

COMPLEX AFFIX FORMATION: ALLOSEMY AND DIACHRONY

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1 INTRODUCTION: THE PUZZLE OF “SUPERFLUOUS” AFFIXATION

A very widespread phenomenon barely noted in Distributed Morphology:

- (1) a. classify → classification, classificatory suffixal complex -ic-at-[t]ion-
b. *classific, *classition, *classation
c. simplify, gamify, spotify...

There are many varieties, including **affix conglutination** and **affix telescoping** (Haspelmath 1995)

The **micromorphology hypothesis** (Stump 2017a, b, 2023): affixes can be internally complex

1.1 Dramatis personae: -*telj*- and -*ĩn*-

Adjectivizing suffix -*ĩn*- (surface [en]/[n]): “pure categorizer”, no discernable lexical meaning beyond adjective formation:

- (2) a. *piłi* ‘dust’ (3) a. *komp*ú*ter* ‘computer’
b. *piłi*-*n*-*ij* ‘dusty.MSG’ b. *komp*ú*ter*-*n*-*ij* ‘computer-ADJ-MSG’

Non-deverbal, productive, strongly disprefers [+human] bases (support from corpus studies by Bobkova 2022)

Vinogradov 1952:346 treats this as a restriction on animates, but notes a few exceptions, such as *konnij* ‘horsed’ or *ribnij* ‘fish’. On the use of -*ĩn*- with verbal bases see section 4.1

“Pure categorizer” means the outcome is a “property linked to N”:

- (4) a. programmnij ‘programmatic, program’
b. kul’turnij ‘cultural, cultured, cultivated’
c. vernnij ‘faithful’ (from *vera* ‘faith, belief’)

- (5) $[-ĩn-] = \lambda x_k . \lambda P . P \text{ has something to do with } x_k$

Agentive suffix -*telj*-: strictly deverbal, strictly obeys the External Argument Generalization of Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1988 and Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1992:

- (6) a. *ľub*í*-tj* ‘love-INF’ (7) a. *vikľuč*á*-tj* ‘turn off.IMPV-INF’
b. *ľub*í*-telj* ‘an amateur’ b. *vikľuč*á*-telj* ‘a light switch’

In productive uses can be restated as “one who Vs”, ambiguous between actor and instrument interpretation; this ambiguity seems to be systematic across languages (Rainer 2015)

An agentive noun can serve as a basis for an apparently transparent adjective-formation:

- (8) a. *muči-tj* b. *muči-telj* c. *muči-telj-n-ij*
torture-INF torture-AGT torture-AGT-ADJ-MSG
to torture *tormentor* *poignant, agonizing*

Impressionistically, most -*telj*/*ĩn*- adjectives are agentive

1.2 Affix telescoping and conglutination

The interpretation of a sequence of suffixes need not be compositional

Affix telescoping (Haspelmath 1995): semantically transparent derivation with a missing step: Terminology: for Stump 2022 **affix telescoping** only includes cases where the historical change is complete (only the complex is productive, and its former parts are not); Haspelmath 1995 reserves this term for cases where the inner affix is semantically null

- (9) a. *opravda-tʲ*
acquit-INF
to acquit → b. **opravda-telʲ*
acquit-AGT → c. *opravda-telʲ-n-ij*
acquit-AGT-ADJ-MSG
acquitting

DM: [–lexical insertion], Halle 1973, Marantz 2023

But in fact, most agentive *-telʲ-ŋn-* adjectives lack a corresponding noun

Sometimes the noun is present but cannot be the base for the adjective, either for semantic or for syntactic reasons:

- (10) a. *izbirátʲ* ‘to elect’ → *izbirátelʲ* ‘elector, voter’ *-ŋn-* strongly disprefers [+human] bases
b. *izbirátelʲnij* ‘electoral, election (attr.), voting’ ≈ ‘related to voting/election’
c. *izbiratelʲnij učastok* ‘polling station’
d. *izbiratelʲnij bʹulletenʲ* ‘voting form’
e. *izbiratelʲnij podxod* ‘selective approach’
- (11) a. *predoxranítʲ* ‘to protect, preserve’ → *predoxranítelʲ* ‘electrical fuse, safety device’
b. *predoxranítelʲnij* ‘preservative, preventive, protective’
c. *predoxranitelʲnie meri* ‘precautions, precautionary measures’

And the resulting *-telʲ-ŋn-* adjective does not have to include an agentive component:

- (12) a. *razdražátʲ* ‘to irritate (IMPF)’ → *razdražítelʲ* ‘irritant’ (from the perfective stem)
razdražítelʲnij ‘irritable’
b. *nosítʲ* ‘to carry, wear, bear’ → *nosítelʲ* ‘carrier’ (rocket carrier, information bearer)
nosítelʲnij ‘wearable, transportable’

The adjective is semantically linked to the verb rather than to the intermediate noun:

- (13) $[[\sqrt{-X_{TEL}-Y_{IN}}] = [[Y_{IN}]]([\sqrt{\quad}]]$ affix conglutination

Semantically vacuous intermediate suffixes are very widespread (section 5)

Affix conglutination (Haspelmath 1995): “affix reanalysis in which an inner affix and an outer affix are combined [...] Semantically, the new conglutinated affix is not different from the original outer affix”

In affix conglutination the intermediate affix is semantically vacuous

Traditional Russian grammars, Agapova 1974 via Zvezdova and Gou 2013; Haspelmath 1995, citing Kiparsky 1975; Itkin and Leont'eva 2019: new simplex suffix *-telʲŋn-*:

- (14) a. *osnovátʲ* ‘to found’ → *osnovátelʲ* ‘founder’ → *osnovátelʲnij* ‘substantial’
b. *starátʲsʲja* ‘to try hard’ → *starátelʲ* ‘prospector’ → *starátelʲŋn-ij* ‘assiduous’

But is it truly reanalyzed as a single morpheme?

1.3 Complex affix formation or reanalysis?

Stump 2022: the suffixes *-let* and *-ling* have been reanalyzed:

- (15) a. booklet, droplet, eyelet, leaflet, piglet, rootlet, streamlet, wavelet -let-
 b. kernel, nozzle, puddle, scrapple -l-
 c. Janet, midget, packet, turret -et-
- (16) a. duckling, gosling, hatchling, nestling, sapling, seedling, weakling, yearling -ling-
 b. fairing ‘present from a fair’, golding ‘gold coin’,
 lording ‘term of address for a lord’, sweeting ‘sweet apple; sweetheart’ -ing-

Neither the inner nor the outer suffixes are productive

Haspelmath 1995, Grestenberger and Kastner 2022: Modern Greek verbalizer *-ev-*, originally derived from the combination of the agentive suffix *-eu-* and the verbalizer **-je/o-*

Conversely, in *-ic-al-*, *-ic-ian-*, *-ist-ic-*, or the Russian *-telʲ-ŭn-* or *-ik-ŭsk-* (surface *-ič-esk-* (34)), both pieces are fully productive

But their interpretation is not compositional: the agentive component can be missing

1.4 Where is the agentivity?

Puzzle: the loss of agentivity at the intermediate step appears to be conditioned by both the root and the adjectivizing suffix, in other environments agentivity is retained:

- (17) a. predstaviť ‘imagine; present.PFV.INF’
 predstavľati ‘imagine; present; represent.IMP.FV.INF’
 b. predstaviteľ ‘representative’, predstaviteľnica ‘representative.F’
 c. predstaviteľníj ‘representative; **impressive, dignified**’
 d. predstaviteľstvo ‘representation’

And moreover, the loss of agentivity at the intermediate step **is not obligatory**

Paykin 2003:181 after Markov 1984: instrument-denoting *-telʲ-* nouns may combine with the suffix *-ščik-* to yield corresponding agents (e.g., *osvetitelʲ* ‘lighting appliance, or person in charge of lighting effects’ → *osvetitelʲščik* ‘person in charge of lighting effects’). Is this another case of *-telʲ-* bleaching?

The semantically vacuous affix is systematically the inner one (more cases in section 5)

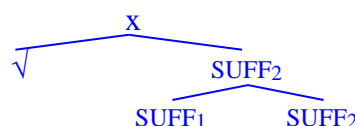
2 COMPLEX AFFIX FORMATION

Proposal: two potential structures for a sequence of suffixes:

- (18) a. **iterative suffixation**



- b. **complex suffix**



The two adjectival interpretations in (17c) correspond to the two structures, respectively:

- (19) a. [[predstavi-telʲ]- nɨj] ‘representative’
 present AGT ADJ
 b. [predstavi-[telʲ-nɨj]] ‘impressive, dignified’

Complex affix formation is not excluded by DM (it is even expected, if it’s “Syntax All The Way Down”)

However, **this constituency imposes constraints on the interpretation**

2.1 Semantic processes in a complex suffix

The **agentive suffix** *-telj-* is deverbal and creates agentive nouns

The adjectivizing suffix *-ĭn-* is strictly denominal (most likely not for semantic reasons but who knows)

The constituent formed by the two suffixes is redundant and incoherent:

- redundancy: *-ĭn-* is a pure categorizer returning the property of being related to the base stem (*-telj-* is far more specific, returning the kind characterized as the external argument of the base event)
- incoherence: *-telj-* returns a kind, *-ĭn-*, a property

In the general case, **one suffix in a complex suffix structure must be semantically null**

Two options: actual deletion (a process) or inserting a null alloseme (i.e., semantic allomorph, cf. Marantz 2013, Wood 2015)

My preference is for the former: (a) deletion is a process attested on the PF side; (b) the distribution of semantically null affixes seems to be predictable; (c) the null alloseme would also have to have come from somewhere, (d) too many other suffixes would have to have a null alloseme

Empirically, it is always the inner suffix that is semantically null

Since *-ĭn-* is a pure categorizer, *-telj-ĭn-* will also be one, no motivation for semantic constraints on the base

But the c-selectional conditions of *-telj-* remain: the complex suffix is purely deverbal

Two options:

- semantic constraint: the inner affix introduces a presupposition on the type of its argument, and this presupposition remains and is projected to the complex affix
- this is c-selection (and some conditions on its inheritance)

No evidence for choosing on the basis of *-telj-ĭn-*

But complex suffix formation may also give rise to novel meanings

Hypothesis: the “baby-diminutive” suffix *-ionok-* (Gouskova and Bobaljik 2022) was derived from a complex suffix (*-ĭn-* + *-ũk-*):

- (20) a. $\llbracket -\text{ĭn-} \rrbracket = \lambda x_k . \lambda P . P \text{ has something to do with } x_k$
 b. $\llbracket -\text{ũk-} \rrbracket = \lambda f . \lambda x . f(x) \ \& \ x \text{ is small}$

Iterative affixation should produce the wrong result:

- (21) $\llbracket -\text{ũk-} \rrbracket (\llbracket -\text{ĭn-} \rrbracket (\llbracket \text{lynx} \rrbracket)) = \lambda x . x \text{ has a lynx-related property } P \text{ and } x \text{ is small}$

To the extent that a diminutive suffix can apply to a property, the outcome is questionable

If the two suffixes form a constituent, the inner adjectivizing suffix would undergo semantic deletion but the presupposition that its inner argument is a kind could remain

And when it doesn’t, the diminutive suffix *-ionok-* (Gouskova and Bobaljik 2022) is created

- (22) $\llbracket -\text{ũk-} \rrbracket (\emptyset (\llbracket \text{lynx} \rrbracket)) = \lambda x_k . x_k \text{ is a sub-kind of lynx and } x_k \text{ is small}$

Complex suffix formation and subsequent semantic deletion are a prerequisite for reanalysis

2.2 Reasons for complex affix creation

Section 5: complex affix creation usually seems result-oriented (e.g., phonotactics, c-selection, blocking, adaptation of non-native vocabulary...)

Most Russian verbs contain a thematic suffix: a vocalic suffix merged between the verbal stem and the tense-agreement inflection

The **adjectivizing suffix -*ĭn*-** cannot combine with thematic verbal stems (section 4.1)

Hence a complex suffix is created (cf. Stump's and Haspelmath's *counterpotentiation*)

Why via -*tel*-? Most likely, due to calques from Greek (section 4.3)

3 INTERMEDIATE CONCLUSION

The agentive semantics of the suffix -*tel*- can be lost in adjectival derivation (Haspelmath's affix conglutination, which is a type of Stump's rule conflation)

This loss is not obligatory, there exist doublets, as in (17c):

Though such doublets can always be attributed to polysemy, either of the base stem or of the derivate

- (23) a. *predstavitel'niĭ* 'representative'
b. *predstavitel'niĭ* 'impressive, dignified'

Proposal: formation of a complex suffix and obligatory semantic deletion inside it

Agentive and non-agentive readings of -*tel*-*ĭn*- adjectives correspond to different structures

The hypothesis that affixes can themselves be complex (Stump's (2017b, 2023) **micromorphology**) predicts semantic deletion of one of the affixes, but also allows to explain how new meanings arise (e.g., "baby-diminutives")

Additional benefits: **counterpotentiation** (Haspelmath 1995, Stump 2022, 2023):

- (24) a. *cyclic, historic*
b. **whimsic, nonsensic*
c. *whimsical, nonsensical*

In the suffixal complex -*tel*-*ĭn*- the inner suffix (-*tel*-) overcomes the selectional restrictions of the suffix -*ĭn*-

4 THE RHYME AND REASON OF -*TEL*-*ĬN*-

Independent evidence for complex affix formation, driving force (functionalist), diachrony

4.1 The complex feminine -*nic*-_F

The suffixal complex -*nic*- forms feminines for -*tel*- nouns:

- (25) *učitel'/učitel'nicā* 'a teacher', *voditel'/voditel'nicā* 'a driver', *voitel'/voitel'nicā* 'a warrior', *roditel'/roditel'nicā* 'a parent'

The suffixal complex -*nic*- is the feminine variant of the agentive/nominalizing suffix -*nik*-:

- It is a suffixal complex:

- How are these feminitives formed? Suppose only iterative suffixation is available:

27)

The diagram shows a hierarchical morphological structure. At the top is the root 'n3'. It branches into 'n2' and 'nF'. 'n2' branches into 'a1' and 'nDIM'. 'a1' branches into 'n1' and 'a'. 'n1' branches into a root symbol '√' and 'n'. 'a' branches into '-in-'. 'nDIM' branches into '-ic-'. 'n' branches into '-telj-'. The final output is the concatenation of these morphemes: √ n1 -telj- a -in- -ic- nF.

The interpretation of feminine [tel^hnic] nouns should depend on the interpretation of the corresponding [tel^hn] adjective

It becomes a pure accident that all [-*tel^hnic*] nouns denote female counterparts of [-*tel^j*] nouns

Possible objection: can *-nic-* not contain *-in-* synchronically?

Though this is rather unintuitive and misses a number of empirical generalizations (see Matushansky 2023b)

4.2 On the c-selectional properties of the suffix *-in-*

Thus empirically, the adjectivizing suffix *-in-* cannot combine with thematic verbal stems

Hypothesis: this is not a hardwired restriction, either semantic or syntactic, this is blocking

The **passive past participle suffix -en-** is historically identical to *-ĭn-* (and might still be *-ĭn-* in the underlying representation) but never surfaces as such (its vowel never alternates, it is either zero or [e]):

- (28) a. čit- a- n- a ← čit-a-ĭn/ĕn-a + hiatus resolution?
 read TH PPP FSG
 b. kup l- ĕn- a ← kup-i-ĕn-a + glide formation
 buy TH PPP FSG

If an adjective was formed with the suffix *-ĭn-* from a thematic verb, this adjective would be indistinguishable from a passive past participle

Hence **complex affix formation caused by blocking**

Other instances of the same: certain feminines (e.g., *gorec* ‘highlander.M/F’, cf. *gorka* ‘mountain.DIM’)

4.3 A brief history of *-telĭ-ĭn-*

Agapova 1974 via Zvezdova and Gou 2013, Itkin and Leont'eva 2019: adjectives without the intermediate noun already by the 11th century:

Demidov and Kamchatnov 2020: the existence of *-telĭ-ĭn-* adverbs without corresponding adjectives suggests that short forms with the gerundive meaning should be regarded as primary

- (29) a. volitelĭnĭj ‘by choice’ (11th c., *volitelĭ)
 b. vozveščatelĭnĭj ‘demanding, announcing’ (16th c., *vozveščatelĭ)

Agapova 1974 via Zvezdova and Gou 2013: derivation from the verbal stem in the 11th-14th c.

Non-agentive use in the 19th century:

- (30) stojal, ožidaja s zamirajuščim serdcom postupi-telĭ-n-ogo ĕkzamena
 stood awaiting with sinking heart admit-TEL-ADJ-SG.GEN exam
 stood waiting for admittance exam with a sinking heart (Aleksey Pisemsky, 1858)

Zvezdova and Gou 2013: these adjectives are derived directly from the verbal stem

Lopatin and Uluxanov 2016:653-657: at least six allosemes, including “intended for V”, “the object of V”, and “the state of V”, direct derivation from the verbal stem

Important: **the suffix *-telĭ-* remained agentive throughout**

Both *-telĭ-* and *-ĭn-* remain productive, and are recognizable as parts of *-telĭ-ĭn-*

5 A FEW OTHER INSTANCES OF COMPLEX SUFFIXATION

5.1 Russian complex adjective formation and the loss of agentivity

Systematic semantic deletion of the [+human] nominalizer in adjective formation

Haspelmath 1995 following Kiparsky 1975:267-268: the complex suffixes *-česk-* and *-čestv-*:

- (31) a. tvor^{ec} ‘a creator’ → tvor^{českij} ‘creative’, tvor^{čestvo} ‘creation’
 b. peresel^{enec} ‘migrant, settler’ → peresel^{českij} ‘migrational’
 c. jazikov^{ed} ‘a linguist’ → jazikov^{českij} ‘linguistic’
 d. stud^{ent} ‘a student’ → stud^{českij} ‘student’, stud^{čestvo} ‘students as a class, the time of being a student’

The nominalizing suffix *-ič-* (surface [ec]/[c]) is productive, as are the suffixes *-isk-* (surface [esk]/[sk]) and *-stv-* (surface [estv]/[stv])

The non-productive agent ([+human]) suffix *-ar-/arⁱ-* might be an exception to the inability of the suffix *-in-* to combine with animate nouns:

The final palatalized consonant of the nouns in (32) is depalatalized before [n]

- (32) a. *pekár* ‘a baker’ → *pekárnij* ‘baking (attr.)’ (cf. *pekú* ‘bake.PRES.1SG’)
 b. *kustár* ‘handicraftsman’ → *kustárnij* ‘handicraft (attr.)’

The meaning is ‘related to/characteristic of the profession(al)’ (*pekárnij* is linked to bakers and bakery (*pekárn’a*, *-in-* is a non-productive location suffix), not to the baking process itself)

The non-native nominalizer *-ik-* becomes semantically null in a complex suffix *-ič-esk-*:

Surface [ičesk] with corresponding nouns in *-nik-* and *-ščik-* has different prosodic properties

- (33) a. *alkogólík* ‘an alcoholic’ → *alkogolíčeskij* ‘alcoholism-related’ parallel derivation
alkogól’ ‘alcohol’ → *alkogól’nij* ‘alcoholic’
 b. *xímík* ‘chemist’ → *ximíčeskij* ‘chemical’ glide insertion in the abstract noun
xími[j]-a ‘chemistry’
 c. *nevrótík* ‘a neurotic’ → *nevrotíčeskij* ‘neurotic(al)’ stem allomorphy
nevrós ‘neurosis’
 d. *fízík* ‘physicist’ → *fizíčeskij* ‘physical’ likely reanalysis with the root *-fiz-*
fízika ‘physics’

And the corresponding human nouns may even be null-derived:

- (34) a. *kardiológ/*kardiologik* ‘cardiologist’ → *kardiologíčeskij* ‘cardiological’
*kardiológ[ij]-a/*kardiologika* ‘cardiology’
 b. *xirúrg/*xirurgik* ‘surgeon’ → *xirurgíčeskij* ‘surgical’
*xirurgí[j]-a/*xirurgika* ‘surgery’

English creates *-ist-* adjectives by conversion (and no one wonders about the loss of agentivity), Russian uses the suffix *-isk-* (surface [esk]/[sk]):

- (35) a. *kommúníst* ‘a communist’ → *kommunistíčeskij* ‘communist (attr.)’
 b. *artíst* ‘an artist, performer’ → *artistíčeskij* ‘artistic’ cranberry root

The adjectives *communist* and *capitalist* are not derived from the corresponding human nouns

5.2 Russian augmented feminines and ambiguity avoidance

Ambiguity avoidance may drive complex affix formation in feminines:

- (36) a. *grek/grečánka* ‘a Greek’ (cf. *grečka* ‘buckwheat’) *-ian-ŭk-*
 b. *slugá/sluzánka* ‘servant’ (cf. *služka* ‘lay brother’) *-ian-ŭk-*
 c. *górec/goránka* ‘mountain-dweller’ (cf. *gorka* ‘mountain.DIM’) *-ič-/ian-ŭk-*

Other cases cannot be so explained:

- (37) a. *c’órt/certóvka* ‘devil’, *plut/plutóvka* ‘rogue’ *-ov-ŭk-*
 b. *geógraf/geografíčka* ‘geography teacher’ *-ik-ŭk-*

But here an augment is also used in derivation

5.3 Russian verbalization: loanword stems and ACT-*be*

Affix pleonasm (Gardani 2015) in loanword integration: with loanword roots the suffix *-ow-* is often preceded by the sequences *-iz-*, *-ir-*, and *-iz-ir-*:

- (38) a. *kompil-ir-ov-a-tj* ‘to compile’
 b. *social-iz-ir-ov-a-tj* ‘to socialize’
 c. *real-iz-ov-a-tj* ‘to realize’

Extremely productive with loan stems

These loan suffixes cannot function as verbalizers (unlike in Serbo-Croatian (Simonović 2015))

The suffixal complex *-n-ik-e[jj]-* (surfacing as *-niča[jj]-*):

(39) a.	<i>báb -n -ič -aj -e t</i> woman-ADJ -N -VBLZ -PRES 3SG <i>womanize.PRES.3SG</i>	b.	<i>bab -n -ik</i> woman -ADJ -NMLZ <i>womanizer</i>
(40) a.	<i>nérv -n -ič -aj -e t</i> nerve-ADJ -NMLZ -VBLZ -PRES 3SG <i>be nervous.PRES.3SG</i>	b.	<i>nérv -n -aj a</i> nerve -ADJ -LF FSG <i>nervous</i>
(41) a.	<i>jábéd -n -ič -aj -e t</i> sneak-ADJ -NMLZ -VBLZ -PRES 3SG <i>carry tales.PRES.3SG</i>	b.	<i>jabed-a</i> sneak-NOM <i>a sneak, a telltale</i>

Also subject to “agent incorporation” (see Grestenberger and Kastner 2022 for references and discussion): their interpretation does not involve the agent even when they look like they might be denominal (39)

5.4 Russian augmented plurals

The plural nominative *-a-* is **both accented and dominant with non-neuter nouns** (Coats 1976, Zaliznjak 1985, Alderete 1999:166, Timberlake 2004:136, Munteanu 2021, Iordanidi 2020):

- (42) a. *proféssor* ‘professor.NOM’
proféssora ‘professor.GEN’
 b. *professorá* ‘professor.PL.NOM’
professorámi ‘professor.PL.INS’

There exist no non-neuter *a*-plurals that have stress on the stem

Two exceptions: the “baby-diminutive” suffix *-inŭk-* (surface [iɒnok]/[iɒnk]), suppletive plural form *-int-* [iɒt], see Gouskova and Bobaljik 2022, and **augmented plurals in -īj-**:

- (43) a. *brat/brátja* ‘brother.SG/PL’
 b. *kn’az/kn’azjá* ‘prince.SG/PL’
 c. *déveri/deverjá* ‘husband’s brother.SG/PL’
 d. *kólos/kolósja* ‘ear (of a cereal).SG/PL’
 e. *dérevo/derévja* ‘tree.SG/PL’
 f. *kriló/krílja* ‘wing.SG/PL’
- masculine, stem-final stress
 masculine, inflectional stress
 masculine, inflectional stress
 masculine, stem-final stress
 neuter, stem-final stress
 neuter, stem-final stress

Matushansky 2024: these roots are **underlyingly specified as singular**, the augment is needed to enable morphological pluralization

As the suffix *-īj-* is neuter, it cannot combine with [+human] roots → complex affix formation

Plénat and Roché 2004, Plénat 2005: diminutive “interfixes” in French:

- (44) a. tarte ‘cake’ → tartelette ‘tartlet’ (cf. boule ‘ball’ → boulette ‘meatball, pellet’)
 b. nappe ‘tablecloth’ → napperon ‘doily’ (cf. blouse ‘blouse’ → blouson ‘jacket’)
 c. brique ‘brick’ → briquetier ‘bricklayer’ (cf. pot ‘pot’ → potier ‘potter’)

- augmented suffixes (e.g., *-lette*-)
- unattested intermediate stems (e.g., **tartelle*)
- semantically neutral interfixes

NB: all these “interfixes” have a separate life as diminutives or nominalizers

(45) a. *clau* ‘key’ → *claveta* ‘little key; bushing key, dowel...’
 b. *clavetièra* ‘keyhole’

Despite the presence of the diminutive suffix, (45b) is semantically linked to the root only (cf. Haspelmath 1995 for the French *-erie-*)

A few *-ani-* adjectives have no *-an-* counterpart (Laks lists *racxani*/**racxan* ‘murderous, cruel’)

- (46) a. kapdan, kapdani ‘meticulous’
b. mahapexan, mahapexani ‘revolutionary’

Nouns in *-an-* can marginally be suffixed with the default adjectivizing suffix *-i-* yielding ‘typical of, related to, etc.’ interpretation (e.g., *saxkani* ‘actor-like, actor-related’)

- (47) a. saxyan 'swimmer' c. kabcan 'beggar'
b. saxkan 'actor' d. yevuan 'importer'

Laks 2024: “the addition of the suffix *-i* is motivated by the desire to reduce polycategoricity in the language”, i.e., to distinguish adjectives from agent nouns

Stump 2019: the English suffix **-at(e)-** has a dual status: as a verbalizer (*saliva/salivate*) and as a former of a T-stem used in further derivation:

- (48) a. provoke → provoc**ative**, provoc**ation**
 b. form → form**ative**, form**ation**
 c. explain → explan**ation**, explan**atory**
 d. probe → prob**ation**

Hypothesis: maybe it's the suffix observable in *celibate*, *reprobate*, *apostate*...

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