

## Nominalization, event, aspect, and argument structure: a syntactic approach

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### 1. Goal of the paper

We show that for nominalizations there are more than the two readings (process / result) that have been traditionally proposed (Grimshaw 1991), and argue that these readings are reflected in the changing properties of vP and AspP within DP (as in Alexiadou's 2001 analysis). We defend a gradual process of nominalization, with a gradual loss of verbal properties and a gradual growth of nominal properties, reflected a.o. in a change in argument structure (see also Sleeman & Brito 2007).

### 2. Arguments against the strict dichotomy process / result nouns

- (i) Not only process nouns can select arguments (Grimshaw 1991). Result nouns may also select arguments, see, e.g., Picallo (1991) for Catalan:
  - (1) La discussió de les dades es va publicar a la revista. (result)  
'The discussion of the data was published in the journal'
- (ii) Process nouns do not necessarily take arguments:
  - (2) The destruction lasted at least for ten days. (event)

- (iii) Not only result nouns can pluralize (Grimshaw 1990). Process nouns can also pluralize, see, e.g., Van Hout (1991) for Dutch:
  - (3) Tijdens de martelingen van de politieke gevangenen door de zwarte brigades moesten alle journalisten het gebouw uit.  
'During the tortures of the political prisoners by the black brigades all the reporters had to leave the building'
- (iv) Certain nominalizations can combine with a genitive phrase instead of a *by*-phrase when they have an event interpretation, as observed by Van Hout (1991) for Dutch:
  - (4) Ik heb alle uitvoeringen van Youri Egorov van het Schumann-programma bijgewoond. (event)  
'I have attended all Youri Egorov's performances of the Schumann program.'
- (v) Both in Grimshaw's and in Alexiadou's analysis, result nouns and object nouns are analyzed in the same way. However, Brito & Oliveira (1997) show (for Portuguese) that result nouns can combine with a *by*-phrase expressing the agent and can be used in control constructions (contrary to what Grimshaw claims), whereas this is not possible with object nouns:
  - (5) A análise do texto pelo aluno enriqueceu o conhecimento dos colegas. (result)  
'The analysis of the text by the student enlarged the knowledge of the colleagues.'
  - (6) A construção do campo de jogos para entreter as crianças trouxe benefícios para a comunidade. (result)  
'The building of the playground to entertain the children benefited the community.'
  - (7) \*A construção do campo de jogos para entreter as crianças é de boa qualidade. (concrete object)  
'The building of the playground to entertain the children is of good quality.'

### 3. A more fine-grained distinction

We reject the strict dichotomy between process nouns and result nouns. Within a syntactic approach to morphology we propose that nominalizations show a mixed behavior to various degrees, which is expressed by the presence/absence and nature of AspP and vP.

(I) – In the most ‘verbal’ reading of the nominalization, *v* is eventive and agentive:

- The unspecified lexical root is dominated by at least vP, AspP, NumP and DP.
- *v* contains an event feature
- *v* is agentive → *by*-phrase
- *v* licenses an internal argument
- *v* does not assign accusative Case
- *v* does not introduce an external argument
- AspP contains an (im)perfectivity feature or the feature ‘Result’ (as in 5-6)
- NumP contains the feature ‘Singular’ or ‘Plural’ (as in 3)

(II) – The second stage is as in (I), but ‘agents’ are expressed by a genitive:

- The unspecified lexical root is dominated by at least vP, AspP, NumP and DP.
- *v* contains an event feature
- *v* is not agentive → ‘agents’ are expressed by a genitive (as in 4)
- *v* licenses an internal argument, but *v* being not agentive, the internal argument is optional (as in 2)
- AspP contains an (im)perfectivity feature or the feature ‘Result’ (as in 1)

(III) – The third stage of the nominalization process is reflected by object/entity nouns as in (7). There is no vP, and no AspP, and there are no arguments, due to the absence of *v*.

- The unspecified lexical root is dominated by at least NumP and DP.
- There is no AspP and no vP (as in 7)

The process of nominalization may be viewed then as a gradual process reflected in the changing properties of vP and AspP. This makes the first type of process nouns in (I) the most ‘verbal’ and the object/entity nouns, as a concrete result without the event being expressed, as in (III), the most ‘nouny’ one.

### References

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