, Bk:DaVinciCode)

     e.   SHARON # Talk to me. He shakes his NO.
(COCA, 1993, FIC, Mov:BodyEvidence)

     f.   But MacKenzie just nods his farewell and starts humming as he walks
away. (COCA, 2005, FIC, Mov:Jacket)

These nouns denote intentional routinized speech acts oriented to a recipient, who may be specified in the construction, as in (14a). The verbs *kiss* and *hug* also incorporate delocutive nouns, but since they are transitive verbs, they emerge as ditransitive, (16a,b), intransitive reciprocal, (16c,d), or passive constructions, (16e). In (16d) the formula shows number inflection, *hellos,* to refer to the different individual acts of greeting performed by the reciprocal subject participants.

(16)   a.   They said he hugged them hello and goodbye, and always said, « I
love you. » (COCA, 1995, NEWS, WashPost)

     b.   Meg, dressed in jeans and a pink T-shirt, hugged her good morning.
(COCA, 2003, MAG, ChildLife)

     c.   In our family all of us kissed good morning, good-bye after breakfast,
hello when we came home, and goodnight before going.
(COCA, 1993, FIC, Health)

     d.   Marla let them hug their hellos. (COCA, 2009, FIC, Bk:SpellGames

     e.   I've been hugged and kissed hello, Charlie's been slapped on the
shoulder. (COCA, 1999, FIC, SouthwestRev)

Some nouns deserve a special explanation: *thanks, thank-you, congratulations* and *welcome*. Unlike the other formulae, these forms have corresponding verbs from which they originally derive (*thank, congratulate* and *welcome*), but they also function as independent stereotyped segments :

(17)   a.   Mr-DUJARDIN: Thank you. Mr-HAZANAVICIUS: Thank you. Mr-
LANGMANN: Thank you. LAUER: Congratulations again. CURRY:
Congratulations. (COCA, 2012, SPOK, NBC_Today)

     b.   His smile flashed through the hallway like lightning. « Welcome. » He
hugged Katie. Then Laura. Then me.
(COCA, 2012, FIC, Bk: TheseDaysAreOurs)

Their derivational status is unclear ; both the verb and the formula might be the source of this nominal unit in the ROC. They have been included in

this section because they share more syntactic and semantic / pragmatic properties with delocutive nouns than with deverbal illocutionary nouns.

These words may appear as direct speech segments, (17a,b), consequently, they can also appear as quotes introduced by *verba dicendi*, (18a,b), in this intermediate step between independent sentences and objects.

(18)   a. What he said was hello, goodbye and thanks.
           (COCA, 2002, NEWS, Atlanta)

       b. I don't know whether to say « I'm sorry, » or « Congratulations. »
           (COCA, 1991, FIC, Mov:SilenceLambs)

Notice that they may even appear in ROCs within quotation marks, (19), revealing thus their 'direct speech' status. Deverbal illocutionary nouns like *agreement* or *approval*, on the other hand, do not occur in isolation or as quotes.

(19)   a. When he finished, the driver waved him « thanks ».
           (COCA, 1994, FIC, Mov:BattleShaker)

       b. Red calmly walks past Sally who smiles a « thanks ». He gives her a one finger to the hat salute. (COCA, 1993, FIC, Mov:PerfectWorld)

       c. A NEON SIGN above her drops down. It flashes « CONGRATULATIONS » over and over again. « CONGRATULATIONS ». (COCA, 1993, FIC, Mov:Arcade)

Finally, notice that even though *thank-you* resembles a verb phrase, it works as a fixed phrase, with an object that cannot be changed (**thank-her*). As a reported speech construction, the ROC requires a change of deictics. But since *thank-you* is a set phrase, when it appears in a ROC, as in (20), it surprisingly has two recipients: *you* and *her new friend*.

(20)   She said thank you to her new friend, Buddy.
        (COCA, 2006, MAG, ChildLife)

From a pragmatic perspective, *thank you*, *thanks*, *congratulations* and *welcome*, like the speech formulae in this section, are generally empty, routinized expressions linked to pragmatic and social rules. For example, *welcome* is a social sign for greeting, similar to other greeting formulae (*hello, hi*). It is so void of content and routinized that it appears as a sign on our doormats and in shops and restaurants. Our corpus contains examples of ROCs with these inanimate subjects :

(21)   a. ...a library with crosshatched, leaded-glass windows that glow a welcome yellow against the falling dark.
           (COCA, 2007, FIC, MichiganQRev)

       b. The butcher store was crowded, and as we stepped inside the door jingled a welcome. (COCA, 1996, NEWS, NYTimes)

Thanking formulaic expressions, like *thanks* or *thank you* show more discourse and pragmatic functions than their equivalent uses as verbs, which keep a more stable propositional meaning. As conversational routines they are usually interpreted functionally and pragmatically rather than by semantic compositional rules :

> Sometimes thanking has very little meaning. *Fine thanks* in the answer to the question *how are you* represents a 'phatic' use of thanking, i.e. thanking has no other function than to make the hearer feel good. In addition, *thank you* can accept a proposal to end the telephone conversation, in which case the phrase has a terminating or discourse-organizing function. Another interesting use is *thank you* with the illocutionary function of accepting an offer. However, when an offer is rejected, *thank you* is purely phatic (*no thanks*). Finally, there are derived uses of *thank you*, signalling irony, sarcasm, brusqueness, which are marked by a characteristic prosody. (Aijmer, 1996 : 52)

As Aijmer (1996: 53) notes, *thanks* is also used as a discourse marker, for example, in service encounters like the following, (cited from Coulmas 1981 : 91):

> (Situation: the conductor hands over a ticket)
> Conductor: 'Thank you.'
> Passenger: 'Thank you.'
> Conductor: 'Thank you.'

Notice that in this discourse function it cannot be replaced by a clearly verbal usage:

> Conductor: !'I thank you.'
> Passenger: !'I thank you.'
> Conductor: !'I thank you.'

In the ROC, these thanking expressions frequently function as polite markers:

(22)   a. The bartender puts a mug in front of Cleeve, who nods his thanks.
           (COCA, 1999, FIC, LiteraryRev)

       b. Fritz held the door open, and I nodded my thanks.
           (COCA, 2009, FIC, Bk:TraceSmoke)

       c. Singing in the Rain, the first Oscar recipient to sing and dance his
           thank you. (COCA, 1998, SPOK, ABC_GMA)

       d. « Well, enjoy yore dinner, Colonel. » Harry nodded a thanks and
           sighed pleasurably when he heard the door shut.
           (COCA, 2005, FIC, Bk:Defender)

In sum, *thank you*, *thanks*, *congratulations* and *welcome*, appear in the ROC as automatic conventionalized responses contrasting with the more

specific propositional meaning of deverbal nouns, as illustrated in (9), which imply a higher degree of commitment of the speaker.

4.2. Deverbal illocutionary nouns

A second type of nominalization in the ROC involves deverbal nouns like *understanding, appreciation, commands, assent, warning, determination, disapproval, apology* or *approval*, as in (23), which are derived by a suffixation or conversion process from a verb stem.

> (23) a. Wendy nodded her understanding. (COCA, 1991, FOC, BkSF:Drifter)
>
> b. He licks the bowl clean, lets out a loud belch, and grins his appreciation. (COCA, 2005, FIC, HudsonRev)
>
> c. Someone whistled approval (COCA, 2008, FIC, Bk:SconeColdDead)
>
> d. Marisa nods her assent. (COCA, 2004, MAG, PsychToday)
>
> e. They ran flat out, while the dog barked his warning. (COCA, 2002, FIC, AntiochRev)
>
> f. Ben scowled his determination. (COCA, 1990, FIC, Bk:HereStandAMan)
>
> g. Moshe snorted his disapproval. (COCA, FIC, Bk:DanzigPassage)
>
> h. That hurts. Bernie shrugs an apology. (COCA, 2003, FIC, Mov:ShipWho)

A possessive determiner in many of these ROCs formally links the nominal with the subject, which is the agent of both events. The nominalized speech act is always conceived of as an individual act performed by the subject of the construction. For example, a noun like *agreement* may refer to a shared past position or opinion, or to a document which reflects it, as in (24a). But in the ROC it will always make reference to an individual act resulting from the event denoted by the verb, as in (24b), or, if the subject is plural, as in (24c), to a sum of individual acts of agreeing.

> (24) a. The elder refused, citing their agreement. (COCA, 2000, ACAD, Generations)
>
> b. « A motorcycle is just transportation. » As her pals hum their agreement, I trot on westward. (COCA, 1996, NEWS, SanFranChron)
>
> c. But the main reason she smokes is « stress reduction. » The others nod their agreement. They all know smoking is bad for them, but it helps them relax. (COCA, 1994, NEWS, WashPost)

The meaning of the nominalized event is « S' s act of v », where S is the subject of the clause and v is the verbal source of the nominal. So even though these nouns inherit some of the verbal properties of their source

(*agree, appreciate, disagree, approve*...), the derivational process they un-dergo also affects their meaning. As resulting objects, these events are frozen into a single resulting act: a personal / individual act linked to the time reference of the verb of the construction. The aspectual status of the nominal is thus delimited by the verb of the construction ; since both events are causally linked, the noun acquires a telic status.

As has been mentioned before, these nouns are performative reactive speech acts. The subject expresses approbation or discontent in response to a previous situation. For example, in (24c), *their agreement* refers anaphori-cally to the previous sentence ; it is an act of affirmation of the statement « But the main reason she smokes is 'stress reduction' ». In (25a), *his deter-mination,* refers to a firm decision kept in spite of the previous words ; a determination which is further clarified linguistically. In (25b), the speaker's commitment is made clear in her following act.

(25)   a.   « The guides won't like it, sir. » Ben scowled his determination.
              « Neither would I, but see that they do it anyway. »
              (COCA, 1990, FIC, Bk:HereStandAMan)

       b.   « Maybe you should keep your light a bit subdued so that he can sleep
              longer. He needs the rest. » She bobbed her agreement, and her light
              dimmed. (COCA, 2004, FIC, Bk:TreasuredOne)

4.3. Predicative expressive nouns

Finally, a third type of noun in this object position exhibits adjectival properties. With a predicative rather than a referential meaning, this noun denotes a state of mind or feeling of the subject. Thus, the ROCs in (26) entail « Beth got confused », « Mistress Grofe got angry » and « Peggy got annoyed », respectively. The possessive determiner formally marks this partial coreference with the subject.

(26)   a.   Beth was frowning her confusion. « Chaldona? I don't know it.
              What's there that these people would want? »
              (COCA, 1992, FIC, BkSF: DragonToken)

       b.   Mistress Grofe sat at her end of the table and glared her anger at all of
              us. (COCA, 1990, FIC, BkSF:LensWorld)

       c.   Peggy saw him staring and frowned her annoyance.
              (COCA, 1991, FIC, KansasQ)

This mental state is perceived as a reaction to a contextual element ; in (27a) the cause of her disappointment is not finding Luke and in (27b) his delight is caused by her ingenuity. It is thus perceived as a transitory resulting state.

(27) a. When she reached the kitchen door, she paused. Someone was sitting in front of the fireplace on the far wall, but it wasn't Luke. She sighed her disappointment. (COCA, 1990, FIC, Bk:GiftUponShore)

b. Max chuckled his delight at her ingenuity.
(COCA, 1991, FIC, Bk:RobinHood)

Notice that although deverbal illocutionary nouns are also mental, they denote performative acts (*She nodded her agreement = she nodded + she agreed*). Predicative expressive nouns, on the other hand, denote the result of a process undergone by the *expresser*, who is an experiencer, not an agent, of the corresponding verb (*She frowned her confusion = She frowned + she got confused*). Notice that the 'doing' test can be applied to deverbal nouns, but not to predicative nouns :

(28) a. She nodded her agreement. What did she do? She agreed.
b. She nodded her satisfaction. What did she do? !!She satisfied.

Most of these predicative nouns denote states resulting from the events described by the corresponding active verbs. For example, the nominals in (26), *her confusion, her anger, her annoyance* imply « X confused / angered / annoyed her », where X is the experienced phenomenon.

These emotional states are usually regarded as either positive or negative. Consequently, the gestures used to transmit them must be semantically and pragmatically compatible. In our corpus, positive feelings are usually expressed through smiling or similar positive gestures, (29a,b,c), while negative feelings are signalled through sniffing, huffing, spitting, weeping, frowning, or other signs socially perceived as negative, as in (29d,e,f). These non-subcategorized nouns attached to intransitive verbs are thus semantically / pragmatically constrained.

(29) a. He stood away, smiling his satisfaction.
(COCA, 2003, FIC, FantasySciFi)

b. Besides, whatever his sexual orientation, Andrew beamed his coquettish enthusiasms equally at him. « It's the best ever! »
(COCA, 1993, FIC, HarpersMag)

c. Your parents gave us gorgeous champagne flutes. If we're going to toast our happiness properly, that's what we need.
(COCA, 1998, MAG GoodHousekeeping)

d. Votana huffed his displeasure. (COCA, 2008, FIC, Analog)

e. He sniffed his contempt. (COCA, 1998, FIC, Bk:Loop)

f. I'd never expressed this hatred to a soul. Ernest spat his rage out like a young god. (COCA, 2011, MAG, GoodHousekeeping)

Even though these nominal elements express socially transmitted messages, which imply a recipient, some ROCs denote solitary situations, where

an *expresser* releases a strong or repressed feeling, not necessarily in the presence of a *recipient* :

(30) a. Greta Marie threw her head back and howled her misery to the skies.
(COCA, 1999, FIC, FantasySciFI)

b. He walked back and coughed into the feathers in the dank down pillow – he coughed his sorrow into the plucked sorrows of geese.
(COCA, 1998, FIC, KenyonRev)

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

ROCs are complex constructions which involve two predicates in one single clause: a verb denoting manner of communication, and a transferred message. The second predicate is a nominal unit which comprises a complete speech act. When this speech act is a formulaic expression (*hello, good-bye, thanks*) it is directly nominalized by insertion into this object position, with or without the addition of determiners. There is no loss of information in this nominalization process. But this nominal unit frequently stands for a longer message, which must be recovered from contextual information. The context must then provide enough information to ensure proper decoding. This high cost of (de)coding results in a low productivity. Table 1 offers overall distribution of the most frequent ROCs in our corpus. The first column offers the number of instances of ROCs with the most frequent verbs in the COCA. The second column contains the overall number of occurrences in the COCA. The third column gives the percentage of ROCs compared to the total amount of instances of the verb in the COCA.

type	tokens in ROCs	tokens in COCA	percentage
kiss	926	18158	5,10
nod	693	31580	2,19
wave	507	15451	3,28
hug	103	8546	1,20
smile	92	47008	0,20
snort	26	2668	0,97
sigh	25	11663	0,21
shrug	15	12223	0,12
whistle	9	3245	0,28
frown	7	6927	0,10

Table 1. – Distribution of most frequent verbs in ROCs

In spite of their low productivity, ROCs are powerful devices to capture communicative scenes, which are basic to human experience. Consider, for

example, (31) where the ROC, *he smiled his pleasure,* narrates the reactive expression of a feeling triggered by an antecedent event (the image of his wife grinning). The text describes different silent communicative acts which take place without uttering a word :

(31)   One of them held it open for the emperor, who always preceded his wife by two paces. The security men did not enter the hallway ; they remained outside. The entire palace was inside a security zone. Inside the building, away from other eyes, the emperor paused to let Masako reach his side. She flashed him a grin, a very un-Japanese gesture, but then she had spent years in the United States attending college before their marriage. He dearly enjoyed seeing her grin, and *he smiled his pleasure*. She took his arm and leaned forward, so that her lips brushed his cheek. His smile broadened. Arm in arm, they walked down the hall to the end, then turned right. Four men stood silently, waiting. They blocked the hallway. The emperor stopped. One of the men moved noiselessly to position himself behind the royal couple, but the others did not give way. Nor, the emperor noted with surprise, did they bow. Not even the tiniest bob.
(COCA, 1999, FIC, Bk:FortunesWar)

The narration of these silent communicative acts, which are pervasive in our lives, is a frequent source of ROCs. Since this construction offers a rich report of a silent communicative act, through a condensed construction (two predicates in one), it is very useful for rich descriptive narration. It is, therefore, not surprising that most ROCs appear in Fiction. Table 2 shows the distribution of ROCs with *kiss,* the most frequent verb in our corpus, among the different genres in the COCA. The data prove that ROCs are a good narrative device to express secondary detailed expressive acts, with a 60% of use in Fiction. These elaborate constructions do not fit in academic prose, nor in the direct informational style of newspapers or magazines. Since ROCs are complex indirect speech constructions, they are neither frequent in spoken language.

genre	tokens	percentage
Fiction	556	60
Magazine	157	17
Spoken	121	13
Newspapers	78	9
Academic	11	1
Total	923	100

Table 2. – ROCs with *kiss* in the genres of the COCA

The gestures that are more prevalent in our daily lives have a conventional meaning associated to them, which favours their codification in ROCs.

Thus, the most frequent verb in our corpus, *kiss*[5]*,* denotes a highly conventional greeting act. These ROCs are semi-fixed, since the verb only combines with a small number of greeting formulae: *goodbye, good night, good morning, bye,* and *hello*[6]. As already noted, since the verb is transitive it includes a subcategorized object followed by the nominalized speech formula. The construction *kiss good-bye* offers such a degree of fixedness that it has developed a stable figurative sense :

(32)   I mentally kissed my job good-bye and wondered how fast I could find another one. (COCA, 2009, FIC, Bk:AnimalAttraction)

A much more versatile verb is *nod*, the second most frequent verb in our corpus (693 occurrences). This gesture is conventionally understood as an act of greeting or assent. Thus, the most frequent combination is with *yes,* followed by *agreement*, *approval*, *thanks*, *assent*, and *understanding,* as shown in Table 3.

type	tokens	percentage
yes	280	40
approval	130	19
thanks	72	10
assent	42	6
understanding	39	6
other nouns	130	19
Total	693	100

Table 3. – Expressive nouns with *nod*

Although most ROCs with *nod* imply a positive answer, surprisingly, there are eight examples with *no,* as in :

(33)   a.   He motions to her two top buttons of her blouse. She nods no. Austin nods yes. She sheepishly undoes them.
(COCA, 1997, FIC, Mov: AustinPowers)

b.   You like hiking? (Erica nods no) Fishing? (Erica nods no) Sailing? (Erica nods no) What do you like? # ERICA # Boys.
(COCA, 1992, FIC, Mov: KnightMoves)

Our corpus reveals other creative uses where the noun acquires richer contextual interpretations. For example, *nodded a lie* in (34a) refers in fact to an affirmative act of nodding, which turns out to be an act of lying. Example (34b) also implies an act of agreement, but the nominal unit instead of a pro-

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5   For a detailed analysis of the *kiss goodbye* construction see Haïk (2011).

6   These formulae appear with different spellings, for example, *good-night, good night* and *goodnight*.

form like *agreement* or *yes,* literally reproduces the specific cause of agreement, *our familiarity with the genre.*

(34)   a.   You're still a virgin, aren't you? « For several reasons I lacked the heart to tell him about my latest discovery … so I nodded a lie. (COCA, 2011, FIC, Bk:NobleNorfleet)

     b.   « Are you all familiar with gangster rap? » McPherson asked. We were, despite the fact that, besides me, all of the students were white and mostly middle – to upper-class. While we each nodded our familiarity with the genre, McPherson reached into a shopping bag he'd brought and removed a magazine. (COCA, 2006, FIC, IowaRev)

The variety of interpretations that this head movement may acquire in different contexts makes *nod* a very productive gesture to transmit information. It is actually the most versatile verb in our corpus, combining with 41 different expressive nominalized messages :

acceptance, acknowledgment, acquaintances, acquiescence, affirmation, agreement, answer, apology, appreciation, approval, assent, awareness, compliance, comprehension, confirmation, congratulations, consent, disinterest, dismissal, dreads, encouragement, farewell(s), forgiveness, go-ahead, good-bye(s), gratitude, greeting, hello, lie, no, permission, recognition, recrimination, reply, satisfaction, support, surrender, thank-you / thanks, understanding, yes and *welcome.*

A richer description can be achieved through the use of modifiers. In the following noun phrases from our corpus, an adjective adds information about the manner of communication (35a), the expresser (35b), or the duration of the message, (35c).

(35)   a.   *a silent hello, a silent command.*

     b.   *a respectful farewell, a polite greeting, a polite acknowledgment, a neighborly hello, a nervous confirmation, a cool greeting.*

     c.   *a quick reassurance, a quick hello, a quick agreement, a minimal greeting.*

The next most frequent verb in our corpus is *wave* with 507 ROCs. Notice, however, that its overall percentage in the COCA is higher than *nod* (see Table 1). It is used mainly with greeting nouns, as illustrated in Table 4.

type	tokens	percentage
goodbye	401	79
hello	52	10
farewell	22	4
greeting	19	4
thanks	13	3
Total	507	100

Table 4. – Expressive nouns with *wave*

The verb *hug* is used in analogy with *kiss* to report greeting encounters. It appears with nouns of the delocutive type, in a similar distribution to *kiss*, as shown in Table 5.

type	tokens	percentage
goodbye	75	73
hello	18	17
good night	9	9
good morning	1	1
Total	103	100

Table 5. – Expressive nouns with *hug*

Although smiling is a recurrent polite gesture in our lives, it is less frequently encoded in ROCs (92 examples). Other smiling verbs like *grin*, *beam* or *chuckle* have occasionally been attested with expressive nouns.

Finally, verbs with gestures socially perceived as negative, like *snort*, *sigh, shrug, whistle* and *frown*, are less frequently encoded in ROCs (see Table 1).

Our findings show that most ROCs are semi-fixed constructions denoting conventional acts of greeting or thanking. But not all our daily rituals emerge as ROCs. For example, shaking hands is a conventional greeting sign, (36a) – probably more widespread than kissing – yet it is not encoded in a ROC. A major impediment for its appearance in a ROC is that the act is not expressed through a simple intransitive verb, but through a phrase which includes the body part, *shake hands*. This expression usually requires a verb of saying to include a delocutive noun, as in (36b). However, occasional more creative uses have been attested. For example, (36c) offers an example where *hands* is referred to anaphorically so that the verb is left intransitive and may add the delocutive noun in object position, *shake hello*. This structure resembles the frequent metonymic use of the verb *wave* in ROCs where *hand* is implied but not explicitly mentioned, for example in (6d), (8a) or (13b)*,* or the frequent use of *nod* without the explicit mention of *head.* In (36d) there is a transitive usage followed by the speech formula in quotation

marks, as in (14a) or (19a) with the verb *wave*. Finally, in a similar situation the verb *hand out* is taken as a source domain for the greeting shaking of hands, (36e).

(36)　a.　I'm sorry, we only shake hands to say hello.
　　　　　(COCA, 2004, MAG, TodaysParent)

　　　　b.　As he makes his way back, Barris shakes hands and says hello to several early seventies tv celebrities scattered throughout the restaurant: (COCA, 2002, FIC, Mov:EternalSunshine)

　　　　c.　And then there's Dominic Reilly, who has mutton-chop hands so impossibly large that yours get lost in their folds when you shake hello. (COCA, 2005, MAG, GolfMag)

　　　　d.　She then invites Maria to shake her hand « hello » and to walk along and shake the hands of some of the other children in the group before the music session begins. (COCA, 1998, ACAD, Re:View)

　　　　e.　It's a place near his office, and he hands out hellos all around as he makes his way over to my table. (COCA, 1997, FIC, Ploughshares)

Less conventional gestures are also encoded in ROCs in a creative way. For example, in (37a) a repetitive alveolar sound, *tut-tut*, conventionally understood as an exclamation of disapproval or annoyance (OED), is surprisingly used as a sign to express gratitude. This dismissive sound may be used here as a strategy for minimizing the compliment received, while, at the same time, a ritual *thanks* is uttered. Example (37b) is easier to contextualize: honking is a conventional *good-bye* signal used to get people's attention before a final *good-bye* wave from a person driving away. In (37c) and (37d) we find the description of other less conventional gestures. Finally, (37e) and (37f) capture « conventional » greeting signs of dogs.

(37)　a.　Doctor, I have seen you on TV and I have great respect for the work you are doing. Seed tut-tuts his thanks.
　　　　　(COCA, 1998, NEWS, WashPost)

　　　　b.　I simply do not have time to go back in there. I honk good-bye to Charles and Faye ... and pull out of the driveway heading down Peachtree Circle toward Peachtree Street.
　　　　　(COCA, 2009, FIC, Bk:BoundSouth)

　　　　c.　I gestured hello, a kind of jutting out of one elbow while shaking my head side to side. (COCA, 2005, FIC, FantasySciFi)

　　　　d.　'Howdy, Miss Emily,' I said as I creaked open the screen door, my hand springing up, my fingers fluttering hello.
　　　　　(COCA, FIC, Bk:IcySparks)

　　　　e.　Zippy is set free to jump up and lick and wag her hellos before she leads everyone into the family room. (COCA, 2008, MAG, SportsIll)

   f. A feisty DALMATIAN PUPPY ELVIS barks his welcome from
       behind a fence. (COCA, 2000, FIC, Mov:Frequency)

These examples prove that ROCs are not restricted to a closed class of
verbs combining with a small group of nouns in semi-fixed constructions ;
the construction proves to be a powerful shortening device which is produc-
tive in the expression of detailed narration of speechless communicative
acts.

Some examples of ROCs involve more complex metaphoric mappings
with inanimate expressers. For example, the ringing sound of a shop's door
in (21a) or the lights of a house in (38a) are used as source domains to
express greetings. Example (38b) offers a familiar unfriendly departure
scene, where the loud sound of a door slamming, a common end to a heated
scene, is metaphorically used to express farewell.

(38) a. Around the last bend of the driveway, the lights of the house shone
          their welcome. (COCA, 2011, FIC, Bk:WhenSparrowsFall)

      b. She let the door slam her good-byes. (COCA, 2005, FIC, Stroyworks)

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has analysed the integration of different expressive acts into
syntax, precisely as objects in ROCs. A message is summarized into a
nominal element through metonymic devices based on social conventions. A
corpus analysis of over 2000 examples extracted from the COCA has
revealed three sub-types of nominalization processes: delocutive nouns,
deverbal nouns and predicative nouns.

Most of these nominalizations occur at the level of the word, i.e. the
resulting element forms a simple nominal head. But sometimes this nomina-
lized form is complex, and includes a complement :

(39) a. What can we do, Paul? … The two girls nodded their wishes to help
          too. (COCA, 1994, FIC, SouthernRev)

      b. And she stoically smiled her courage to always surrender.
          (COCA, 1995, FIC, LiteraryRev)

The resulting nominals are attitude nouns, which reflect a resultative
instance of a way of thinking or feeling. The subjective nature of these nouns
is sometimes underscored by the use of possessive determiners. Although
they denote mental rather than external activity, they are presented as dyna-
mic and agentive. Most of them are instances of a present mental state made
explicit to a recipient in a conventional situation where an answer is socially
expected. But some ROCs reflect a solitary situation, as in (30). Although
most of them are semi-fixed constructions in which a verb combines with a
small set of nouns describing communicative expressions which are quite
rooted in Western culture, such as the act of kissing as a sign for greetings

and farewells, other more creative uses have been attested.

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