

**The French construction ‘*nouveau* + past participle’ revisited.
Arguments in favour of a prefixoid analysis of *nouveau*¹**

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the French construction ‘*nouveau* + past participle’, as in *nouveau-né* ‘newborn baby’, *nouveau(-)venu* ‘newcomer’ and *nouveaux(-)mariés* ‘newly married couple, newlyweds’. It elaborates the results of an earlier, comparative, study on the prefixoid uses of the Dutch adjectives *oud* ‘old’/*nieuw* ‘new’ and their French counterparts *ancien* ‘old’ and *nouveau* ‘new’ (cf. XXX 2009), in which determining the grammatical nature of *nouveau* in word-formation turned out to be particularly difficult. Traditionally, *nouveau* is considered to have an ADVERBIAL status when it combines with past participles (cf. *TLFi*², Noailly 1999, Grevisse 2001), especially because of its adverbial meaning ‘recently, newly’ and because of its occasional loss of inflection in, for instance, *les nouveau-nés* ‘the newborn babies’. The central aim of this article, however, is to demonstrate the shortcomings of this adverbial interpretation and to provide an alternative and, in my view, more adequate analysis that considers *nouveau* as a PREFIXOID when combining with a past participle. This implies that the original adjective has undergone a grammaticalization process through which it has developed some prefix-like properties.

In the first part of this study (§2), the notion of AFFIXOIDS will be defined and illustrated. The phenomenon proves to be very productive in Germanic languages such as Dutch, but to my knowledge it has never been recognized for French. I will claim that affixoids can be seen as the result of grammaticalization and propose some parameters applying to the grammaticalization of French prefixoids. In the second part (§3), these parameters will be applied to the construction ‘*nouveau* + past participle’. It will be argued that the grammaticalization parameters conflict with the traditional adverbial analysis and plead in favour of a prefixoid analysis of *nouveau*.

2. Affixoids

2.1. Definition

While compounding can be defined as “the combination of lexemes into larger words” (Booij 2005b: 75) (e.g. *timbre-poste* ‘postage stamp’), derivation “involves affixes (prefixes or suffixes), non-lexemic morphemes” (Booij 2005b: 85) (e.g. *anti-clérical-isme* ‘anticlericalism’). Nevertheless, there is not always a sharp boundary between both word-formation patterns, as claimed by many authors (cf. Amiot 2005; Bauer 2005; Booij 2005a, 2005b; XXX 2006, 2008, 2009, etc.). This can be illustrated by the complex lexeme *grand-père* ‘grandfather’. It cannot be considered a true compound since *grand-* expresses a specific meaning of family relationship, which cannot be expressed by the adjective *grand* ‘big, tall’ when used as a free lexeme. In consequence, *grand-père* cannot be regarded as a simple combination of two autonomous lexemes. It is not a true derivation either since the lexeme

¹ This article originated as a paper for the *Décembrettes 6* morphology conference at Bordeaux in December 2008. I am grateful for the helpful suggestions of the participants of this meeting and I especially wish to thank Gregory T. Stump (University of Kentucky) for commenting on an earlier draft. In completing this paper, I also benefited from the comments of two anonymous referees.

² The *TLFi* is the French dictionary *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, consultable at <http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>.

grand still occurs in modern French, though with a different meaning. Hybrid elements such as *grand-*, combining characteristics of lexemes and of affixes, are generally called AFFIXOIDS or SEMI-AFFIXES (see Fleischer 1969 among others). Booij (2005a: 114) defines them as “morphemes which look like parts of compounds, and do occur as lexemes, but have a specific and more restricted meaning when used as part of a compound”.

To account for their hybrid status, Booij (2005a, 2005b) describes affixoids (prefixoids or suffixoids) as parts of (morphological) CONSTRUCTIONAL IDIOMS, which are situated at an intermediate level between abstract patterns of word formation and the concrete instantiations of these schemas. They can be defined as productive morphological constructions in which one position is lexically specified, in this case by the affixoid, developing a specific meaning when embedded in a compound structure. This approach can be illustrated by the Dutch prefixoid *oud-*, which means ‘old’ when used as a lexeme but has developed the specific meaning ‘former, ex-’ when used in the constructional idiom $[[oud] [X]_N]_N$ (cf. Booij 2005b: 86). This semi-abstract idiom gives rise to concrete instantiations such as *oud-leerling* ‘former pupil’, *oud-burgemeester* ‘former mayor’, *oud-wielrenner* ‘former cyclist’, *oud-priester* ‘former priest’, etc.

It is not only difficult to establish a clear boundary between compounds and derivations. Examples such as *une grande surface* ‘a supermarket’ (lit. ‘large-surface’) illustrate that the distinction between compounds and lexicalized phrases is neither clear at all in French. Such lexicalized combinations are traditionally called compounds (cf. Gross 1996, Mathieu-Colas 1996), even when they are not written as one word nor joined by a hyphen. Since the typical criteria used in Germanic languages such as stress pattern and loss of inflection of the adjectival component do not apply to French,³ only spelling can be taken into account, which is, however, very inconsistent and hence highly unreliable.

Corbin (1997), however, establishes a distinction between French lexicalized phrases and compounds on the basis of the DIVISION OF LABOUR PRINCIPLE between morphology and syntax: it implies that syntax has no access to morphological operators or inflexional units and, inversely, morphology has no access to syntactic operators. In other words, POLYLEXEMATIC UNITS, covering both compounds and lexicalized phrases, are exclusively formed either by syntax or by morphology (Corbin 1997: 83-84). In consequence, lexicalized A+N (or N+A) combinations should not be considered true compounds, but have to be seen as the result of the lexicalization of syntactic phrases, since their formation corresponds to the syntactic formation rules of French (Corbin 1997: 86).

Nevertheless, I believe that A+N combinations such as *grand-père* (‘grandfather’, lit. ‘big-father’), *petite-fille* (‘granddaughter’, lit. ‘small-daughter’) and *beau-frère* (‘brother-in-law’, lit. ‘beautiful-brother’) are an exception to Corbin’s claims. They do comply with regular syntax, but the specific meaning of the adjectives *grand* (‘big’), *petit* (‘small’) and *beau* (‘beautiful’) in these combinations, indicating a degree of family relationship, is not available in syntax: *un grand-père* (‘a grandfather’) and *un grand père* (‘a tall father’) are not synonymous. The divergent semantics of the adjectives *grand*, *petit* and *beau* impedes an

³ For instance, the Dutch compound *zuurkool* (‘sauerkraut’, lit. ‘sour-cabbage’) can be distinguished from the lexicalized phrase *zure regen* (‘acid rain’) and the non-lexicalized syntactic phrase *zure kers* (‘sour cherry’) on the basis of its spelling (written as one word), its stress pattern (prominent stress on *zuur* in *zuurkool* while *zure kers* has double stress and *zure regen* has prominent stress on the noun *regen*) and the lack of inflection of the adjectival component *zuur*.

analysis as lexicalized phrases with a syntactic origin. Instead, these word formations belong to morphology and the adjectival parts should in my view be analyzed as prefixoids.⁴

2.2. Illustrations

Affixoids are widely attested in Germanic languages. Especially Germanic suffixoids such as English *-ful*, Dutch *-vol* and German *-voll* (e.g. *joyful*, *vreugdevol*, *freudvoll*) have received much attention (cf. Fleischer 1969, Marchand 1969, Kühnhold et al. 1978, Bauer 2005, etc.). However, Germanic languages also employ a rich system of prefixoids. They do not only go back to adjectives, such as in the Dutch example *oud-* ‘former, ex-’ (cf. 2.1.), but can also be derived from nouns (1a), verbs (1b) and prepositions or adverbs (1c).

- (1) a. Dutch *hoofd* ‘head’ meaning ‘main, principal’ when used as a prefixoid (cf. Booij 2008: 59):
- *hoofdingang* ‘main entrance’
 - *hoofdgebouw* ‘main/central building’
 - *hoofdverdachte* ‘main suspect’
- b. Dutch *scharrel* ‘to scratch, to scrape’ meaning ‘related to/originating from a free-range farm’ when used as a prefixoid (cf. Meesters 2004: 49):
- *scharrelkip* ‘free-range chicken’
 - *scharrelei* ‘free-range egg’
 - *scharrelvlees* ‘free-range meat’
- c. Dutch *door* ‘through’ expressing continuative aspect when used as a prefixoid (cf. Blom 2005; XXX 2006, 2008):
- *doorlopen* ‘to keep on walking’
 - *doorwerken* ‘to carry on working’
 - *doorstuderen* ‘to continue one’s studies’

Even though the phenomenon has received much less attention in the literature on Romance and, more particularly, on French morphology, some implicit references to lexemes with suffix-like (2a) or prefix-like (2b, 2c) properties may occasionally be found.

- (2) a. *mot-clé* ‘key word’, *prix-choc* ‘bargain price’, *industrie-pilote* ‘pilot industry’, etc. (cf. Dubois 1962, Dubois & Dubois 1971, Noailly 1990, Bauer 2005)
- b. *grand-père* ‘grandfather’, *petit-fils* ‘grandson’, *belle-soeur* ‘sister-in-law’, etc. (cf. Corbin 2001)
- c. *surproduction* ‘overproduction’, *entrouvrir* ‘to open partway’, etc. (cf. Amiot 2004, 2005; XXX 2006, 2008)

2.3. Grammaticalization

Affixoids may be seen as an intermediate stage of grammaticalization, occupying a position between lexemes as parts of compounds, on the one hand, and true affixes, on the other hand. This claim is also defended by Booij:

⁴ The distinction between French lexicalized A+N phrases and A+N compounds has been studied more thoroughly in XXX (*submitted*).

The rise of affixoids is a typical case of grammaticalization, content words becoming grammatical morphemes. As is well known from grammaticalization studies, semantic change precedes formal change. In the case of affixoids semantic change has already taken place, but there is no formal change yet: formally they are just like (real) compounds, there is usually no phonological weakening involved. We also observe the layering that is characteristic of grammaticalization: besides the bound use of these words, their use as independent lexemes, with a greater range of meanings is still possible. (Booij 2005a: 117)

On the basis of the studies by Hopper (1991), Hopper & Traugott (1993), Lehmann (1995), Ten Hacken (2000) and Marchello-Nizia (2006), I will now present some grammaticalization parameters that allow us to identify affixoids and to determine their degree of grammaticalization. These parameters are situated at the semantic, morphological and distributional level.

2.3.1. *Semantic specialization or resemanticization*

Booij's definition in 1.1. clearly indicates that the development of a specific new meaning or a more restricted meaning is a decisive criterion for the identification of affixoids. RESEMANTICIZATION (cf. Lehmann 1995: 127; Marchello-Nizia 2006: 34-37) occurred, for example, in *grand-père* 'grandfather': *grand* no longer refers to size, but to family relationship (cf. 2.1.).

Many Dutch affixoids suggest that SUBJECTIFICATION, "the development of a grammatically identifiable expression of speaker belief or speaker attitude to what is said" (Traugott 1995: 32), may also be involved. Affixoids, derived from nouns and adjectives with a neutral meaning, may develop pejorative, positive or intensifying meanings expressing how the speaker evaluates the facts. For example, the noun *steen* 'stone' has developed an intensifying meaning in complex lexemes such as *steenkoud* 'very cold', *steengoed* 'very good' and *steenrijk* 'very rich' (cf. Booij 2008: 62).

2.3.2. *Decategorialization: loss of grammatical inflection*

In French lexicalized A+N phrases and/or A+N compounds (see the discussion in 2.1.), the adjective still has number and gender inflection (e.g. *grande surface* 'supermarket', lit. 'large-surface'). Prefixes, by contrast, are invariable morphemes, even when derived from adjectives (e.g. *néo-* < Greek *neos* 'new'). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the intermediate stage of grammaticalization between adjectives and prefixes is characterized by a (partial) LOSS OF GRAMMATICAL INFLECTION, which could be regarded as a sign of DECATEGORIALIZATION (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 103-113).

This seems to be the case for *une grand-mère* 'a grandmother', which lacks the feminine inflection *grande*. The lack of inflection of *grand* goes back to Latin: *grandis* belonged to the second class of Latin adjectives, which had the same form in masculine and feminine (*grandis* – *grandis* in the nominative case, *grandem* – *grandem* in the accusative case) and this uniformity was preserved in Old French (*grant* – *grant* in the accusative case, derived from Latin *grandem*) (cf. Nyrop 1924: 277-278). At the time *grand-mère* was formed, the adjective was still invariable and the uninflected form has been preserved in Modern French (see also *la Grand Place* 'the central market square', *la Grand'Rue* 'the main/ high street' and *grand-chose* 'a big thing'). I believe that, even if diachrony accounts for this lack of inflection and

even if it cannot be generalized to all the components of this type (e.g. *petite-fille* ‘granddaughter’, *belle-fille* ‘daughter-in-law’), the fact that the uninflected forms have not been levelled out by paradigmatical analogy may be seen as a sign of a PREFIXIZATION process.

2.3.3. Paradigmaticization

Finally, two distributional parameters can give additional evidence to identify affixoids. The first one is PARADIGMATICIZATION (Lehmann 1995: 135): it implies that affixoids are often in competition or in complementary distribution with true affixes (cf. Kühnhold et al. 1978). This can be illustrated by the Dutch adjectival prefixoid *oud-* (cf. 2.1.), which alternates with the prefix *ex-* (cf. *oud-leerling/ex-leerling* ‘former pupil’). The possibility of paradigmatic alternation with true affixes suggests that the lexeme is being DECATEGORIZED or RECATEGORIZED into an affix.

2.3.4. Productivity

A second distributional parameter that characterizes affixoids is their increase in PRODUCTIVITY (cf. Ten Hacken 2000: 355), which is typical of ongoing grammaticalization (Marchello-Nizia 2006: 42). From a synchronic point of view, productivity can manifest itself in the appearance of neologisms and new tokens of the affixoid, not included in the dictionaries.

3. *Nouveau* + past participle

In the next part of this study, the parameters presented above will be applied to the constructional idiom $[[nouveau] [X]_{\text{past part.}}]_{N/A}$. It will be verified if *nouveau* can be considered as an adjective which is developing some prefix-like properties, through grammaticalization. In addition, some arguments against the adverbial analysis of *nouveau* will be adduced.

3.1. Semantic specialization or resemanticization

In its syntactic use, as a free adjective, *nouveau* means either ‘new, which has recently happened’, often when used in postposition to a noun (3a), or ‘second, other, more’, mostly when used in anteposition (3b). These tendencies may of course vary according to the contextual interpretation (cf. *TLFi*, s.v. *nouveau*).

- (3) a. *acheter une voiture nouvelle* (‘*nouvellement construite*’)
 ‘to buy a new (‘newly constructed’) car’
 b. *acheter une nouvelle* (‘*seconde*’) *voiture*
 ‘to buy a new (‘second’) car’

Forming part of a complex lexeme, in combination with a past participle, *nouveau* means ‘recently, newly’, as in *nouveau-né* ‘newborn baby’, *nouveau(-)venu* ‘newcomer’ and *nouveaux(-)mariés* ‘newly married couple, newlyweds’. It has clearly undergone SEMANTIC SPECIALIZATION, since *un nouveau-né* is not a new (‘second’) baby, but a recently born baby. The lexical content of *nouveau* has shifted to a more grammatical meaning in which *nouveau* is used to refer to the recent past: ‘*nouveau* + past participle’ is a kind of equivalent of the grammatical construction ‘*venir de* + infinitive’ (cf. *nouveau-né* ‘qui vient d’être né’).

Incidentally, it is worth noticing that whereas the adjective *nouveau* may appear in postposition or in anteposition to a noun (3), it occupies a fixed anteposition when it combines with a past participle (cf. *nouveau-né* vs **né-nouveau*). This DECREASE IN SYNTAGMATIC VARIABILITY or FIXATION is also a typical parameter of grammaticalization (cf. Lehmann 1995: 158-160).

It is striking that the prefix *néo-*, which is derived from the adjective *neos* ‘new’, has undergone the same semantic evolution. In Greek loanwords in which it combines with a verbal stem, such as *néogène* (etymological meaning: ‘recently born’) and *néophyte* (etymological meaning: ‘newly planted, new/recent convert’), *néo-* also means ‘newly, recently’ (cf. *TLFi*, s.v. *néo-*, *néogène*, *néophyte*).⁵

3.2. Decategorialization: loss of grammatical inflection

Orthographically, the adjective *nouveau* has three singular forms and two plural forms:

- *nouveau* is the masculine singular form used before consonants (e.g. *un nouveau manteau* ‘a new coat’);
- *nouvel* is the masculine singular form used before vowels and before the so called ‘mute *h*’ (*h muet*) (e.g. *un nouvel enfant* ‘a new child’, *un nouvel habit* ‘a new costume’);
- *nouvelle* is the feminine singular form (e.g. *une nouvelle voiture* ‘a new car’);
- *nouveaux* is the masculine plural form (e.g. *de nouveaux manteaux* ‘new coats’, *de nouveaux enfants* ‘new children’, *de nouveaux habits* ‘new clothes’);
- *nouvelles* is the feminine plural form (e.g. *de nouvelles voitures* ‘new cars’).

These orthographical distinctions correspond to four phonological differences:

- [nuvo] before masculine singular and plural nouns beginning with a consonant (e.g. *un nouveau manteau* ‘a new coat’, *de nouveaux manteaux* ‘new coats’);
- [nuvel] before masculine singular nouns beginning with a vowel or a mute *h* (e.g. *un nouvel enfant* ‘a new child’, *un nouvel habit* ‘a new costume’), and before feminine singular nouns and feminine plural nouns beginning with a consonant (e.g. *une nouvelle voiture* ‘a new car’, *de nouvelles voitures* ‘new cars’);
- [nuvoz] before masculine plural nouns beginning with a vowel or a mute *h* (e.g. *de nouveaux enfants* ‘new children’, *de nouveaux habits* ‘new clothes’);
- [nuvelz] before feminine plural nouns beginning with a vowel or a mute *h* (e.g. *de nouvelles amies* ‘new (girl)friends’, *de nouvelles habitudes* ‘new customs’).

When *nouveau* combines with a past participle, this participle can be adjectival or nominalized and the combination ‘*nouveau* + past participle’ can function as an adjective or as a noun. According to the *Bon Usage*’s rules on the spelling of *nouveau* (Grevisse 2001: 1357), *nouveau* should be uninflected before an adjectival participle (e.g. *une épreuve nouveau-tirée* ‘a newly printed proof’) and inflected when the right-hand component is used as a noun (e.g. *la compagnie des nouveaux venus* ‘the company of the new arrivals’). In the first use, *nouveau* is claimed to have an adverbial value, which would explain its invariability. It still remains unclear, however, why French does not use the adverbial form *nouvellement* in this use. In the second use, *nouveau* acts as an adjective and follows the regular adjectival inflection rules. However, *nouveau-né* ‘newborn baby’ is said to be an exception to these

⁵ In Modern French, *néo-* also combines productively with nouns (e.g. *néogrammairien* ‘neogrammarian’) and adjectives (e.g. *néoclassique* ‘neoclassical’) and indicates that the derived lexeme refers to a kind of new version of the original one denoted by the base.

rules and should never be inflected (e.g. *la nouveau-née*). This would suggest that, apart from the resemanticization and the close relation with *néo-*, *nouveau* is subject to a (partial) loss of grammatical inflection when combining with a past participle.

However, many examples can be cited which contradict these rules.

According to the first rule, *nouveau* is uninflected when it combines with a participle used as an adjective. However, sources such as the *TLFi* and *Google* provide innumerable counterexamples:

- (4) a. *Les merles nouveaux arrivés sur leur couvée d'oisillons* (Pergaud, *TLFi*, s.v. *nouveau*)
 b. *Je regarderai tout de suite ce que devient, à travers ma joie nouvelle venue, mon besoin d'écrire.* (Bousquet, *TLFi*, s.v. *nouveau*).
 c. *Le programme innovant de « SEPWR » aide les étudiants nouveaux venus et leurs familles dans leurs besoins de base en leur prodiguant l'accès aux services d'établissement et de ressources communautaires.* (Anon. author, *Settlement and Educational Partnerships in Waterloo Region (SEPWR)*, *Google*, http://www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/program_SEPWR.asp, updated in August 2008, viewed 7th April 2009)

Examples (4a) and (4b) clearly show that this inflection is not merely a spelling inconsistency, which could be attributed to the author's negligence in writing. The *liaison* [z] in the combination of the plural forms *nouveaux arrivés* (4a) and the feminine inflection in *nouvelle venue* (4b), in contrast to the uninflected form *nouveau venue*, are also observable in spoken language.

Secondly, it can be observed that, in contrast to *Bon Usage*'s second rule (Grevisse 2001: 1357), *nouveau* often occurs uninflected when it is used in combination with a nominalized participle:

- (5) a. *Les nouveau-venus (...) pour la plupart ne s'attendaient pas à pareille rencontre.* (Theuriet, *TLFi*, s.v. *nouveau*)
 b. *Il n'y eut point de noces, car les nouveau-mariés partirent pour le Prébaudet.* (de Balzac, 1836, *La vieille fille*, *Google*, <http://books.google.be/books>, viewed 7th April 2009)
 c. *Ils sourissent et accueillent les nouveau-arrivés comme des amis.* (Anon. author, 2009, *Holy Family Journey*, *Google*, www.holyfamilyjourney.com, viewed 7th April 2009)

Again, example (5c) indicates that this invariability is not merely an orthographical fact: phonologically, *les nouveau-arrivés* is pronounced without the *liaison* [z] that would be expected in *les nouveaux-arrivés*.

Thirdly, *nouveau-né* is not always uninflected, not when it is used as a noun (6), nor as an adjective (7). The following examples are taken from the database *Frantext*⁶ and from the dictionary *TLFi*:

⁶ *Frantext* is a database of French texts, consultable at <http://www.frantext.fr/>.

- (6) a. *Au corral, il y eut, dans les mêmes circonstances, accroissement du troupeau de mouflons, et plusieurs agneaux bêlaient déjà sous les hangars, à la grande joie de Nab et d'Harbert, qui avaient chacun leur favori parmi les **nouveaux-nés**.* (Verne, *Frantext*)
 b. *Une jeune servante, vue de dos, tenant la **nouvelle-née**, qui élève vers le ciel ses petites mains roses* (Gautier, *TLFi*, s.v. *nouveau-né*).
 c. *J'ai humé l'haleine des **nouveaux-nés**.* (Moréas, *TLFi*, s.v. *nouveau-né*)
- (7) *Une chauve-souris **nouvelle-née**, tombée de je ne sais où, s'était écrasée contre le sol de la terrasse où nous nous tenions.* (Crevel, *Frantext*)

A quantitative search on *Google* (18.11.2008) corroborates these results. In the plural forms, *nouveau* is more often uninflected than inflected, but the inflected forms still represent a high percentage:

- (8) a. *nouveau(-)nés*: 401 000 tokens (59,94%)
 b. *nouveaux(-)nés* : 268 000 tokens (40,06%)

These tendencies also apply to the feminine forms, which also indicate a phonological distinction:

- (9) a. *nouveau(-)née*: 23 700 tokens (76,25%)
 b. *nouvelle(-)née*: 7380 tokens (23,75%)

Nevertheless, the fact that *nouveau* remains uninflected most of the time is surprising: *nouveau-né* is mostly used as a noun, in which we would expect inflection of the adjectival part. Consequently, the high degree of invariability of *nouveau* points to an advanced degree of grammaticalization.⁷

In my view, it is not accurate to assign an adverbial status to *nouveau* while it often presents adjectival inflection, especially when the participle it combines with has an adjectival function, as illustrated in (4) and (7). A quantitative search on *Google* (18.11.2008) indicates that in this configuration the inflected form of *nouveau* is often even more frequent than the uninflected form:

- (10) a. *bébés nouveau nés* (591 tokens) 'newly born babies'
 b. *bébés nouveaux nés* (844 tokens)
- (11) a. *personnes nouveau venues* (0 tokens) 'newly arrived people'
 b. *personnes nouvelles venues* (49 tokens)
- (12) a. *couples nouveau mariés* (22 tokens) 'newly married couples'
 b. *couples nouveaux mariés* (35 tokens)

An alternative analysis of *nouveau*, classifying it as a prefixoid, could account for these apparent irregularities: it implies that *nouveau* is in an intermediate stage of

⁷ By contrast, idioms such as *premier né* 'first born' and *dernier né* 'last born' seem to be less grammaticalized. *Premier* 'first' and *dernier* 'last' are not resemanticized and they are most likely to appear as inflected forms, although the uninflected forms also occur (e.g. *premiers nés*: 31 800 tokens vs *premier nés* 931 tokens; *dernières nées*: 7420 tokens vs *dernier nées*: 119 tokens, *Google* 27.01.2009).

grammaticalization between adjective and prefix. As a result of LAYERING (Hopper 1991), it combines the characteristics of its original function as an adjective (its inflection) and of its grammaticalized function as a prefixoid (its loss of inflection).

3.3. Paradigmaticization

It can be argued that *nouveau* does not belong to the paradigm of adverbs. For example, just like other French ‘uninflected adjectives’ (13a, 13c), *nouveau* cannot occur between the auxiliary and the past participle (14b), which is nonetheless the typical position of French adverbs (13b, 14a) (cf. Abeillé & Godard 2004: 211-213).

- (13) a. *La sculpture pèse **lourd**.* ‘The sculpture weighs heavy.’
 b. *La situation internationale a **lourdement** pesé sur notre économie.* ‘The international situation has weighed heavily upon our economy.’
 c. **La situation internationale a **lourd** pesé sur notre économie.*
- (14) a. *Ils se sont **récemment** mariés.* ‘They just got married.’
 b. **Ils se sont **nouveau** mariés.*

Conversely, the fact that *nouveau-* is closely related to *néo-*, both in semantic and distributional terms (cf. 3.1.), which can be illustrated by *nouveau-né/néonatal* and *nouveau converti/néophyte*, may indicate that *nouveau* is integrated into the paradigm of prefixes.

3.4. Productivity

The constructional idiom ‘*nouveau* + past participle’ seems to be more productive than dictionaries suggest. The *TLFi* (s.v. *nouveau*) only mentions *nouveau-né* ‘newborn baby’, *nouvel arrivé* ‘new arrival’, *nouvel embauché* ‘recently hired’, *nouvel enrichi* ‘new rich’, *nouveau converti* ‘recent convert, neophyte’, *nouveau débarqué* ‘new arrival, newcomer’, *nouveaux mariés* ‘newly married couple, newlyweds’ and a few less lexicalized expressions such as *du beurre nouveau battu* ‘freshly churned butter’. However, on *Google* many more combinations can be found, such as the ones listed in (15).

- (15) a. *les nouveau(x) morts* ‘the recently deceased’
 b. *les nouveau(x) baptisés* ‘the recently baptized children’
 c. *les nouveau(x) divorcés* ‘the recently divorced couples’
 d. *les nouveau(x) virés* ‘the recently dismissed’
 e. *une maison nouveau-construite/ nouvelle construite* ‘a newly built house’
 e.g. *Acheter une maison nouveau-construite ? Dix avantages d’employer un professionnel immobilier* (Anon. author, 2009, *Google*, <http://www.fruitymag.com/acheter-une-s40476.htm>, viewed 7th April 2009)

This productivity corroborates the existence of a constructional idiom $[[nouveau][X]_{\text{past part.}}]_{\text{N/A}}$ ‘recently + past participle’. The limits of this productivity, however, can be illustrated by examples such as **un mur nouveau peint* ‘a freshly painted wall’, **un livre nouveau lu* ‘a recently read book’ and **des fruits nouveau(x) cueillis* ‘freshly picked fruit’.

4. Conclusions

Although *nouveau* is commonly assigned an adverbial value when it combines with a past participle, especially because of its adverbial meaning ‘newly, recently’ and its partial loss of adjectival inflection, several arguments can be raised against this hypothesis. Firstly, *nouveau* does not always lose its inflection, not even when it modifies a participle with a clear adjectival function (cf. *les merles nouveaux arrivés* ‘the newly arrived blackbirds’). Secondly, *nouveau* does not present the same syntactic properties as its adverbial synonym *récemment* ‘recently’ (cf. **Ils se sont nouveau mariés*). Finally, if *nouveau* would have an adverbial status in this configuration, it could be questioned why French would use the adjectival form *nouveau* instead of its regular adverbial form *nouvellement*.

Because of these counter-arguments, it is worth taking into account an alternative analysis, classifying *nouveau* as a PREFIXOID. This implies that the original adjective is subject to a grammaticalization process when embedded in the productive construction or CONSTRUCTIONAL IDIOM (cf. 2.1.) $[[nouveau][X]_{\text{past part.}}]_{\text{N/A}}$. It has been demonstrated that the typical grammaticalization parameters indeed apply to *nouveau*. The adjective occupies a fixed anteposition in relation to the participle, which indicates a DECREASE IN SYNTAGMATIC VARIABILITY, and has undergone SEMANTIC SPECIALIZATION to a more grammatical meaning. Its partial loss of inflection may be regarded as grammatical DECATEGORIALIZATION and as a sign of integration into the paradigm of prefixes. Moreover, this PARADIGMATICIZATION claim is strengthened by the semantic and distributional affinity with the prefix *néo-*. Finally, the existence of innumerable new tokens and neologisms provides clear evidence for the PRODUCTIVITY of the constructional idiom.

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