



*Hélène Vassiliadou, Francine Gerhard-Krait, Georgia Fotiadou  
& Marie Lammert*

## *Pseudo(-)* in French and Greek: Categorization and approximation

**Abstract:** *Pseudo(-)* is generally considered to be a prefix or a prefixoid unit with an evaluative value of pragmatic approximation and negative polarity: *pseudo(-)X* presents a distortion with respect to a standard X. It then enters the paradigm of expressions responsible for infusing subjectivity into the discourse. The interpretative mechanisms in play exploit two dimensions, semantic and pragmatic, according to principles that will be explained in this paper. Furthermore, our contribution aims to highlight the semantic dimension in the interpretation of *pseudo(-)* both in Greek and French and to show how it exploits the semantic and categorial properties of the nouns that are postposed to it, leading to three main types of categorization (*pseudo(-)X* belongs to the category X but it is not a good exemplar, *pseudo(-)X* is clearly not an X, the categorization remains undecidable) and to several readings.

**Keywords:** categorization, approximation, disproximation, vagueness, evaluative morphology

### 1. Introduction

In this study, we examine *pseudo(-)* in French and in Greek, considered to be part of the paradigm of typical evaluative prefixes indicating “deviation from a standard value” as described, among others, in Štekauer, Salvador & Körtvélyessy (2012), Körtvélyessy (2015), Amiot & Stosic (2015, 2023) and Melissaropoulou (2015). Noticeably, there are no studies dedicated to *pseudo(-)* in French, except for the recent work of Van Goethem, Norde & Masini (2021/under review), while Greek scholars focused on the investigation of its morphological status (Giannouloupoulou 1997) and discussed primarily some of its aspects within the paradigm of diminutive verbs (Efthymiou 2017a, b, 2019).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Thillmann’s study (2007) for German, Van Goethem & Norde (2020) for Dutch, Van Goethem, Norde & Masini (2021/under review) for eight European languages (Danish, Dutch, English, German, Swedish, French, Italian, Spanish) and Cappelle, Daus & Hartmann (2023) for English.

In our turn, we aim to tease apart the various interpretative effects of *pseudo(-)* when used with nouns and to show that it always triggers categorization by signaling a gap between an individual or a class of *pseudo(-)X* and the category X itself. Three types of categorial relationships result: for example, a *pseudo(-)wife* out of context a) belongs to/is included in the category ‘wife’ but it is not a good exemplar (she does not correspond to social stereotypes), b) is clearly not a wife (officially speaking), c) the categorization remains undecidable (the context does not offer enough information to decide on its status). Both the type of categorization triggered and the readings associated to it must be carefully established, as they do not always depend on a free choice of the speaker. As suggested in several recent studies (see i.a. Vassiliadou & Lammert (eds.) 2022; Mihatsch et al. (eds.) 2023), the distinction between types of categorization as well as what falls under approximation is, in some cases, difficult to grasp, and objective criteria which, ideally, leave no room for doubt, are sometimes missing. For instance, glosses by *fake*, *similar to*, *alleged*, *so-called*, *quasi* and other devices that could help us decide which interpretation to choose, are not finally able to disambiguate the interpretations, because they convey the same semantic effects as *pseudo(-)* itself.

In order to untangle the skein of meaning effects of *pseudo(-)X* expressions and to grasp the semantic and pragmatic dimension in which meaning is built, we proceed as follows: first, we describe the relationship between categorization and approximation, mechanisms which we consider two sides of the same coin. We also plead for a semantic account of vagueness, and we discuss some morphological issues which also justify our methodological protocol (Section 2). In Section 3, we present the corpora we used for our investigation and our distributional data. Based on *pseudo(-)*’s general semantic information, shared by French and Greek, we then evaluate how it combines with the element X (=Noun) that follows it (Section 4). Within this perspective, three types of categorization are proposed. We specifically focus on the type of nouns that occupy the X-position (Section 5), since their semantic properties offer some objective criteria that may lead to an understanding of how the meaning of *pseudo(-)X* is specified. The main findings of this work as well as some open questions are discussed in the final part of the paper (Section 6).

## 2. Preliminary remarks on approximation and morphology

For the sake of functional comparison (which is often done in contrastive studies), we intentionally quasi-overlook the specific formal properties of the two formatives in French and Greek. Moreover, we consider that comparing a formative in its original language (even if it has travelled through history and languages; see Van Goethem, Norde & Masini 2021/under review) and in a target language is relevant for contrastive linguistics.

Despite the fact that French and Greek *pseudo(-)* differ in some respects as the presence of two forms and the freer distribution of the Greek marker (see Section 2.2), they both share the same semantic core meaning. They enter the domain of evaluative morphology by providing appreciation of the existing conceptual categories, not only by focusing on diminution and depreciation, but also by considering the intersection between categorization/approximation and evaluative morphology (see Masini, Norde & Van Goethem 2023, Introduction of this issue, for references). Thus, we put forward that, in all its uses, both in Greek and French, *pseudo(-)* is clearly a hedge<sup>2</sup> in Lakoff's original sense (1973), that is an expression whose role it is to make a categorial belonging either clearer (taxonomic reading) or less clear (evaluation of the degree of exemplarity within a category, i.e. intra-category approximation, and fuzzy reading). Nevertheless, that does not imply that *pseudo(-)X* is a vague expression, as we will show below.

### 2.1 Clear and approximate categorization: Two sides of the same coin

We will not investigate the terminological imbroglio that closely affects *approximation*, *imprecision*, *vagueness* and *categorization*: approximation is often correlated with vagueness, vagueness or fuzziness are correlated with pragmatics, the boundaries of vagueness and indeterminacy are fuzzy in turn (Kleiber 1987). Moreover, it seems that, in recent years, scholars tend to overlook the fact that vagueness is also an affair of semantics and prefer to associate it quasi-exclusively with pragmatics and context-dependencies. Devos (2003: 122–123) argues that vagueness is “primarily a semantic phenomenon, and not a pragmatic one, as vagueness cannot always be imputed to language users”. In fact, we deal, above all, with a language phenomenon and not an extra-linguistic one; semantic

---

<sup>2</sup> The concept of *hedge* is used in this paper as a “comparative concept” (Haspelmath 2010) applicable to Greek and French (and probably to other languages which use different sorts of hedging devices).

vagueness is, thus, conceived as “an intrinsic uncertainty with regard to the application of a word to a denotatum” (Devos 2003: 123). Following Devos, we will show, for instance, how objectively vague predicates (like nouns designating affects) play a role in the interpretation of *pseudo(-)X*.

According to psycho-/neurolinguistics, the principle of categorization itself functions by means of relating elements (Kahlaoui et al. 2010). This is also the case for approximation and comparison. In other words, both taxonomic and approximative categorization relate some element to a category. Assigning a category to a referent and judging the adequacy of its categorial membership can in some cases be difficult. The categorization at stake for a given statement, in terms of clear, approximate or vague membership (see Section 4), can sometimes vary considerably depending on the interpreter or the descriptor (see, among others, Gerhard-Krait & Vassiliadou 2014, 2017; Gerhard-Krait & Zerva 2023; Vassiliadou et al. 2023). The reasons that may explain this difficulty in apprehending the boundaries of certain categories are of various kinds: inherent semantic indeterminacy, vague predicates, speaker’s intention and multiplicity of pragmatic values, to name a few.

Having established that our starting point is to avoid opposing categorization and approximation, we next show that inconsistency runs through morphological marking as well.

## 2.2 Morphological and syntactic status of *pseudo(-)*

*Pseudo(-)*’s morphological status as a pejorative, depreciative prefix or prefixoid (see among others Quirk et al. 1985; Van Goethem & Norde 2020) or as a bound morpheme entering neo-classical compositions (Baeskow 2004) or even as a “semi-word” (“semiparola” in Scalise 1990) can be discussed in length. Most cases, where *pseudo(-)* (and other similar items) appear, are considered in the literature as cases of occasional composition (syntactic constructions),<sup>3</sup> i.e. words constructed in discourse (Corbin 1987; Lieber 2004).

*Pseudo(-)*, as far as French is concerned, can indeed be seen as an initial combining form which appears in nominal and adjectival units recorded in dictionaries, notably in specialized lexicons and terminologies, as in *pseudonyme* ‘pseudonym’, *pseudo-science* ‘pseudo-science’, *pseudo-kyste* ‘pseudo-cyst’, *pseudo-tourelle* ‘pseudo-turret’, *pseudo-bulbinaire*

---

<sup>3</sup> Our aim is not to study when a word stops being an “occasional composition” and becomes a “real word”. Literature on neology tries to answer at this very controversial question by using many different criteria like frequency, autonomy, semantic and formal stability, fixation, etc.

‘pseudobulbar’, *pseudo-byzantin* ‘pseudo-byzantine’, and so on. Given the number of occurrences of *pseudo(-)X* which are not intended to form lexicalized units (which is one of the properties of evaluative morphemes), it could also be seen as a simple modifier of a noun or an adjective in French assuming the status of a “debonding unit” (Norde 2009: 186). Indeed, there are many occurrences in French where users proceed to agreement between *pseudo(-)* and X (like adjectives do): *pseudos qualités* (‘false qualities’), *pseudos artistes* (‘false artists’) among others<sup>4</sup>.

Greek data<sup>5</sup> can be tricky because *pseudo(-)* may surface with two forms: *ψευδο(-)* *psevðo(-)* and *ψευτο(-)* *psefto(-)* for which the literature has not reached definite conclusions concerning their categorization and does not uniformly agree on whether *psevðo(-)* and *psefto(-)* should be considered as allomorphs or not. This is the case, for instance, for Giannouloupoulou (1997), who considers *psevðo-* as a confix (i.e., neither stem nor affix) and *psefto-* as the first element of compound words. Her main argument is that *psevðo-* (from *ψευδ(ής)* ‘lying, false’) conserves in all cases the meaning of ‘artificial, fake’ and rejects the evaluative one ‘vile, junk’ (Giannouloupoulou 1997: 120), leaving *psefto-* to endorse the evaluative meaning of depreciation. She also claims that *psevðo-* can be combined exclusively with nouns (which is not the case, even if nouns are indeed more frequent; see Section 3). If this statement was true, how could we explain their massive coexistence with the same ‘base’ and the same meaning (*ψευτο/ψευδο-επιστήμη* *psefto/psevðo-epistími* ‘pseudo-science’, *ψευτο/ψευδοδίλημμα* *psefto/psevðoðílima* ‘pseudodilemma’, *ψευτο/ψευδοανάγκη* *psefto/psevðoanàgi* ‘pseudoneed’, etc.) rather than free variation in speakers’ usage or the well-established differentiation in Greek between *ð* used in more literary registers and *τ* in more familiar ones? One can also argue that as Greek dictionaries register *psevð-* and *pseft-* under two different entries, they are not allomorphs. It is well known that this is not a convincing argument as lexicographers do not distinguish between polysemy and monosemy based on strict morphological criteria. Finally, a recent study (Anastassiadi-Symeonidi & Fliatouras 2019: 26) explains why Modern Greek allows the presence of both

<sup>4</sup> See also some cases where *pseudo(-)*’s scope is over a noun phrase (NP) (Van Goethem, Norde & Masini (2021/under review).

<sup>5</sup> We wish to express our gratitude towards our anonymous reviewers who encouraged us to further develop some aspects neglected in the first version of this paper. Many thanks also to Anna Anastassiadi-Symeonidi with whom we had extended discussions that helped us better understand many issues raised for Greek.

*psefto(-)* and *psevðo(-)* with the same ‘base’ by showing that there is a clear continuum from [+learned] to [-learned], the norm (everyday vocabulary) being in the center. The norm corresponds to a two-zone overlap (formal and familiar registers) including thus all permitted combinations within the Greek lexicon. Moreover, Ralli (2005: 169; see also Ralli 2004) considers this kind of formations as “pseudo-compounds”: the presence of the vowel *o* in *psevðo(-)/psefto(-)* is not the typical compounding marker in Greek, but the last segment of the “affixoid”. We can also find the characterization of “fossilized diminutive” referring to a very productive paradigm (*micro(-)* ‘small’, *psilo(-)* ‘thin, a bit’, etc.) in which the items are not “proper diminutives” (Xydopoulos 2009: 404).<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this paper is not to conduct a diachronic study (see Babiniotis 1969), but we can outline here some observations retrieved from Fotiadou et al. (forthcoming). *Psevð-* and *pseft-* are to be examined probably in the times of Puristic Greek (*Katharevousa*), but a quick glance at TLG corpus data (10<sup>th</sup> AD onwards; theological/historical texts) shows the possible existence of two derivational paths for *pseudo(-)*:

1. *pseud(o)-* complement/argument of noun as in *ψευδάγγελος* *psevðàγγελος*, lit. pseudo-angel ‘who announces lies’, or in *ψευδολόγος* *psevðολόγος* ‘who tells lies, liar’. These formations can be glossed by a corresponding phrase.
2. *pseudo(-)* specifier/adjunct in cases which we cannot easily paraphrase by using corresponding phrases: *ψευτοδουλεύω* *pseftoðoulévo*, lit. pseudowork, does not mean ‘work in a false/artificial way’ but ‘work a little’ or ‘pretend to work’ (see Efthymiou 2017b: 5–11).

The first path is still at work in Modern Greek and even if rare, it is not negligible: we encounter it with lexicalized units as *ψευδομάρτυρας* *psevðomártiras* ‘false witness, perjurer’ and within the scientific vocabulary as *ψευδοκύστη* *psevðokísti* ‘pseudocyst’. The second path, the dominant one in our corpus data and in general, is very prolific/productive, in line with the affixoids’ Modern Greek paradigm. Even if the meaning of ‘fake’ seems transparent, we do not claim that *pseudo(-)* in *pseudo(-)X* has fully retained its original meaning; it is on the contrary an underspecified item that, as *psilo(-)* ‘thin, a bit’, “has undergone bleaching [...], lost some of its semantic features and become more and more

<sup>6</sup> For diminutive formation in Greek, see Melissaropoulou & Ralli (2020).

abstract” (Xydopoulos 2009: 400). The transition from ‘fake, artificial’ towards ‘of a lower quality’ is easy to grasp. It is interesting to note here that in some cases, when the process of grammaticalization is not fully achieved, ambiguities remain. Evidence from Sarantakos blog show the disagreement between the lexicographer’s position and the comments uploaded by many users of the internet on the interpretation of *ψευτοπονηράκιας*<sup>7</sup> *pseftoponirákias* (‘pseudo-cunning’):

- Not a pseudo-cunning but a liar and a cunning (for the lexicographer).
- Pseudo-cunning is a person who pretends or is trying to persuade that he is clever though he is not (for internauts). ([sarantakos.wordpress.com/2009/04/02/nopseudo-ponirakias](https://sarantakos.wordpress.com/2009/04/02/nopseudo-ponirakias))

For both French and Greek, we consider all the possible orthographic marking variations of *pseudo(-)* (welding, hyphen, absence of hyphen, in brackets) insofar, as they are not reliable criteria to differentiate what would be lexicalized units. This is supported by the fact that a lexicalized unit can appear with or without a hyphen (*pseudo-rhumatisme/pseudorhumatisme* ‘pseudo(-)rheumatism’, *ψευδο-ιστός/ψευδοιστός* *psevðo(-)istós* ‘pseudo(-)tissue’, for example), just as free uses of *pseudo(-)* can appear with or without a hyphen (*pseudo-mari/pseudo mari* ‘pseudo(-)husband’, *ψευτοόραμα/ψευτο-όραμα* *psefto(-)órama* ‘pseudo(-)vision’).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, dictionaries register both hapaxes and occasionalisms, thus they do not guarantee the denomination status of the unit. Queries in corpora also display discrepancy regarding the presence or absence of the hyphen.<sup>9</sup>

While we do not assimilate prefixal and syntactic mechanisms,<sup>10</sup> we rely on the fact that for the constructed lexicon, there is a prior fixation of meaning, whereas for free sequences,

<sup>7</sup> Note that the ambiguity concerns even *psefto(-)*, which is supposed to specialize in depreciation.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, welding is a sign of lexicalization in French only as far as lexicalized units are concerned.

<sup>9</sup> In the literary French corpus Frantext, the tendency is to hyphenate almost all *pseudo(-)X*. Statistics on Wortschatz and frTenTen17 are difficult to present here due to the high frequency of *pseudo(-)* as the truncation of *pseudonym*. Van Goethem, Norde & Masini (2021/under review) present in their paper token frequencies of French *pseudo*’s construction types as per 1000 tokens extracted from TenTen web corpus. They found 393 neo-classical compounds, 192 clippings (i.e., *pseudo* meaning ‘nickname’) and 415 native formations. In Greek, things are a little bit different as there are almost the same number of tokens with and without hyphens, but also a great number of *pseudo(-)* in brackets: *(ψευδο)ιστορία* (*psevðo*)*istoría* ‘(pseudo)history’, *(ψευδο)επανάσταση* (*psevðo*)*epanástasi* ‘(pseudo)revolution’ (see Fotiadou et al. forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> As they do not belong to the same functional domains, they do not follow the same rules of combination and they do not produce the same semantic and pragmatic effects.

the semantic value primarily obeys the semantic potential of the nouns associated to the *pseudo(-)X* sequence. Thus, there is always a computation of meaning to be made in context. For example, *pseudo-tissu* ‘pseudo-tissue’ as a lexical unit designates something that is not a tissue. We could imagine that a free use of *pseudo(-)* combined with *tissu* means a tissue of bad quality.

Hence, *pseudo(-)* can be seen as an element at the crossroads of word construction and syntactic construction. Whether it is free or bound, it produces the same interpretative effects and, for this reason, we do not take into account considerations related to its status as a prefix or an autonomous element, as this is not relevant to our semantic approach. In all its uses, both in Greek and French, *pseudo(-)* is clearly a hedge in Lakoff’s original sense (1973), as stated from the outset.

In the following sections, we seek to understand the role that the element X plays in the different interpretative schemes when X is a noun.

### 3. *Pseudo(-)* in French and in Greek: Corpus and distribution

Taking under consideration the above, we focus on the semantics of *pseudo(-)* in all its formal configurations with respect to the type of nouns appearing in the position X, but we also examine to what extent a pragmatic dimension is called upon. For the purposes of this paper, we opted for a qualitative analysis of the examples given, even if some quantitative data are also provided to justify our choices regarding the phenomena affecting *pseudo(-)*’s uses.

#### 3.1 Corpus

The data extraction both in Greek and French was motivated by the need to cover as many registers as possible. For French, we consulted the following three corpora: first, the literature database *Frantext* gave back 1,441 tokens of *pseudo* from 1610 to 2019. Secondly, the *fra\_mixed\_2012* corpus, available on the *Leipzig Corpora Collection – Wortschatz*, composed of various texts (from newspapers, webcrawls, etc.), returned 9,582 tokens of *pseudo* and *pseudos*, from which we retrieved the first 200 tokens of each form. This corpus also



allowed us to extract a list of 1,370 words composed on the scheme *pseudo\** or *pseudo-\**<sup>11</sup>. Thirdly, we found 121,673 tokens of *pseudo* (excluding *pseudonyme*) in the French Web 2017 Corpus (*frTenTen17*), from which we retrieved a random sample of 400 tokens and a list of 997 words composed on the scheme *pseudo\** or *pseudo-\**. As expected, the results in these corpora and databases contained some noise, since *pseudo(-)* can be used to designate, by truncation, a *pseudonym*, which was manually eliminated and relevant tokens were not considered in the analysis.

For Greek, we also consulted three corpora: in the first place, we used the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) to register the initial uses of *pseudo(-)*, diachronically speaking, as already mentioned in 2.2 above, but we do not further exploit in this paper the tokens found in this base (see Fotiadou et al. forthcoming). For Modern Greek, we used the Greek Web 2014 (*elTenTen14*) corpus, where our searches were limited to creations with  $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta$ - *psevð*- (n=556) or  $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\tau$ - *pseft*- (n=665). We finally exploited some examples from a broadly used corpus of written speech (various genres), the Hellenic National Corpus of Institute for Languages and Speech Processing, where searches for  $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta$ - *psevð*- (n=64) or  $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\tau$ - *pseft*- (n=40) returned very few example formations.

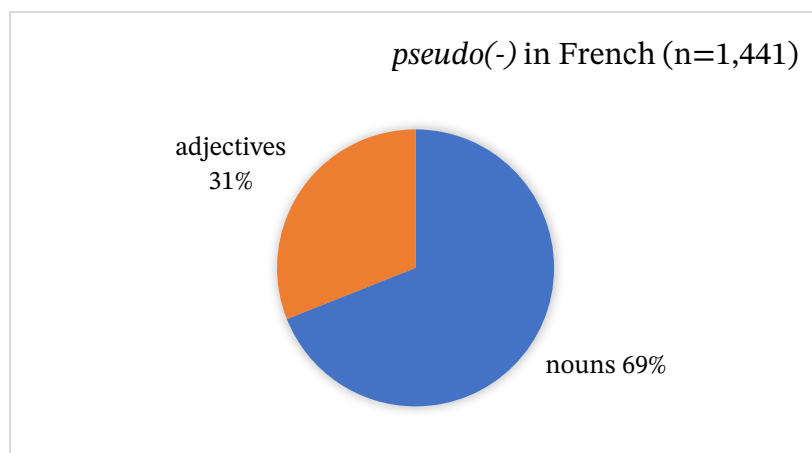
### 3.2 Distribution

As far as the distribution of X (in *pseudo(-)X*) is concerned, snippets extracted from the corpora show a clear-cut tendency for *pseudo(-)* to be attached to nouns in both languages. Nevertheless, we cannot provide reliable statistics for French (especially for *frTenTen17* and *Wortschatz*) due to the many incorrect annotations. Adjectives related to specialized domains (medicine, architecture, art, terms that designate an era, a period) are also quite frequent<sup>12</sup> (*pseudo-bulbair* ‘pseudo-bulbar’, *pseudo historique* ‘pseudo-historical’, *pseudo-gothique* ‘pseudo-gothic’, *pseudo-classique* ‘pseudo-classical’). In the literature corpus *Frantext*, *pseudo(-)* is used with nouns almost twice as much as with adjectives (Fig. 1). In French, combinations with adverbs could be conceivable but are not attested in our

<sup>11</sup> Strings used to extract the hits.

<sup>12</sup> For *TenTen* web corpora, see the statistics in Van Goethem, Norde & Masini (2021/under review): high proportion of clippings (19,2%), majority of nouns (32%) followed by adjectives (ca. 12%).

corpora (nor accepted by native speakers of French<sup>13</sup>), except for 12 tokens of *pseudo-aléatoirement* derived from the lexicalized adjective *pseudo-aléatoire* ‘pseudo-randomized’.

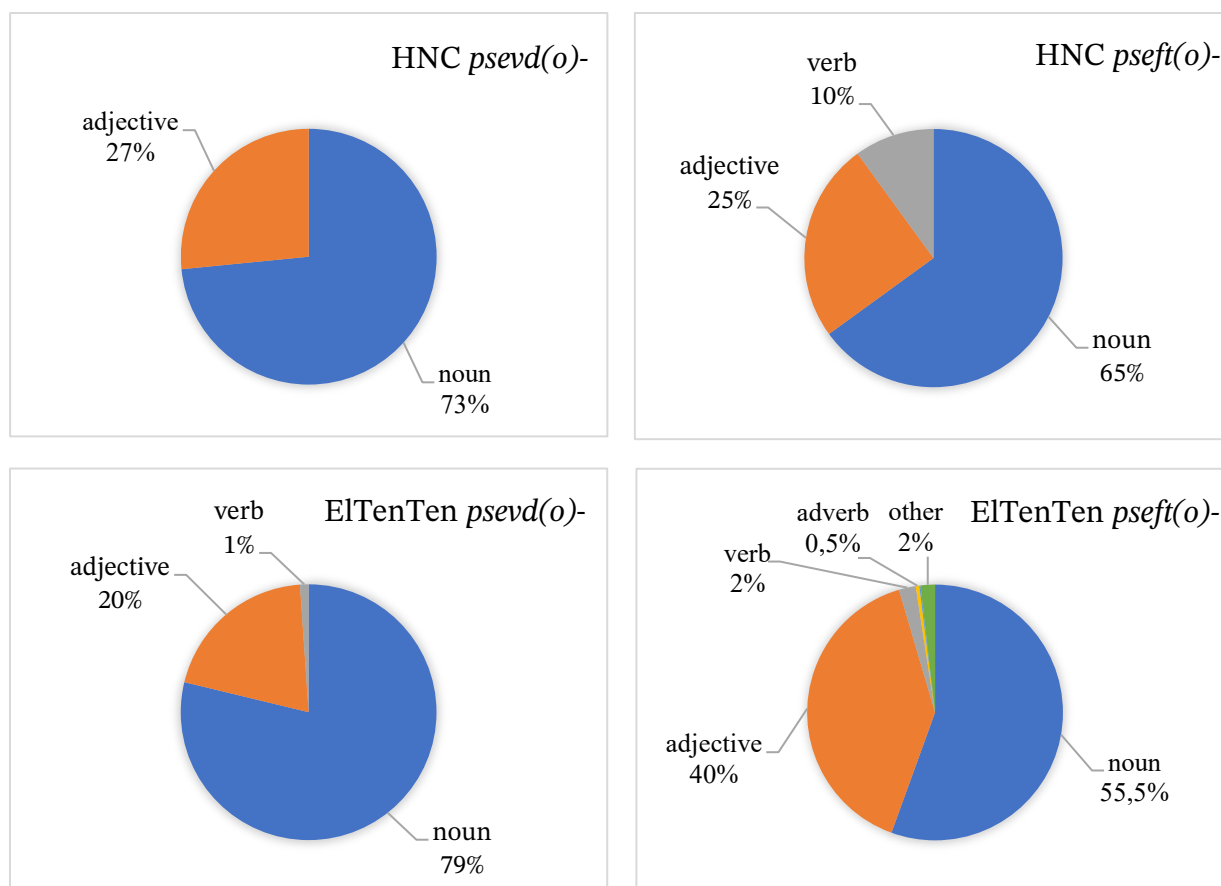


**Fig. 1:** Distribution of *pseudo(-)* in French in Frantext

On the other hand, the distribution of *pseudo(-)* (noticeably *pseft(-)*) in Greek is very rich (see Fig. 2). It can combine with nouns (*ψευτο επιχειρήσεις* psefto epixirisis ‘pseudo enterprises’, *ψευδο αδιακρισία* psefto adiakisia ‘pseudo indiscretion/intrusiveness’), adjectives (as in *ψευδοδημοκρατικός* pseftodimokratikós ‘pseudodemocratic’, *ψευδογοτθικός* pseftogothikós ‘pseudogothic’, *ψευδορομαντικός* pseftoromantikós ‘pseudoromantic’, *ψευδοβυζαντινός* pseftovizantinós ‘pseudo-byzantine’), verbs<sup>14</sup> (*ψευτοπαραπονιέμαι* pseftoparaponiéme ‘to pretend to complain/to complain a bit’, *ψευτογκρινιάζω* pseftogriniázō ‘to grumble a bit’, *ψευδο αρνούμαι* psefto arnúme ‘pseudo deny’), adverbs (*γράφω ψευτορομαντικά* gráfico pseftoromandiká ‘to write in a pseudo romantic manner’, *ψευτο ήρεμα* psefto írema ‘in a pseudo cool way’), interjections (*Άσε τα ψευτοάχ σου τώρα* ase ta pseftoáx su tora ‘leave now your false suffering’) and pronouns (*ψευτοεγώ*, pseftoegó ‘pseudo-I’).

<sup>13</sup> We used a small sample of informants (n=10), who provided us grammaticality judgment regarding the well-formedness of a set of examples with *pseudo(-)* which we no further discuss.

<sup>14</sup> All data were cleared and annotated. *Psefto(-)* is by far less compatible with verbs than *psefto(-)*. We found few tokens of verbs such as *ψευδοσυντηρώ* pseftosindiró ‘pseudo conserve’ or *ψευδογεμίζω* pseftojemízo ‘pseudo fill’ where *psefto(-)* has an evaluative value.



**Fig. 2:** Distribution of *pseudo(-)* in corpora of Modern Greek

Combinations with verbs are a very interesting phenomenon that needs to be thoroughly described. This kind of combination, even if conceivable in French, does not seem to occur. For instance, if one says in French something like *Je pseudo-dors* ‘I pseudo-sleep’, we may easily understand the implied meaning, even if it is not attested in naturally occurring data. On the other hand, when one says in Greek *ψευτοκοιμάμαι* *pseftokimáme* ‘I pseudo-sleep’, we understand either something like ‘I am sleeping but in a non-qualitative way’ (because my sleep is disturbed or because I know that I have to wake up soon, etc.) or ‘I am dozing’ (‘I do not really sleep’, the speaker is at the beginning of the activity of sleeping).<sup>15</sup> In (1), *(ψευτο)κολυμπήσαμε* *(psefto)kolimbísame* ‘we pseudo-swam’ means either that the speaker and his friends did swim, but not enough, not for a long time or that they just floated (what they did cannot be called swimming strictly speaking). Accordingly, *(ψευτο)ψαρέψει* *(psefto)psarépsi* ‘(had) pseudo-fished’ signifies either that they went fishing but they caught no fish (or just a few) or that the activity cannot be called *fishing* because the

<sup>15</sup> Verbal aspect is also to be considered.

appropriate equipment was missing. In any case, the *pseudo-activity* took place, but its quality is depreciated:

- (1) ξέρω, είναι όμως εκπληκτική κι σ'ένα παρθένο μέρος! Εμένα μου θύμισε τα Φαλάσαρνα της Κρήτης! Πέρσι το καλοκαίρι **(ψευτο)κολυμπήσαμε** εκεί [οικογενειακώς] σε επίσκεψη μας στην περιοχή όπου η παρέα είχε **(ψευτο)ψαρέψει** κιόλας. (epanenosi.com)

kséro, íne ómos ekpliktikí ki s'ένα parthéno mérós! Eména mu thímise ta Falásarna tis Kritis! Pérsi to kalokéri **(psefto)kolimbísame** eki (ikoγeniakós) se epískepsi mas stin perioxí ópu i paréa íxe **(psefto)psarépsi** kiólas.

'I know, but it's amazing even in a virgin place! It reminded me of Falassarna in Crete! Last summer we **(pseudo)swam** there [as a family] on a visit to the area where the group had even **(pseudo)fished**.'

As Efthymiou (2017b: 5) pointed out, in the Greek verbal domain,

*psefto-* appears frequently with verbs denoting activity [...] and indicates that the process in question is performed with less effort than expected. In addition to expressing the speaker's attitude towards the event in question, verb formations with *psefto-* can also express event internal pluractionality [...].

#### 4. What kind of categorization for *pseudo(-)*?

*Pseudo(-)X*, as already suggested (Section 2), always implies categorization; it presupposes a comparison between what it designates and an expression X, and it consists of an evaluation of the categorial adequacy between what *pseudo(-)X* designates and the category X itself. This evaluation is negatively polarized, i.e., it focuses on features of difference and deviation from the category (see the term of *disproximation*; Cappelle, Daugs & Hartmann 2023). Thus, the referent of *pseudo(-)X* (where X is a noun) deviates in one way or another from X.

In what follows, we first present the three general types of categorization triggered by *pseudo(-)* (4.1–4.3)<sup>16</sup> and we next associate them to the types of readings they receive along with the X's type noun which participates in the expression (Section 5).

<sup>16</sup> In this section, we present one of the possible interpretations of *pseudo(-)X* out of context: the same examples are also examined in context (Section 5) in order to highlight the different readings.

4.1 *Pseudo(-)X* looks like an X but is not an X

*Pseudo(-)X* denotes another category, notably in many denominations (see *pseudo-kyste* ψευδοκφστη psevdokísti ‘pseudocyst’ and commented examples (2), (5), (6)) or in occasional designations<sup>17</sup> (as ψευδομετάξι psevdometáksi ‘pseudo silk’, *pseudo-havane* ‘pseudo-Havana cigar’, *pseudo-banquise* ‘pseudo-ice pack’, *pseudo-Mozart* ‘pseudo-Mozart’). Artefacts are the best candidates as *pseudo(-)* denotes forgery or counterfeiting (*pseudo-iPad*). There is always at least one objective (i.e., semantic) feature which allows us to oppose X to *pseudo(-)X*: the deviations concern the semantic properties of X in such a way that *pseudo(-)X* does not satisfy the conditions of applicability of the denomination X as in (2)–(6):

- (2) A *pseudo-membrane* ‘pseudo-membrane’ looks like a membrane (is a membrane-like secretion) but is not a membrane. These are two different categories.
- (3) *Pseudo-Mozart* is not Mozart, but another composer who plays/composes like/in the style of Mozart.
- (4) A *pseudo-gestation* (lit. pseudo-pregnancy) ‘phantom pregnancy’ shows symptoms of gestation, but there is no baby in the end.
- (5) Ψευδο-ιστός psevdhoístós ‘pseudo-tissue’ is an artificial tissue made in a lab.
- (6) A *pseudo-mot/ψευδολέξη* psevdholéksi ‘pseudo-word’ has the form of a word but it lacks semantic content (it is not a linguistic sign; see speech therapist experiments: it follows the phonotactic rules of a language and is different from *non-words*, where specific violations are applied).<sup>18</sup>

In these commented examples, *pseudo(-)X* is objectively a ‘no X’, it is not part of the semantic extension of X. There is no subjective devaluation, but there are clear cases of non-inclusion in the category, although some similarities are shared (e.g., shape). The possible following glosses for these cases of non-inclusion leading to a clear interpretation of the examples can be applied:

<sup>17</sup> The same referent can receive two linguistic realizations: ‘church’ is a denomination vs. ‘the place of worship for Catholics’ is a designation (Kleiber 2001).

<sup>18</sup> See the term of “kin-categorization” (i.e., the creation of a new closely related category) used by Masini & Micheli (2020).

- *Pseudo(-)X* looks like an X but is not an X.
- It is a fake X (as in real fake, strictly speaking).
- It is an imitation of X, an artificial X, a forgery.
- It pretends to be X, but is not, it passes itself off as X.

When denominations are formed, *pseudo(-)X* can create in turn a category, X and *pseudo(-)X* can then be co-hyponyms. This is the case of ‘pseudo cyst’, which is an approved term to denote a type of pathology.

#### 4.2 *Pseudo(-)X* is included in the category X but is qualitatively depreciated

We now proceed with the discussion of a second type of categorization with *pseudo(-)*, which concerns what is known in the literature as *approximation* (see among others Mihatsch 2009). The approximation in question is mainly a subjective depreciative evaluation and, as such, relevant to pragmatic vagueness. *Pseudo(-)X* is objectively X but the speaker adds subjective judgement, and thus modality: if a real, actual *team supporter* is qualified as a *pseudo-supporter*, this means that the speaker judges that he is not a good exemplar of the category, he does not deserve to be called a *supporter*, as in (7); similar cases are included in (8)–(11):

- (7) A *pseudo-supporteur* ‘pseudo-supporter’ denotes a team supporter who is negatively evaluated by the speaker.
- (8) A *pseudo-mari* ‘pseudo-husband’ can be officially a husband but a failing one.
- (9) A *pseudo-enquête* ‘pseudo-investigation’ is an actual investigation (conducted by police officers or journalists, for instance), but the speaker considers it to have flaws, because it is based on approximations, innuendos, false allegations, etc.
- (10) *Ψευδο-δημοσιογράφος* *psevðo-ðimosiografos* ‘pseudo-journalist’ can be an official member of the order of journalists (with accreditations, etc.) but a bad one, one who is doing bad journalism.
- (11) *Ψευτο συγγραφέας* *psefto sigraféas* ‘pseudo writer/author’ can be an acknowledged author, but depreciated by the speaker.

Possible glosses for the commented examples (7)–(11) are provided:

- *Pseudo(-)X* is a non-exemplary X, it is a member considered as (negatively) deviant.
- *Pseudo(-)X* is a bad X, an X of poor quality, an X that does not fulfil its role, etc.

All these cases belong to the negative evaluation of a member of a category. This is by far what we would call *subjective (modal) categorization*. *Pseudo(-)X* is a non-prototypical or non-stereotypical X. It draws its value essentially from connotations, from additional features of X, or of a speaker's judgment. It behaves as a "derogatory marker" (Xydopoulos 2009) similarly to *psilo(-)*. *Pseudo(-)* exploits the vagueness not from a semantic point of view, but from the evaluative judgment on the connotations attached to X or compared to a prototype.

#### 4.3 Vagueness: Undecidable Categorization

In this third case, we are dealing with instances of undecidable categorization, i.e., occurrences where there is no more reason to think that *pseudo(-)X* is included in the category X than the opposite. Semantic vagueness meets here subjective vagueness: as *pseudo(-)* exploits the existence of borderline cases and underlines the negative side of X, it questions the very categorization of X. Contrary to what we exposed above, in undecidable categorization we lack objective features to oppose X to *pseudo(-)X*. It is then necessarily the speaker who decides whether *pseudo(-)X* belongs to the category of X or not.

This type of *pseudo(-)X* typically concerns controversial predicates about which we can argue at length: for instance, "what is love?", "what is poetry?" "who can be called an artist or an intelligent person, an expert, a seducer, etc.?" vs. "what is a tissue, a membrane, a Havana cigar, an iPad, etc.?" for which there are no objective borderline cases, as in (12) and (13):

(12) *Pseudo-liberté* 'pseudo-freedom', *pseudo-amour* 'pseudo-love'

(13) *Ψευδοποίηση* *psevðopiisi* 'pseudopoetry', *ψευτοδίλημμα* *psaftoðilima* 'pseudodilemma'

Possible gloss for these cases:

- *Pseudo(-)X* claims/is claimed to be X but could just as well be non-X.

We next present the distribution of noun types that enhance specific types of the three categorizations of *pseudo(-)X* and the readings they favor.

### 5. Types of nouns, types of categorization and types of readings

In this section, based on well-established nominal typologies (see Flaux & Van de Velde 2000; Huyghe 2015), we propose an interpretative prediction model for *pseudo(-)X*

depending both on the semantic and categorizing potentials of the X-noun and the semantic value associated to *pseudo(-)*.

## 5.1 One type of categorization, one type of reading

### 5.1.1 Categorial exclusion reading

There are only a few nouns that imply a single reading of *pseudo(-)X*, namely that *pseudo(-)X* does not belong to the X category.<sup>19</sup> *Pseudo(-)X* is a copy, an imitation (even if there may be also a depreciative value because of the counterfeit character). The category of X is clearly established. The nouns belonging to this class fall under the pattern seen in Section 4.1: *pseudo(-)X* looks like X but is not an X.<sup>20</sup>

Artefacts (especially with a brand name like *iPad*, *Havana*, *Panama*, *Nike*, etc.) tend to be the best candidates for categorial exclusion readings, as illustrated in (14)–(18):

- (14) *Le bout du havane, ou pseudo-havane, s'illumina et resplendit.* (Arnoux, *Double chance*, 1958)

‘The end of the Havana cigar, or **pseudo-Havana**, lit up and glowed.’

- (15) *Roubaud (...) arbore un pseudo-panama sous lequel il se croit très chic.* (Colette, *École*, 1900)

‘Roubaud (...) wears a **pseudo-panama** under which he thinks he is very chic.’

- (16) *οι μόνοι δυτικοί ανάμεσα σε καμιά τετρακοσαριά έγχρωμους συνταξιδιώτες με ψευτο-nike, φθαρμένα παπούτσια και κουρασμένα χαμόγελα.* (koel.gr)

*i móni ðitiki anámesa se kamiá tetrakosariá éxromus sintaksiðiótes me psefto-nike, ftharména papútsia ke kurazména xamójela.*

‘the only westerners among about four hundred colored travelers with **pseudo-Nike**, worn out shoes and tired smiles.’

<sup>19</sup> Some authors use the term *privative*. If by *privative* we mean that *pseudo(-)* deprives X from the category, this terminology can be also applied to our examples. But semantically speaking, *pseudo(-)* is also an evaluative marker. In this paper, we consider it as a hedge as stated in Section 2.

<sup>20</sup> The combination of *pseudo(-)* + adjective indicating historical periods or architectural styles is used to always signal categorial inadequacy. For instance, in the following example, the style of Saint Augustine’s church in Paris has a byzantine allure, it resembles byzantine art without being of it: (*L’eglise saint Augustin de style pseudo-byzantin s’inscrit dans les travaux d’Haussmann sous Napoléon III (...)*) ‘(The church of Saint Augustine) of **pseudo-Byzantine** style is part of the work of Haussmann under Napoleon III’ (<https://www.europexplor.com/visite-de-leglise-saint-augustin>).



- (17) *συνεχίζεις, πωλώνοντας τα (ψευδο-)μεταξωτά σου (και) σε πάμφθινη, μάλιστα, τιμή.*  
(blockspot.cz)  
sinexízis polóndas ta **(psevðo-)metaksotá** su (ke) se pámfθini, málista, timí.  
‘you continue, selling your **(pseudo-)silks** at a bargain price.’
- (18) *Στον όροφο υπάρχουν και ψευτοπαράθυρα ιδίως στα αρχοντικά, καθαρά για λόγους διακόσμησης.* (pblogs.gr)  
Ston órofo ipárxun ke **pseftoparáθira** ιδίως sta arxondiká, kathará ja lóγus θiakózmisis.  
‘On the floor there are also **pseudo windows**, especially in the mansions, purely for decorative reasons.’

It is interesting to note that in (14) the speaker is shown unable to decide whether the referent *is* or *is not* a real Havana cigar, but (s)he knows that there is a semantic, a categorial difference between X and *pseudo(-)X* (“observational vagueness” in Raffman 2011).

Proper names, other than brand names, especially artists’ or politicians’ proper names are also good candidates for categorial exclusion reading, as shown in (19) and (20):

- (19) [...] *le pseudo-Mozart* signé Strauss, a encore, pour beaucoup, l’air [...] pas sérieux et légèrement pervers [...] (Le Nouvel Observateur, 2 February 1976).  
‘the **pseudo-Mozart** signed Strauss, still looks [...] not serious and slightly perverse [...]’
- (20) *ο Παπανδρέου βγαίνει σαν νέος (ψευτο-)Μεταξάς ενός νέου Γενναίου ΟΧΙ και λέει: Εγώ ήμουν αποφασισμένος να το πάω στα άκρα [...]* (mypharm.gr)  
o Papanðréu vγéni san néos **(psefto-)Metaksás** enós néu jenéu OXI ke léi: Egó ímun apofasizménos na to páo sta ákra [...]  
‘Papandreou comes out as the new **(pseudo-)Metaxas** of a new Brave NO and says: I was determined to take it to the extreme [...]’

Noticeably, the referential uniqueness of proper names in (19) and (20) leaves no doubt about the inadequacy of the application of the proper name to the referent.

### 5.1.2 Devaluative or subjective reading

Due to their very wide semantic extension and their very low intension,<sup>21</sup> general nouns (including some nouns called in the French literature *noms d’idéaliétés* ‘ideality nouns’;

<sup>21</sup> “Intension” indicates the internal content of a term or concept that constitutes its formal definition, while “extension” indicates its range of applicability by naming the particular objects that it denotes.

Flaux & Stosic 2015; Stosic & Flaux 2021) and some shell nouns (Schmid 2000), when associated with *pseudo(-)* drive the categorization towards category membership and the reading towards a negative qualitative evaluation (devalued belonging). In other words, general nouns are semantically underspecified but they are not necessarily vague predicates. Despite their restricted semantic intension, they draw the boundaries of the category in a clear way.

If X is considered an idea, a problem, an element or an argument, it necessarily belongs to the attributed category of ideas, problems, etc., and *pseudo(-)* can only make a negative axiological evaluation. To put it briefly, what else can an idea be, without being an idea? As shown in (21) below, a ‘pseudo-idea’ is still an idea, but maybe bad, confusing, or difficult to apply. Similarly, a ‘pseudo-problem’ (22)–(23) or a ‘pseudo argument’ (24) and even a ‘pseudo-dialogue’ (25) cannot be conceived otherwise:

- (21) *L’idée d’une abolition de tout est donc destructive d’elle-même, inconcevable ; c’est une **pseudo-idée**, un mirage de représentation* (Bergson, *Deux sources*, 1932)

‘The idea of an abolition of everything is thus destructive of itself, inconceivable; it is a **pseudo-idea**, a mirage of representation’

- (22) *Il y a là un **pseudo-problème** ; si la conversion est pensée, c’est parce que l’expérience nous en fournit des exemples ; il est impossible de se poser ici un problème à proprement parler critique.* (Marcel, *Journal*, 1914)

‘There is a **pseudo-problem** here; if conversion is thought of, it is because experience provides us with examples of it; it is impossible to pose here a problem properly speaking critical.’

- (23) *Ακόμα, η αξιολόγηση των δράσεων μιας επιχείρησης με ωφελιμιστικά κριτήρια οδηγεί σε αναπάντητα (**ψευδο**)προβλήματα, του τύπου αν είναι ηθικά θεμιτό ή όχι μια επιχείρηση να απολύσει 1.000 εργατές σε μια πόλη της χώρας της και να εγκατασταθεί (με σκοπό τη μείωση του κόστους) σε μια άλλη χώρα προσφέροντας εργασία σε 5.000 ή και περισσότερους εργατές που ζουν [...] (ethics.gr)*

Ακόμα, I aksiolójisi ton d̄raseon mias epixírissi me ofelimistiká kritéria ōdijí se anapándita (**psev̄do**)provlímata, tu típu an íne íthiká themitó i óxi mia epixírissi na apolísi 1.000 ergátes se mia póli tis chóras tis ke na egatastaθí (me skopó ti míosi tu kóstus) se mia áli chóra prospérondas eryasía se 5.000 i ke perisóterus eryátes pu zun [...]

‘Still, the evaluation of the actions of an enterprise with utilitarian criteria leads to unanswered (**pseudo**)problems, such as whether or not it is morally legitimate for an enterprise to lay off 1,000 workers in one city of its country and move (in order to reduce costs) to another country offering work to 5,000 or more workers living in [...]’

- (24) *Comme ces **pseudo arguments** qui sciemment mettent en perspectives le nucléaire avec des champs d'éoliennes.* (rss.feedsportal.com)

'Like those **pseudo arguments** that knowingly put nuclear power in perspective with wind farms.'

- (25) *Με απάτη έγιναν **ψευτο-“διάλογοι”** με τις άμεσα πληττόμενες κοινωνικές ομάδες, όταν οι βασικές αποφάσεις ήταν ήδη ειλημμένες.* (blogspot.gr)

Με απάτη έγιναν **psefto-“διάλογι”** με τις άμεσα plitómenes kinonikés omádes, ótan i vasikés apofásis ítan íði iliménes.

'**Pseudo-“dialogues”** with the directly affected social groups, when the basic decisions had already been taken, were made by fraud.'

To sum up, in (21)–(25) *pseudo(-)X* belongs to the category, but it is a negatively evaluated exemplar.

### 5.1.3 Undecidable (vague) reading

When associated with inherently vague predicates (Williamson 1975), that is predicates whose referential extension is vague, *pseudo(-)* signals that the referent is a borderline case of the category. Thus, the membership is logically undecidable. *Pseudo(-)* surfs on the vague, so the speaker's position is necessarily subjective and negatively orientated. *Pseudo(-)* does not solve the problem of the given interpretation; on the contrary, it focuses on the vague and more particularly on the devaluing aspect of *pseudo(-)X*.

The undecidable reading is mostly triggered when *pseudo(-)* combines with vague predicates (affects, qualities, properties, human status names), as illustrated in (26)–(30):

- (26) *Au tout début d'une vie amoureuse, nous rencontrons – et cela est difficilement avouable et acceptable – ce que j'appelle les **pseudo-amours**. Amours de besoin: je lui dis « Je t'aime » et cela veut surtout dire « Aime-moi ». Amours de peur: je lui crie « Je t'aime » et cela veut dire « Ne me quitte pas ».* (psychologies.com)

'At the very beginning of a love life, we encounter - and this is difficult to admit and to accept - what I call **pseudo-love**. Needy loves: I tell her “I love you” and that mostly means “Love me”. Fear loves: I shout “I love you” and that means “Don't leave me”.'

- (27) *Et des coups de force successifs vont fragiliser davantage ce peuple affamé par des **pseudos intellos** sans conscience des souffrances du peuple.* (france24.com)

'And successive coups de force will further weaken this starving people by **pseudo intellectuals** with no awareness of the suffering of the people.'

- (28) *Vous avez un talent indéniable, et par conséquent vous méritez amplement d’être considéré comme un artiste, un vrai, pas comme ces **pseudos artistes** de pacotille qui vivent sur le travail des autres.* (simondaval.book.fr)

‘You have an undeniable talent, and therefore you deserve to be considered an artist, a real one, not like these **pseudo artists** who live on the work of others.’

- (29) *ήσαν καταραμμένες, ως τάχα δαιμονικές ψευδαισθήσεις, ενός νέου “σύμπαντος” που απαιτούσε στο εξής την φυσική εξόντωση των “απίστων” στο όνομα του ψευτο-“Θεού” της ψευτο-“Αγάπης” [...] (ysee.gr)*

ίσαν kataraménes, os tácha ðemonikés pseuðesþísis, enós néu “símbandos” pu apetúse sto eksís tin fisikí eksónodosi ton “apíston” sto ónoma tu psefto-“Θeú” tis **psefto-“Aγápis”** [...]

‘(they) were cursed, as allegedly demonic illusions, of a new “universe” that henceforth demanded the physical extermination of “infidels” in the name of the pseudo-“God” of **pseudo-“Love”** [...]

- (30) *Ίσως όχι ο Δημητράς προσωπικά, αλλά έχει συμβεί αυτό με άλλους (ψευτο) διανοούμενους σε πάμπολλες περιπτώσεις σε όλες τις χώρες του κόσμου και σε όλα τα κράτη.* (ndimou.gr)

ίσος όχι ο ðimitrás prosopiká, alá éxi simví aftó me álus (**psefto**)ðianóúmenus se pámboles periptósis se óles tis xóres tu kózmou ke se óla ta kráti.

‘Maybe not Dimitras himself, but it has happened with other (**pseudo**) **intellectuals** on numerous occasions in all countries of the world and in all states.’

Examples (26)–(30) include occurrences, where the writers consider themselves incapable of drawing the boundaries of X<sup>22</sup>, as it is difficult to say where the concept of ‘love’ (26), (29), ‘intellectual’ (27), (30) or ‘artist’ (28) begins and where it ends.

## 5.2 Ambiguous cases: Several categorizations, several readings

In this section we are concerned with nouns for which *pseudo(-)* – out of context – can target both category inclusion and category exclusion. The categories are clearly established, the opposable criteria can then be objective (*pseudo(-)X* is not an X), but they can also be subjective and play on connotations (*pseudo(-)X* is an X, but a bad example). In this case, the context makes it possible to know what type of categorization is involved (as demonstrated in (31)–(38) below and further discussed in what follows).

<sup>22</sup> Note that in (28) the writer explicitly points towards a no clear cut between a real and a not real (fake) artist and he uses the double hedging *real/pseudo(-)*.

Thus, a third scenario may occur: in the absence of an enlightening context, *pseudo(-)X* can give rise to an ambiguous reading. Hence, there are potentially two types of categorization,

- *Pseudo(-)X* is an X.
- *Pseudo(-)X* is not an X.

and three types of possible readings:

- *Pseudo(-)X* does not belong to the category.
- *Pseudo(-)X* belongs to the category but is subjectively modalized.
- It is not known whether *pseudo(-)X* belongs to the category or not.

The trend<sup>23</sup> in our corpora is towards depreciative readings, i.e., subjectively modalized Xs. Human nouns and human collective nouns referring to institutions are the main types appearing in configurations raising several categorizations and several readings (see among others the French and Greek equivalents of *committee*, *team*, *association*, *organization*, *husband*, *tourist*, *supporter*, etc.) illustrated indicatively by ‘team’ in (31)–(32):

- (31) *Après la pitoyable défaite des Bleus face au Mexique, jeudi, Raymond Domenech ne trouvait pas de mots. La lecture de la presse du jour devrait grandement aider le sélectionneur à qualifier la bouillie de football offerte par sa pseudo-équipe. Le foutage de gueule est terminé, semblent dire les médias français. « Les imposteurs », titre L’Equipe (maxifoot.fr)*

‘After the pitiful defeat of Les Bleus against Mexico on Thursday, Raymond Domenech was at a loss for words. Reading the press of the day should greatly help the coach to qualify the soccer mush offered by his **pseudo-team**. The French media seem to be saying that the bullshit is over. “The imposters”, headlines L’Equipe’

- (32) *Il réalise son premier film, Sri Lanka National Handball Team, tourné en 2007 au Sri Lanka en langue cingalaise (et en Allemagne), d’après l’histoire vraie d’une pseudo-équipe de handball srilankaise qui s’est rendue en Bavière en septembre 2004 pour y disputer un tournoi avant de disparaître au bout de trois matches. (wikipedia.org)*

‘He made his first film, Sri Lanka National Handball Team, shot in 2007 in Sri Lanka in the Sinhalese language (and in Germany), based on the true story of a Sri Lanka handball **pseudo-team** that went to Bavaria in September 2004 to play a tournament before disappearing after three matches.’

---

<sup>23</sup> A descriptive analysis of our data is beyond the scope of this paper due to space limitations; thus, this claim seems rather impressionist.

*Pseudo(-)équipe* ‘pseudo-team’ out of context can designate a real team but of poor quality, a fake team pretending to be a real team, or leave the interpretation undetermined. We are dealing here mostly with context-dependent occasional uses. ‘Pseudo-team’ in (31) is in fact the official French football team whose performance during the World Cup was criticized. In (32), it is obvious that the writer argues about a fake team “created” for the needs of a film production.

In the same vein, given the semantic properties of these nouns, there are cases where ‘pseudo-tourist/husband/supporter’ are effectively tourists, husbands, supporters: ‘supporters’ in (33) are counted in the ranks of the followers but in reality, they support Friedrich von Hayek by opportunism and do not behave like honorable supporters; in (34) the girl is officially married, but not to a man, i.e., not following the norms, or something like that:

- (33) *Μαζί τους, αυτές τις συνέπειες, δεν θα τις αποφύγουν, ούτε οι σύγχρονοι Τσολάκογλου και Λογοθετόπουλοι, ούτε οι νεοφιλελεύθεροι (ψευδο)οπαδοί του Friedrich von Hayek, οι οποίοι κατήντησαν να συμπεριφέρονται ως ευκαιριακοί και εκ πεποιθήσεως, νεοκατοχικοί “κουκουλοφόροι” καταδότες της τρόικας των δανειστών.* (blogspot.gr)

*Mazí tus, aftés tis sinépies, ðen tha tis apofígyn, úte i síxroni Tsolákoylu ke Logothetópuli, úte i neofileléftheri (psevðo)opaðí tu Friedrich von Hayek, i opíi katíndisan na simberiféronde os efkeriakí ke ek pepithíseos, neokatoxikí “kukulofóri” kataðótes tis troíikas ton ðanistón.*

‘With them, these consequences will not be avoided, neither by the modern Tsolakoglou and Logothetopoulos, nor by the neoliberal **(pseudo)supporters** of Friedrich von Hayek, who have become accustomed to behave as opportunistic and by conviction, neophytes “hooded” informers of the lenders’ troika.’

- (34) *Il est même arrivé que la jeune fille fût assez innocente pour épouser une invertie, et pour vivre longtemps avec son **pseudo-mari** sans se douter qu’elle n’avait pas affaire à un homme.* (Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe*. II, 1949)

‘It even happened that the girl was innocent enough to marry an invert, and to live for a long time with her **pseudo husband** without suspecting that she was not dealing with a man.’

Similarly, we could cite a great number of instances where *pseudo(-)X* is not X, however, we restrict here to indicative examples as (35), where *pseudos touristes* ‘pseudo tourists’ pass off as tourists but are illegal workers, (36) where the man pretends to be the

husband, i.e., he plays a role and (37) where previous context indicates that it is a story about identity theft:

- (35) *Ils découvrent que les **pseudos touristes** sont surtout venus pour couper des ananas pour cinquante euros par jour.* (clicanoo.com)

‘They discover that the **pseudo-tourists** have mostly come to cut pineapples for fifty euros a day.’

- (36) *Des journalistes new-yorkais se sont dit : « On va les avoir. On va prouver que ce n’est qu’un coup publicitaire. » Ils ont trouvé une femme enceinte et lui ont fait répéter un rôle, accompagnée de son **pseudo-mari**. Ce dernier est arrivé et a dit : « Ma femme est enceinte, mais elle veut voir Psychose. Laissez-nous entrer, le film a commencé s’il vous plaît. »* (wikipedia.org)

‘Some New York reporters said, “We’ll get them. We’ll prove it’s just a publicity stunt.” They found a pregnant woman and had her rehearse a part, accompanied by her **pseudo-husband**. He came in and said, “My wife is pregnant, but she wants to see Psycho. Please let us in, the movie has started.”’

- (37) *Φοβούμενη πως ο **ψευτο-συγγενής** μπορεί να θέλει να τη βλάψει, η οικογένεια του Symansky περίμενε τρία χρόνια πριν τολμήσει τελικά να επικοινωνήσει με τις αρχές τον περασμένο Απρίλιο.* (flashnews.gr)

Fovúmeni pos o **psafto-sigenís** borí na théli na ti vlápsi, i ikojénia tu Symansky perímene tría chrónia prin tolmísi teliká na epikinonísi me tis arxés ton perazménó Aprílio.

‘Fearing that the **pseudo-relative** might want to harm her, Symansky’s family waited three years before finally daring to contact authorities last April.’

Finally, notice that we cannot know whether we are talking about a real or a fake husband, tourist, etc. when the context is not informative enough as in (38)–(39):

- (38) *Je m’inclinai seulement devant le **pseudo-mari** qui avait l’air fort contrarié, n’avait pas dit un mot, et trouvait cette conversation grotesque* (Havet, *Journal 1919-1924*, 2005)

‘I only bowed to the **pseudo-husband** who looked very upset, did not say a word, and found this conversation grotesque’

- (39) *Δεν έφταναν όλα τα άλλα, της βγήκε και ζηλιάρης ο **ψευτοσύζυγος***<sup>24</sup>. (Z. Λαπινό, *Η Ελένη και το τέρας*, 2014)

Den éftanan óla ta ála, tis vjíke ke ziliáris o **psaftosízuyos**.

‘As if everything wasn’t enough, her **pseudo-husband** turned out to be jealous as well.’

<sup>24</sup> In Greek, to clearly mean *fake*, the unambiguous adjective *ψεύτικος* pséftikos (litt. ‘false’, ‘fake’) is used as in *Ψεύτικο ραντεβού με τον ψεύτικο σύζυγό σου; (Pséftiko randevú me ton pséftiko síziyó su? ‘A fake appointment with your fake husband?’; OpenSubtitles2018.v3.).* In (39), the speaker considers to be married to a ‘pseudo husband’ because of their inexistent love life.

As briefly demonstrated, all three readings of *pseudo(-)* are available with the nouns discussed in this section and, most of the times, the context helps us decide upon their specification.

## 6. Discussion

*Pseudo(-)*, both in Greek and French, operates on the semantic as well as on the pragmatic dimension of utterances and a tendency towards devaluation is observed. It signals above all a “disproximation”, a gap between *pseudo(-)X* (a comparator) and a compare X (Treis & Vanhove 2017) which, depending on the semantic and categorial potential of the noun, offers a more or less wide range of interpretative possibilities. From this point of view, we have argued that *pseudo(-)* is not an expression that makes a categorization fuzzy. It can clearly be used to assert a categorial exclusion on the basis of a semantic mismatch, it can be used to negatively evaluate a member of a category, and it can finally signal an exemplar that is considered to be a borderline case of a vague category.

Even if semantic and pragmatic dimensions are hard to tease apart, what seems to prevail is that *pseudo(-)* is a vague term itself, in the sense of semantically underspecified, making in many contexts the interpretation of *pseudo(-)X* undecidable or oscillating between devalued belonging and not belonging. As such, one cannot decide in advance whether the vagueness is “intentional” or not (Voghera 2012). The choice of the X noun in the right context of *pseudo(-)* proves to be relevant as it can specify *pseudo(-)*'s semantic orientation. Thus, the semantic features of the noun allow us to build on a predictive model towards untangling propositional content and illocutionary force of *pseudo(-)X*. So, although *pseudo(-)* is a hedge, it is not forced to inject vagueness into the *pseudo(-)X* sequence. It is not even forced to introduce subjectivity into the discourse. It is, however, sensitive to the element X on which it focuses. The model we presented is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to show that it is possible, on the basis of the semantic and categorial properties of elements X, to understand when the scope of *pseudo(-)* is semantic (see for instance the ‘*pseudo ice floe*’ on which we find a bear in a zoo that is objectively *not an ice floe* or a ‘*pseudo husband*’ who can designate someone who is not objectively the



husband) and when it is pragmatic (see a ‘*pseudo husband*’ who can designate a husband but subjectively depreciated), or both.

Still, much work remains to be done. We need to analyze the interesting double marking on *pseudo(-)* (i.e., *pseudo(-)* in quotation marks or parenthesis: “pseudo”-scientist or (pseudo)-scientist) that could reveal a form of linguistic insecurity towards its status, as shown in Section 2, along with an indication of a subjective designation. More research must be also conducted by examining in a systematic and quantitative way the pairing between *pseudo(-)* and X examples appearing in the second position of the structure in order to reveal fine-grained affinities, recurrences and preferences of *pseudo(-)* and to provide statistics about the distribution of the readings. For instance, our corpus data do not include general nouns like *thing, action, movement, noise, smell, gesture*, etc. in the X position. If we considered examples like ‘pseudo-noise’ or ‘pseudo-odor’, the following questions would arise: what can sound like a noise without being a noise? Can we devalue the quality of a noise, of a smell, etc.? At this point, we could not think of something that would justify the presence of *pseudo(-)*.

Besides, one way of studying *pseudo(-)* and conceiving vagueness as the result of the (im)possibility to distinguish between what is true or false is to compare it with expressions which, by different ways, convey similar effects, that is blurring the boundaries of another linguistic expression when this is permitted by the noun. For example, in Greek, *miso(-)* ‘semi’, *koutso(-)* ‘limping/lame’, *psilo(-)* ‘thin/a bit’ can be in competition with *psefto(-)/psevdo(-)* (see Tsamadou-Jacobberger 2009; Xydopoulos 2009). In French (Gerhard-Krait et al. 2023), *simili(-)* is used in a quasi-complementary distribution with *pseudo(-)* (see also Masini & Micheli 2020 for Italian).

Specifically for Greek, we have to study in depth *pseudo(-)* associated to verbs and to examine some interesting cases where *pseudo(-)* is not fully grammaticalized, like *psefto-ponirákias* ‘pseudo-cunning’ mentioned in Section 2.2. We suggested that a possible explanation would be that *pseudo(-)* has been reanalyzed as an evaluative (depreciative) adjective (in contrast to what appears as a privative prefix).

Finally, we would like to stress that our study contributed to disentangle, among all that can generate vagueness in language, what is semantic vagueness (intrinsic) from what is pragmatic vagueness (the set of subjective modalities emanating from observational

vagueness, and from qualitative judgment). Thus, the semantic dimension (i.e., the speaker's intention plays no role here) must be taken into account along with the pragmatic one (i.e., judgment, subjectivity). The patent confusion between pragmatic vagueness and semantic vagueness led to the overpowering character of the prototype theory. Instead, we insisted in this paper on the necessity of considering the rigid vs. extensible nature of noun categories and thus the possibility of the categorial membership or inclusion of *pseudo(-)X* in the category X by verifying the capacity of X to constitute a category that can be grasped by approximation or not.

## References

- Amiot, Dany & Dejan Stosic. 2015. Morphologie évaluative et aspectuelle en français et en serbe. *Lexique* 22. 111–142.
- Amiot, Dany & Dejan Stosic. 2022. Evaluative Morphology: From evaluation to approximation and semi-categorization. In Hélène Vassiliadou & Marie Lammert (eds.), *A Crosslinguistic Perspective on Clear and Approximate Categorization*, 53–94. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Anastassiadi-Symeonidi, Anna & Asimakis Fliatouras. 2019. Το λόγιο επίπεδο της σύγχρονης Νέας Ελληνικής: Συγχρονικές και διαχρονικές τάσεις [The literary register in Modern Greek: Diachronic and synchronic perspectives]. In Asimakis Fliatouras & Anna Anastassiadi-Symeonidi (eds.), *Το λόγιο επίπεδο στη σύγχρονη Νέα Ελληνική* [The literary register in Modern Greek], 15–48. Athens: Patakis.
- Babiniotis, Georges. 1969. *Ο δια συνθέσεως υποκορισμός εις την ελληνικήν*. [Diminution in Greek compounding]. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Athens.
- Baeskow, Heike. 2004. *Lexical Properties of Selected Non-native Morphemes of English*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Cappelle, Bert, Robert Daus & Stefan Hartmann. 2023. The English privative prefixes *near-*, *pseudo-* and *quasi-*: Approximation and ‘disproximation’. *Zeitschrift für Wortbildung/Journal of Word Formation* 7(1). 52–75.
- Corbin, Danielle. 1987. *Morphologie dérivationnelle et structuration du lexique*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Devos, Filip. 2003. Semantic vagueness and lexical polyvalence. *Studia Linguistica* 57(3). 121–141.
- Efthymiou, Angeliki. 2017a. Η έκφραση της επίτασης και του μετριασμού στα αξιολογικά ρήματα της Νέας Ελληνικής. [The expression of intensity and attenuation within evaluative verbs in Modern Greek]. *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 37. 227–238.
- Efthymiou, Angeliki. 2017b. Intensification and deintensification in Modern Greek verbs. *Lexis-Journal in English Lexicology* 10. DOI: [10.4000/lexis.1089](https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.1089).
- Efthymiou, Angeliki. 2019. Οι σημασίες των μετριαστικών ρημάτων στη Νέα Ελληνική. Ένα σύνθετο παζλ. [Meanings of diminutive Greek verbs. A complex puzzle]. In Grammatikí Karla, Io Manolossou & Nikolaos Pentelidis (eds.), *Lexeis. In honour of Christina Basea-Bezentakou*, 69–84. Athens: Kardamitsa.

- Flaux, Nelly & Danièle Van de Velde. 2000. *Les noms en français*. Paris: Ophrys.
- Flaux, Nelly & Dejan Stosic. 2015. Pour une classe des noms d'idéalité. *Langue française* 185. 43–57.
- Fotiadou, Georgia, Francine Gerhard-Krait, Marie Lammert & Hélène Vassiliadou. Forthcoming. *Pseudo(-) in Greek: A morpheme in categorization, approximation and depreciation*. *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 42.
- Gerhard-Krait, Francine & Hélène Vassiliadou. 2014. Lectures taxinomique et/ou floue appliquées aux noms: quelques réflexions... *Travaux de linguistique* 69. 57–75.
- Gerhard-Krait, Francine & Hélène Vassiliadou. 2017. *Clapotis, murmures* et autres manifestations sonores: les méandres de l'approximation catégorielle. *Syntaxe et Sémantique* 18. 19–43.
- Gerhard-Krait, Francine & Maria Zerva. 2023. La catégorisation et ses fluctuations formelles et interprétatives. Introduction. *Langages* 229. 9–30.
- Gerhard-Krait, Francine, Marie Lammert, Hélène Vassiliadou & Maria Zerva. 2023. Catégorisation et approximation à la manière de *simili(-)X*. *Langages* 229. 37–56.
- Giannouloupoulou, Giannoula. 1997. Συμφύματα στη Νέα Ελληνική. Η περίπτωση του ψεύδο-. [Confixes in Modern Greek: the case of *pseudo-*]. *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 17. 115–129.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2010. Comparative concepts and descriptive categories in crosslinguistic studies. *Language* 86(3). 663–687.
- Huyghe, Richard. 2015. Les typologies nominales: présentation. *Langue française* 185. 5–27.
- Kahlaoui, Karima, Bernadette Ska, Clotilde Degroot & Yves Joannette. 2010. Neurobiological bases of the semantic processing of words. In Jackie Guendouzi, Filip Loncke & Mandy J. Williams (eds.), *The Handbook of Psycholinguistic and Cognitive Processes*, Chapter 5. Abington: Routledge.
- Kleiber, Georges. 1987. Quelques réflexions sur le vague dans les langues naturelles. In Sylvie Mellet (ed.), *Etudes de linguistique générale et de linguistique latine offertes en hommage à Guy Serbat*, 157–172. Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Information grammaticale.
- Kleiber, Georges. 2001. Remarques sur la dénomination. *Cahiers de praxématique* 36. 21–41.
- Körtvélyessy, Lívia. 2015. *Evaluative morphology from cross-linguistic perspective*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lakoff, George. 1973. Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 2(4). 458–508.
- Lieber, Rochelle. 2004. *Morphology and Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Masini, Francesca & M. Silvia Micheli. 2020. The morphological expression of approximation: The emerging *simili-* construction in Italian. *Word Structure* 13(3). 371–402.
- Melissaropoulou, Dimitra. 2015. Modern Greek. In Nicola Grandi & Lívia Körtvélyessy (eds.), *Edinburgh Handbook of Evaluative Morphology*, 269–277. Edinburgh: University Press.
- Melissaropoulou, Dimitra & Angela Ralli. 2020. Derivational networks in Greek. In Lívia Körtvélyessy, Alexandra Bagasheva and Pavol Štekauer (eds.), *Derivational Networks Across Languages*, 347–370. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. DOI: [10.1515/9783110686630-035](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110686630-035).
- Mihatsch, Wiltrud. 2009. L'approximation entre sens et signification: un tour d'horizon. In Dominique Verbeke (ed.), *Entre sens et signification - Constitution du sens: points de vue sur l'articulation sémantique-pragmatique*, 100–116. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Mihatsch, Wiltrud, Inga Hennecke, Anna Kisiel, Alena Kolyaseva, Kristin Davidse & Lieselotte Brems (eds.). 2023. *Type Noun Constructions in Slavic, Germanic and Romance Languages. Semantics and Pragmatics on the Move*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. Trends in Linguistics 352.

- Norde, Muriel. 2009. *Degrammaticalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech & Jan Svartvik. 1985. *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.
- Raffman, Diana. 2011. Vagueness and Observationality. In Giuseppina Ronzitti (ed.), *Vagueness: A Guide*, 107–121. New York: Springer.
- Ralli, Angela. 2004. Stem-based versus word-based morphological configurations: The case of Modern Greek preverbs. *Lingue e Linguaggio* 2. 241–275.
- Ralli, Angela. 2005. *Μορφολογία*. [Morphology]. Athens: Patakis.
- Scalise, Sergio. 1990. *Morfologia e lessico. Una prospettiva generativista*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Schmid, Hans-Jörg. 2000. *English Abstract Nouns as Conceptual Shells: From Corpus to Cognition*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Štekauer, Pavol, Salvador Valera & Lívia Körtvélyessy. 2012. *Word-Formation in the World's languages. A Typological Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stosic, Dejan & Nelly Flaux. 2021. Les noms d'idéalité et les noms sous-spécifiés. *Corela* HS 34, DOI: [10.4000/corela.13587](https://doi.org/10.4000/corela.13587) (accessed January 2022).
- Thillmann, Sandra. 2007. A linguistic analysis of the word element 'pseudo', *Seminar Paper*, Munich, GRIN Verlag. <https://www.grin.com/document/88693> (accessed December 2021).
- Treis, Yvonne & Martine Vanhove (eds.). 2017. *Similitive and Equative Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Tsamadou-Jacobberger, Irini. 2009. L'élément *μιο-* et la notion de frontière en grec moderne. In Zoé Gavrielidès (ed.), *Actes du XXe Colloque International des Néo-hellénistes des Universités francophones*, 579–588. Lille: Septentrion.
- Van Goethem, Kristel & Muriel Norde. 2020. Extravagant "fake" morphemes in Dutch. Morphological productivity, semantic profiles and categorical flexibility. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory* 16(3). 425–458. DOI: [10.1515/cilt-2020-0024](https://doi.org/10.1515/cilt-2020-0024) (accessed January 2022).
- Van Goethem, Kristel, Muriel Norde & Francesca Masini. 2021/under review. The fate of 'pseudo'-words: a contrastive corpus-based analysis. Paper presented at UCCTS 2021 (Using Corpora in Contrastive and Translation Studies), Bertinoro, 9–11 September 2021.
- Vassiliadou, Hélène & Marie Lammert (eds.). 2022. *A Crosslinguistic Perspective on Clear and Approximate Categorization*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Vassiliadou, Hélène, Elena Vladimirska, Marie Lammert, Céline Benninger, Francine Gerhard-Krait, Jelena Gridina & Daina Turla. 2023. Clear vs. approximate categorization in French and Latvian. In Wiltrud Mihatsch, Inga Hennecke, Anna Kisiel, Alena Kolyaseva et al. (eds.), *Type Noun Constructions in Slavic, Germanic and Romance Languages. Semantics and Pragmatics on the Move*. Chapter 17. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. Trends in Linguistics 352.
- Voghera, Miriam. 2012. Ghitarre, violini, banjo e cose del genere. In Anna Thornton & Miriam Voghera (eds.), *Per Tullio De Mauro: studi offerti dalle allieve in occasione del suo 80 compleanno*, 341–364. Roma: Aracne.
- Williamson, Timothy. 1975. On the coherence of vague predicates. *Synthese* 30. 325–363.
- Xydopoulos, George. 2009. *Psilo-*: Exploring the case of a 'diminutive' in Modern Greek. In Anastasios Tsangalidis (ed.), *Selected papers from the 17<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*, 397–405. Thessaloniki: Monochromia.

## Corpora

*Frantext*, ATILF: [www.frantext.fr](http://www.frantext.fr) (accessed October 2021).

*French Web Corpus 2017*, frTenTen17: [app.sketchengine.eu](http://app.sketchengine.eu) (accessed October 2021).

*Greek Web Corpus 2014*, elTenTen14: [app.sketchengine.eu](http://app.sketchengine.eu) (accessed November 2021).

*Hellenic National Corpus (ILSP)*: [corpus.ilsp.gr/index.php](http://corpus.ilsp.gr/index.php) (accessed November 2021).

*Leipzig Corpora Collection – Wortschatz*, [corpora.uni-leipzig.de](http://corpora.uni-leipzig.de) (accessed November 2021).

*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*© Digital Library. Ed. Maria C. Pantelia. University of California, Irvine. [stephanus.tlg.uci.edu](http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu) (accessed February 2022).

Hélène Vassiliadou

University of Strasbourg / UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole

Faculté des Lettres

14 rue René Descartes

BP 80010

67084 Strasbourg cedex, France

[vassili@unistra.fr](mailto:vassili@unistra.fr)

Francine Gerhard-Krait

University of Strasbourg / UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole

Faculté des Lettres

14 rue René Descartes

BP 80010

67084 Strasbourg cedex, France

[gerhard@unistra.fr](mailto:gerhard@unistra.fr)

Georgia Fotiadou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

School of Philology, Department of linguistics

Old building of Philosophical School, room 301

54124 Thessaloniki, Greece

[geofotia@lit.auth.gr](mailto:geofotia@lit.auth.gr)

Marie Lammert

University of Strasbourg / UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole

Faculté des Lettres

14 rue René Descartes

BP 80010

67084 Strasbourg cedex, France

[mlammert@unistra.fr](mailto:mlammert@unistra.fr)



This is an open access publication. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution CC-BY 4.0 license. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.