

# Polysemy of Italian Event Nominals

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It is well-known that event nominals tend to have both an event and one or more non-event interpretations. However, the representation of their polysemy can be improved. On one hand, the process-result ambiguity (Grimshaw 1990, Borer 1999) captures only a fragment of the phenomenon, given that result interpretations are not the only option available for event nominals. On the other hand, it has been assumed that result nominalizations introduce an additional semantic argument place, which may be filled by anything related causally to the event (Asher 1993: 151). Result nominals, however, may also bind a true argument of the event, while non-result interpretations may not bind a result argument or a true argument but rather a default argument, a shadow argument or even an adjunct (for a definition of true, default and shadow argument types, based on Pustejovsky 1995, see section 4 below). In other words, event nominals may potentially exploit the whole conceptual space of the event.

Given these premises, the general aim of this paper is to contribute to the representation of the semantic ambiguity exhibited by nominals denoting events<sup>1</sup> by providing an empirically well-founded list of sense alternations as found in corpus data. My specific goal is to investigate what elements of the event tend to be available for the restricted set of interpretations that event nominals may exhibit. Also, I intend to contribute to model event nominal polysemy in terms of semantic types. The language discussed is Italian but the proposed generalizations may expand on a broader perspective. The framework of semantic and aspectual analysis is the Generative Lexicon Theory (henceforth GL) (Pustejovsky 1995, 2001, 2006), which I briefly outline in section 4.

## 1. DEFINING EVENT NOMINALS

Following Kiefer 1998: 56, a nominal denotes an event if it is compatible with aspectual verbs like *continue*, *last*, *happen*, *take place* :

- (1) *What happened/took place?*  
i. A concert, a party, a trip, an examination = event nominals  
ii. \*A car, \*a bag, \*a cat, \*a bed, \*a table, \*a book = non-event nouns

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<sup>1</sup> *Event* is used here as a general term for all sorts of dynamic eventualities.

Following Pustejovsky 1995, 2006, a noun denoting a physical object may be coerced to an event if it is selected by a verb requiring an event as argument, as in the case of *last* in (2) which coerces the physical object *beer* to the event of 'drinking' it<sup>2</sup> :

- (2) *last*  
 i. my *seminar* lasted one hour = event nominal  
 ii. my *beer* lasted one hour ⇒ semantic type coercion

Following Gross 1996 and Gross - Kiefer 1995, event nominals are predicates when they appear in light verb constructions (*take a decision, make a choice*). Predicative event nominals (*prédicats nominaux* or *noms prédictifs d'événement*) should be classified separately on the basis of the light verbs they select.

## 2. CLASSES OF EVENT NOMINALS

From a morphological point of view, event nominals can be *derived* or they can be *simple nouns* (Kiefer 1998: 56-58). *Derived nominals* are usually nominalizations of a verb stem, either through syntactic conversion (zero conversion as in 3a. or conversion and inflection as in (3b) :

- (3a) zero conversion: *avere* 'to have' → *gli averi* 'the possessions'  
 (3b) conversion and inflection: *arrivare* 'to arrive' → *l'arrivo* 'the arrival'

or through a morphological process, as in (4) :

- (4) *-zione*: *costruire* 'to build' → *la costruzione* 'building'  
*-mento*: *allenare* 'to train' → *l'allenamento* 'training'  
*-tura*: *bruciare* 'to burn' → *una bruciatura* 'a burn'  
*-aggio*: *lavare* 'to wash' → *un lavaggio* 'a wash'  
*-ata*: *nuotare* 'to swim' → *una nuotata* 'a swim'  
*-enza*: *partire* 'to leave' → *la partenza* 'departure'  
*-io*: *gocciolare* 'to drop' → *il gocciolio* 'sequence of drops'

*Simple event nouns* (*disguised nominals* in Vendler 1967a) either exist without a corresponding verb in the lexicon, as in (5a), or they have a correspondent denominal verb, as in (5b) :

- (5a) It. *cerimonia* 'ceremony', *incidente*, 'accident', *storia* 'story'  
 (5b) It. *pranzo* 'lunch' (Verb *pranzare*), *viaggio* 'trip' (Verb *viaggiare*)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In Pustejovsky 2006 it is assumed that combinations of an aspectual predicate with an artifactual type (as in 'my beer lasted one hour') undergo an ordered sequence of coercion operations: first, the verb introduces an event (Event Introduction); then, the value of the Qualia of the Noun is exploited (Qualia Exploitation).

<sup>3</sup> In isolating-like languages like English, the distinction between nominals derived from verbs through zero conversion (*call* / *a call*), and simple event nouns from which a denominal verb is derived (*lunch* / *to lunch*) is sometimes blurred since it is not always obvious which of the two uses (nominal or verbal) comes first.

## 3. THE SEMANTICS OF EVENT NOMINALS

Following Grimshaw 1990, event nominals tend to be systematically polysemous between a PROCESS reading (exhibiting argument structure) and a RESULT reading (exhibiting absence of argument structure) :

- (6a) It. la *costruzione* (del palazzo) e' durata due anni           =PROCESS  
       'the building (of the house) took two years'
- (6b) It. la *costruzione* (\*del palazzo) e' alta due piani           =RESULT  
       'the building (\*of the house) is two floors high'

Although the PROCESS-RESULT distinction captures an important generalization, a more refined classification of event nominals polysemy is desirable.

First, Grimshaw's RESULT class is primarily syntactic, and includes both event- and entity-denoting nouns<sup>4</sup>. In a semantic-ontological perspective, however, as the one adopted here, it is more convenient to classify temporal objects separately from non-temporal ones and explore further their syntactic corollaries. Also, after Grimshaw's influential study, the label RESULT has often been applied loosely to all *non eventive interpretations of event nominals* (no matter how different in type specification) without clarifying what RESULT should mean in this case. Only some authors (for instance, Asher 1993) have intentionally used RESULT as a semantic term, meaning 'a causal by-product of the event'. All this, I believe, has caused a general confusion about the ontological status of RESULTS<sup>5</sup>.

Second, the PROCESS-RESULT distinction does not clarify what elements of the event tend to be available for result nominals and how those can be characterized in terms of semantic types. In this respect, Asher 1993 claims that RESULT nominals introduce an *additional semantic argument place* which may be filled by anything related causally to the event satisfying the event argument of the corresponding PROCESS nominal (Asher 1993: 151). However, besides introducing an additional argument place (*analisi* 'analysis') RESULT nominals may also bind an argument of the event (*costruzione* 'construction'). Moreover, as noted for instance in Apresjan 1974 and Bierwisch 1990-91: 63, several interpretations other than RESULT are available for event nominals.

Last, the PROCESS-RESULT alternation does not distinguish between nominals where ambiguity is inherent and nominals which are ambiguous because of contextual operations of coercion (*constructional* or *selectional polysemy*, cf. Coperstake and Briscoe 1995, Pustejovsky 2006). However, this is an important distinction since the ambiguity exhibited by event nominals, while responding to regular patterns, is not systematic, i.e. it cannot always be predicted from the

<sup>4</sup> In Grimshaw's account, nominals with a complex event structure fall into the PROCESS class, while nouns with a simple event structure fall into the RESULT class.

<sup>5</sup> As noted by Vendler 1967b, the notion of result is in itself problematic: it belongs to a family of related concepts, namely *results*, *effects* and *consequences*, which share analogies only in their common sense, not in their technical one.

verb's meaning; for instance, some nominals do not exhibit result readings, even though they potentially could.

A systematic empirical investigation of the polysemy of event nominals focusing on the issues outlined above is still missing.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I briefly outline the components of the GL model which are relevant for the present discussion: these are the *Argument Structure* and the *Event Structure*.

*Argument Structure* specifies the number and nature of the arguments to a predicate. Within GL, Argument Structure may include *true arguments*, *default arguments*, *shadow arguments* and *adjuncts* (Pustejovsky 1995, 62-67). *True arguments* are the semantic parameters which are necessarily expressed syntactically. *Default arguments* are the parameters which participate in the logical expression but are not necessarily expressed syntactically: differently from adjuncts, however, if they are not expressed they are implicit. *Shadow arguments* are the parameters which are semantically incorporated in verb semantics and can be expressed only by operations of subtyping, which adds further semantic content to the expression. *Adjuncts* are the parameters which modify the logical expression, but are not part of a verb's semantic representation.

*Event structure* defines the event type of the predicate and any subeventual structure it may have. Within GL, complex events are represented as tree structures in which subevents are ordered with respect to their temporal relations and to the prominence they play in the final interpretation (as well as in the mapping of the event arguments to syntax). Event Structures may be *States*, *Processes* or *Transitions*. States and Processes are both durative non-bounded events, while *Transitions* are binary branching structures encoding change. Transitions may be left- or right-headed, depending on which one of the two subevents provides the focus of the interpretation. *Mary built a table* is a left-headed Transition and its head is the subevent Process; *The cup broke* is a right-headed Transition and its head is the resulting State (Pustejovsky 1995: 67-75).

#### 5. POLYSEMY OF ITALIAN EVENT NOMINALS

In this section I present an analysis of Italian event nominal polysemy<sup>6</sup> based on corpus-derived data<sup>7</sup>. My general aim is to clarify what elements of the event tend to be available for the restricted set of interpretations that event nominals may exhibit. Also, I intend to characterize the various interpretations from an

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<sup>6</sup> In the analysis, I consider both deverbal and simple nouns. I intentionally leave out stative nominals. Recent analyses on the semantics of Italian event nominals include Gaeta 2004, Melloni 2007 (both from a morphological perspective) and Simone 2000.

<sup>7</sup> The corpus from which data are extracted is the ITWaC corpus - Italian Web as Corpus (see Baroni and Kilgarriff 2006).

ontological point of view<sup>8</sup>. I identify senses of nominals by investigating their distributional behavior in texts and in particular by clustering their typical collocates (a key point being the distinction between verbs and adjectives selecting for events on the one hand and verbs and adjectives selecting for entities on the other hand)<sup>9</sup>. In this way, I isolate eleven regular patterns which are listed in (7) below.) While identifying the patterns, I refer to previous work where various types of regular polysemy of event nominals are discussed (especially Apresjan 1974, Bierwisch 1990-91, Pustejovsky 2005). For the sake of simplicity, I discuss the alternations as if they consisted of two senses only, which does not reflect the real complexity (see section 7). Also, with the exception of 2 and 3 below, I concentrate on domain-shifting alternations (across the temporal domain), and leave for further investigation domain-preserving alternations :

(7)	1. EVENT	<i>caduta</i> 'fall'
	2. EVENT / STATE	<i>inquinamento</i> 'pollution'
	3. EVENT / INTERVAL	<i>ricevimento</i> 'reception'
	4. EVENT / ABSTRACT OBJECT <sup>10</sup>	<i>analisi</i> 'analysis'
	5. EVENT / INFO	<i>discorso</i> 'speech'
	6. EVENT / PHYSICAL OBJECT	<i>disegno</i> 'drawing'
	7. EVENT / FOOD	<i>pranzo</i> 'lunch'
	8. EVENT / MEAN	<i>riscaldamento</i> 'heating'
	9. EVENT / HUMAN	<i>aiuto</i> 'help'
	10. EVENT / HUMAN GROUP	<i>direzione</i> 'board of directors'
	11. EVENT / LOCATION	<i>partenza</i> 'departure'

I assume that event nominals may bind one of the following elements of the event :

- (8) Binding options available for event nominals
- i*) the event argument;
  - ii*) a subevent of the event structure of (i);
  - iii*) a true argument of the event;
  - iv*) a default argument of the event;
  - v*) a shadow argument;
  - vi*) the result argument introduced by the nominalization process
  - vii*) an adjunct.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, I will analyze a process-result nominal like Engl. *drawing* as an EVENT ('the drawing took three hours') and a PHYSICAL OBJECT ('the drawing was sold yesterday').

<sup>9</sup> In order to speed up the analysis, I explore the corpus through the *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2004), a corpus query tool which provides *word sketches*, i.e. one-page automatic corpus-based summaries of a word's collocational behavior, linked to concordance lines.

<sup>10</sup> In Asher 1993's definition, ABSTRACT OBJECTS are objects which resemble events but are not, properly speaking, located in time and space and do not have causal power as events prototypically do. These timeless objects are *propositions* and, to a lesser extent, *facts* (Asher 1993: 57).

In the following section, I discuss the alternations listed in (7) separately<sup>11</sup>.

1. *EVENT* : Some nominals tend to exhibit exclusively an *EVENT* reading<sup>12</sup>. Examples are: *abolizione* ‘abolition’, *sparizione* ‘disappearance’; *guarigione* ‘healing’, *uccisione* ‘killing’; *cambiamento* ‘change’, *inseguimento* ‘pursuing’, *invecchiamento* ‘aging’, *spostamento* ‘displacement’, *svolgimento* ‘development’, *svuotamento* ‘emptying’; *caduta* ‘fall’, *dormita* ‘sleep’, *lavata* ‘wash’; *bocciatura* ‘rejection’, *cottura* ‘cooking’; *rottura* ‘breaking’; *atterraggio* ‘landing’, *montaggio* ‘assembling’, *salvataggio* ‘rescuing’; *dondolio* ‘swing’, *gocciolio* ‘dropping’; *avvio* ‘start’, *crollo* ‘collapse’, *rilascio* ‘discharge’.

(9) *caduta* *EVENT*

Object :

(a) *EVENT*: *anticipare* ‘anticipate’, *rallentare* ‘slow down’, *arrestare* ‘stop’, *accelerare* ‘speed up’, *frenare* ‘slow down’, *affrettare* ‘speed up’, *ritardare* ‘delay’

Head Noun :

(b) *EVENT*:  *Brusco* ‘abrupt’, *improvviso* ‘sudden’, *repentino* ‘sudden’, *rapido* ‘quick’, *frequente* ‘frequent’, *precipitoso* ‘rush’, *progressivo* ‘progressive’, *lento* ‘slow’, *continuo* ‘continuous’, *imminente* ‘imminent’, *recente* ‘recent’

The event structure of these nominals may be a *bounded Process* (10a), a *left-headed Transition* (10b), a *right-headed Transition* (10c).

(10a) Ho fatto una *dormita* di sette ore  
‘I had a seven-hour sleep’

(10b) Io *svuotamento* della vasca fu lento  
lit. ‘the emptying of the pool was slow’

(10c) la *caduta* è avvenuta a un chilometro dall’arrivo  
‘the fall occurred one kilometer before the arrival’

If these event nominals denote a *Transition*, next to denoting the change of state, they may denote the effects that such a change typically brings about (see Asher 1993, 150, 157). Hence :

(11) il *cambiamento* è sotto gli occhi di tutti  
‘the change is there for all to see’

<sup>11</sup> Although the analysis is carried out using statistical tools, it is meant as a qualitative investigation and not a quantitative one. Also, the analysis is not meant to answer the question of whether there are correlations between the morphological properties of nominals and the polysemy patterns they fall into. Even if this is an interesting question, my primary aim is to build an empirically well-founded inventory of polysemy patterns for event nominals, to characterize them in terms of semantic types and to investigate what element of the event these types bind.

<sup>12</sup> We keep out of the present discussion the factive interpretations which, in principle, are available for all nominalizations but which are due to the coercive property of factive predicates rather than the inherent semantics of event nominals (Zucchi 1991, Asher 1993, Pustejovsky 1995).

denotes the effects of the change<sup>13</sup>.

2. *EVENT / STATE* : Nominals denoting a Transition may denote the STATE persisting in time after the event has occurred (Bierwisch 1990-1991: 52). In GL terms, the STATE interpretation originates from the right sub-event of the event structure. Nouns denoting PROCESSES or STATES cannot license this reading, since their event structures do not include a resulting state to which reference can be made. Also, only a subset of nominals denoting TRANSITIONS license stative readings. This probably relates to the aspectual properties of the base verb: only nominals inheriting an event structure that foresees the persistence of a state after the culmination has taken place, may allow this interpretation. Examples are: *agitazione* 'distress', *disoccupazione* 'unemployment', *intossicazione* 'intoxication'; *affaticamento* 'tiredness', *inquinamento* 'pollution', *isolamento* 'isolation', *abbandono* 'state of abandonment', *arresto* 'state of arrest', *assedio* 'siege', *degrado* 'degrade'.

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|---|--------|
| (12) l' <i>abbandono</i> delle campagne | =EVENT |
| lit. 'the leaving of the countryside'   |        |
| una casa in <i>abbandono</i>            | =STATE |
| 'a house in state of neglect'           |        |

Since both EVENTS and STATES are temporal objects, this sense alternation is to be considered a domain-preserving alternation.

3. *EVENT / INTERVAL* : Although in principle all nominals expressing durative events may denote a time span, some nominals more clearly than others denote an EVENT and the INTERVAL or period of time for which the event holds. See for instance *inaugurazione* 'inauguration', *premiazione* 'prize-giving', *rivoluzione* 'revolution'; *allattamento* 'breastfeeding', *fidanzamento* 'engagement', *ricevimento* 'reception'; *fioritura* 'blooming, blossoming'; *raccolta* 'harvest', *cerimonia* 'ceremony', *fiesta* 'party'.

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|--|-----------|
| (13) il ricevimento degli ospiti inizia alle 18  | =EVENT    |
| 'the reception of the guests will start at 6 pm' |           |
| durante il ricevimento si e' sentita male        | =INTERVAL |
| 'during the reception she felt bad'              |           |

Since both EVENTS and INTERVALS are temporal objects, this sense alternation is to be considered a domain-preserving alternation.

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<sup>13</sup> The ontological nature of EFFECTS is controversial: Vendler 1967b considers them as TEMPORAL OBJECTS: 'effects are not facts or physical objects, but events or processes which are due to other events or processes in the world' (p. 155), 'results are not effects, because [...] they are not events or processes at all' (p. 155), 'results are facts and they are due to other facts (159)'. To sum up, for Vendler effects last in time, while results don't.



interrompo il <i>discorso</i> per darvi una buona notizia 'I interrupt the speech to give you good news'	=EVENT
Clinton ha criticato il <i>discorso</i> di Arafat 'Clinton criticized Arafat's speech'	=INFORMATION

6. *EVENT / PHYSICAL OBJECT* : In this case, next to the *EVENT*, the nominal denotes a *PHYSICAL OBJECT*. This object may be the primary output of the event (*costruzione* 'building', *disegno* 'drawing', *collezione* 'collection') or a causal by-product of it (*segatura* 'sawdust' from *segare* 'saw'). The *PHYSICAL OBJECT* may bind an argument of the event (*costruire dieci costruzioni abusive* 'build ten illegal buildings', *disegnare complicati disegni* 'draw complicated drawings') or it may introduce an additional argument place (*segatura*, *collezione* are not arguments of *segare* and *collezionare*). When the physical object binds the internal argument, the interpretation of the nominal corresponds to 'that which is – Ved'. *Drawing*, for instance, is 'that which is drawn'. Conversely, when the physical object introduces an additional argument, this paraphrase does not hold: *ritratto* 'portrait' is not 'that which is portrayed' but rather 'the output of the portrayal' (cf. *\*ritrarre un ritratto della regina* 'to portrait a portrait of the queen')<sup>14</sup>.

Further examples are: *registrazione* 'recording', *spedizione* 'posting, mailing', *arredamento* 'furnishing, furniture' *condimento* 'dressing', *rifornimento* 'supply', *fasciatura* 'bandage', *impalcatura* 'scaffolding', *scultura* 'sculpture'; *bendaggio* 'bandage', *lavaggio* 'washing'; *grigliata* 'mixed grill', *nevicata* 'snowfall'; *acquisto* 'purchase', *affitto* 'rent', *chiusura* 'closure', *assaggio* 'taste, sample', *disegno* 'drawing', *raccolta* 'collection', *ritratto* 'portrayal, portrait', *sveglia* 'alarm clock', *taglio (di capelli)* 'haircut'; *il desinare* 'eating, food'.

(16) *collezione* (EVENT / PHYS)

Object

(a) *EVENT* : *fare* 'do', *dedicarsi a* 'commit oneself to'

(b) *PHYS* : *esporre* 'exhibit', *ospitare* 'host', *possedere* 'own', *donare* 'donate', *mostrare* 'show', *conservare* 'keep', *custodire* 'keep', *vendere* 'sell', *acquistare* 'purchase', *regalare* 'donate', *rubare* 'steal', *ereditare* 'inherit'

dedicarsi alla *collezione* di opere d'arte  
'commit oneself to the collection of art works' =EVENT

ereditare una *collezione* di opere d'arte  
'inherit a collection of art works' =PHYS OBJECT

Interestingly, some deverbal nominals have nowadays predominantly or exclusively a concrete reading. Among these we find: *abitazione* 'habitation, house', *appartamento* 'apartment', *stabilimento* 'plant', *calzatura* 'shoe', *serratura* 'lock', *spazzatura* 'trash', *alloggio* 'lodging', *avanzo* 'leftover', *cascata* 'falls', *dipinto* 'painting', *regalo* 'gift', *romanzo* 'novel', *l'ammontare* 'amount'.

<sup>14</sup> Notice that although *disegno* and *ritratto* differ since the first one binds an argument of the event while the second one does not, they are both to be interpreted as *RESULTS*.

- (17) *si e' rotta la serratura* =PHYS OBJECT  
 'the lock broke'  
*mangiare gli avanzi del pranzo* =PHYS OBJECT  
 'eat the leftovers of lunch'

It is not evident if the EVENT interpretation has ever been available for each of these nominals.

7. *EVENT / FOOD* : The EVENT/PHYSICAL OBJECT alternation has various specializations, one of which is the EVENT/FOOD alternation. The FOOD reading lexicalizes what is consumed during the event. Examples are: *pasto* 'meal', *pranzo* 'lunch', *cena* 'dinner', *colazione* 'breakfast', *picnic*, *spuntino* 'light meal, snack'. Since many of these nouns are non-derived from a morphological point of view and some of them do not have a corresponding denominal verb, it is not evident how their FOOD reading can be characterized. I propose it can be treated as binding a shadow argument of the event (e.g. an argument incorporated in verb's semantics).

- (18) *pranzo* (EVENT / FOOD)  
 Object  
 (a) EVENT : *finire* 'finish', *terminare* 'finish', *fare* 'do, make', *concludere* 'conclude', *interrompere* 'interrupt', *chiudere* 'finish', *cominciare* 'start', *proseguire* 'go on with', *continuare* 'continue'  
 (b) PHYS : *consumare* 'consume', *gustare* 'try', *cucinare* 'cook', *portare* 'bring', *vomitare* 'throw up', *digerire* 'digest', *comprare* 'buy', *assaggiare* 'taste', *distribuire* 'distribute', *cuocere* 'cook', *buttare giù* 'gobble'  
*hanno interrotto il pranzo e sono corsi a casa* =EVENT  
 'they interrupted their lunch and ran home'  
*fare una passeggiata per digerire il pranzo* =PHYS OBJECT  
 'go for a walk to digest lunch'

8. *EVENT / MEAN* : Some nominals denote an EVENT and the MEAN (Bierwisch 1990-1991) used to accomplish the event (specialization of the EVENT / PHYSICAL OBJECT alternation). The MEAN reading may bind the subject argument (*illuminazione* 'lighting, lamp', *isolamento* 'isolation', *riscaldamento* 'heating') or a default argument (*imballaggio* 'packaging', *imbottitura* 'filling').

- (19) *riscaldamento* (EVENT / MEAN)  
 Object  
 (a) EVENT : *provocare* 'cause', *contrastare* 'contrast, oppose', *ridurre* 'reduce', *rallentare* 'slow down', *evitare* 'avoid', *consentire* 'allow', *causare* 'cause', *produrre* 'produce', *frenare* 'slow down', *limitare* 'limit'  
 (b) MEAN : *accendere* 'turn on', *spegnere* 'turn off', *azionare* 'activate', *attivare* 'activate', *staccare* 'turn off', *utilizzare* 'use', *sistemare* 'fix'  
*un guasto non ha consentito il riscaldamento* =EVENT  
 'a breakdown prevented the heating'  
*la notte spengono il riscaldamento* =MEAN  
 'during the night they turn off the heating'

9. *EVENT / HUMAN* : Nominals may denote an EVENT and a person (HUMAN) filling the Agent role in the event (specialization of the EVENT / PHYSICAL OBJECT alternation) (Pustejovsky 2005: 5). Examples are: *aiuto* 'help', *attrazione* 'attraction'. In (18) *aiuto* binds the subject argument of the verb *aiutare* and the meaning can be paraphrased as 'person who Vs'.

- (20) *aspettare sempre l'aiuto di qualcuno* =EVENT  
 'always wait for the help of somebody'  
*il nostro nuovo aiuto e' portoghese* =HUMAN  
 lit. 'our new help is Portuguese'

10. *EVENT / HUMAN GROUP* : E-nominals may denote an event and a HUMAN GROUP (or an INSTITUTION, ORGANIZATION, COMPANY) filling the Agent role in the event. The HUMAN GROUP reading binds the subject argument of the event. See for instance *amministrazione* 'administration', *direzione* 'direction', *organizzazione* 'organization', *redazione* 'editorial staff', *schieramento* 'line-up', *equipaggio* 'crew', *accusa* 'accusation, prosecution', *balletto* 'ballet', *difesa* 'defence', *governo* 'government'.

- (21) *un'accusa di corruzione* =EVENT  
 'an accusation of corruption'  
*l'accusa ha chiesto l'ergastolo* =INSTITUTION  
 'the prosecutor(s) called a life sentence'  
 (22) *assumere la direzione dell'azienda* =EVENT  
 'take on the direction of the company'  
*parlare con la direzione* =HUMAN GROUP  
 'talk to the board of directors'

11. *EVENT / LOCATION* : E-nominals may denote an EVENT and the functional LOCATION where the event takes place or where the action is carried out (Apresjan 1974). The LOCATION reading generally binds a default argument of the event. See for instance *coltivazione* 'cultivation, plantation', *accampamento* 'campsite', *passaggio* 'passage', *entrata* 'entrance', *fermata* 'stop', *discesa* 'slope', *uscita* 'exit', *partenza* 'departure', *arrivo* 'arrival', *bagno* 'bath, bathroom', *deposito* 'deposit', *doccia* 'shower', *parcheggio* 'parking, parking lot', *studio* 'study, office'. The locative meaning can be paraphrased as 'location where one Vs'. In some cases, the location is a ROUTE or PATH: *passeggiata* 'walk', *cammino* 'walk', *percorso* 'route', *ritorno* 'return', *viaggio* 'trip', etc.

- (23) *partenza* (EVENT / LOC)  
 Object  
 (a) EVENT : *ritardare* 'delay', *rinviare* 'postpone', *impedire* 'prevent', *anticipare* 'anticipate', *rimandare* 'postpone', *posticipare* 'postpone', *scaglionare* 'stagger', *bloccare* 'block', *differire* 'postpone', *programmare* 'schedule', *spostare* 'move', *organizzare* 'organize', *aspettare* 'wait for', *attendere* 'wait for', *annullare* 'cancel', *cancellare* 'cancel'  
 (b) LOC : *situare* 'locate', *presentarsi* (a) 'show up at', *schierarsi* (a) 'line up at'

hanno ritardato la partenza 'they delayed their departure'	=EVENT
presentarsi alla partenza 'to show up at the departure'	=LOCATION

(24) *parcheggio* (EVENT / LOC)

Object

- (a) EVENT: *regolamentare* 'regulate', *autorizzare* 'authorize', *disciplinare* 'discipline', *consentire* 'allow', *vietare* 'prohibit'  
 (b) LOC: *ampliare* 'expand', *delimitare* 'delimit', *costeggiare* 'run beside', *occupare* 'occupy', *raggiungere* 'reach', *attrezzare* 'equip', *sorvegliare* 'attend', *recintare* 'fence'

una legge nazionale vieta il <i>parcheggio</i> in quest'area 'a national law prohibits the parking in this area'	=EVENT
la strada costeggia il <i>parcheggio</i> 'the road runs beside the parking lot'	=LOCATION

## 6. PROBLEMS

E-nominals may denote an event and the manner in which the event is carried out. Examples are: *comportamento* 'behavior, way of behaving', *pittura* 'painting, way of painting', *camminata* 'walk, way of walking', *nuotata* 'swim, style of swimming', *il parlare* 'talking, way of talking', etc. This reading can be paraphrased as 'the way in which one Vs'. It is not evident how *manner* should be dealt with in terms of type.

(25) la camminata e' durata piu' del previsto 'the walk lasted longer than expected'	=EVENT
ha una camminata pesante lit. 'he has a heavy walking'	=manner

Some e-nominals only exhibit a manner meaning: *andamento* 'trend', *andatura* 'pace', *portamento* 'bearing'.

## 7. MULTIPLE SENSE ALTERNATIONS

For the sake of clarity, in section 5 I presented the sense alternations as if they consisted of two options only, one of which denotes an event. However, a large number of nominals exhibit alternations between more than two readings: for instance EVENT / INFO / SOUND (26), EVENT / PHYS / LOCATION (27) :

(26) il cantante ha interrotto il <i>concerto</i> 'the singer interrupted the concert'	=EVENT
abbiamo ascoltato il secondo <i>concerto</i> di Rachmaninov 'we listened to the second concert of Rachmaninov'	=SOUND
il settimo <i>concerto</i> è il più difficile e astruso 'the seventh concert is the most difficult and abstruse'	=INFO

- (27) il *parcheggio* è consentito soltanto ai residenti =EVENT  
 ‘parking is allowed for residents only’
- abbiamo raggiunto il *parcheggio* a piedi =LOCATION  
 ‘we walked to the parking lot’
- stanno costruendo un nuovo *parcheggio* =PHYS OBJECT  
 ‘they are building a new parking lot’

Not all senses have the same status. For instance, the PHYS interpretation in the EVENT / ABSTR / PHYS alternation in (28) and (29) are most probably coerced :

- (28) l’*autorizzazione* e’ stata concessa questa mattina =EVENT  
 ‘the authorization was given this morning’
- l’*autorizzazione* è scaduta =ABS OBJECT  
 ‘the authorization has expired’
- allegare l’*autorizzazione* alla richiesta =PHYS OBJECT  
 ‘include the authorization in the application’
- (29) il regolamento delle attività =EVENT  
 lit. ‘the regulation of the activities’
- la scuola ha adottato un nuovo regolamento =ABS OBJECT  
 ‘the school adopted a new regulation’
- il nuovo regolamento è sul mio tavolo =PHYS OBJECT  
 ‘the new regulation is on my desk’

#### 8. ASYMMETRIES OF USE

Nominals may also exhibit asymmetries of use, i.e. selectional preferences for one of the senses. Asymmetries of use may be related to specific argument positions: for instance, the object position may disprefer the EVENT reading while this same reading might dominate in subject position. Alternatively, asymmetries of use may be a general property of some nominals, no matter what argument position they occupy. *Collection*, for instance, exhibits a distinct preference for the RESULT interpretation in all argument positions, even when it combines with verbs selecting for events (like *completare* ‘complete’, *iniziare* ‘start’, *cominciare* ‘begin’ etc).

- (30) sono riuscito a completare la *collezione*, e ora possiedo tutti i 242 libri  
 ‘I managed to complete the collection and I now own all 242 books’
- iniziò la sua *collezione* nei primi anni Settanta  
 ‘he started his collection in the early seventies’

It is not clear how these asymmetries should be interpreted, i.e. if they should be considered as indicators of the nature (inherent vs. constructional) of the polysemy. Some interpretations (I believe) are clearly coerced :

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| (31) abbandonare il <i>ricevimento</i><br>'to leave the reception'               | =coercion to LOCATION    |
| accorse tutto il <i>fabbricato</i><br>'all people living in the building rushed' | =coercion to HUMAN GROUP |

#### 9. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this contribution I discussed the most recurrent polysemy patterns exhibited by Italian event nominals with the aid of corpus-derived data. In particular, I attempted to characterize these patterns in terms of semantic types and to clarify what elements of the event these types bind. The analysis confirms that the non-event reading of an event nominal may be a RESULT but also an entity related to the event in a non-causal way (for instance, a LOCATION). Also, the analysis supports the view that the whole argument space of the event is available for non-event readings of event nominals.

The notion of RESULT cuts across the temporal / non temporal domains since it applies both to states persisting after a change took place and to outputs and by-products of an event (Osswald 2005).

In this work I discussed eleven sense alternations. Further research should refine the inventory of alternations and elaborate diagnostics to clarify which event nominals are inherently polysemous and which are instead coerced. Further research should also explore the correlations between the morphological properties of nominals, the verbs' lexical semantics and the type of sense alternation nominals exhibit.

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