Deverbal external argument nominalizations in Slovenian

Tatjana Marvin
University of Ljubljana

Abstract. This paper outlines an analysis of Slovenian deverbal external argument nominalizations in a syntactic approach. It is proposed that these nominals fall in three distinct classes according to the type of the Asp head found in the nominalization: i) episodic eventive nominals, ii) dispositional eventive nominals (both denoting animate agents) and iii) functional nominals (denoting instruments and humans in professional or temporary functions). The last type is newly introduced, as English/French-based approaches such as Alexiadou and Schäfer (2010) and Roy and Soare (2014) cannot account for the presence and properties of the genitive objects found in Slovenian functional nominals.

Keywords. Nominalization, external argument, Slovenian

1. Introduction

The goal of this paper is to propose an analysis of Slovenian deverbal external argument (DEA) nominalizations in a syntactic approach in order to contribute to a cross-linguistic understanding of these nominals, as previous, mostly English-based analyses (e.g. Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1992 (RH&L), Alexiadou and Schäfer 2010 (A&S), Roy and Soare 2014 (R&S)) cannot accommodate Slovenian data. The main issues and their analyses in previous proposals are discussed in Section 1.1. The proposal for Slovenian is presented in a nutshell in Section 2, followed by the discussion of the data together with some arguments for the proposal in Section 3. Section 4 concludes the paper.

Eventivity and Complement Structure

DEA-nominals are nominalizations that correspond to the external argument of the base verb whose thematic role can be agent, experiencer or instrument. In the study of English DEA-nominals, eventivity, i.e. whether these nominals imply an occurrence of the event denoted by the base verb, is standardly linked to the presence of complement structure (CS) in the form of an of-phrase, (Fabb 1984, Keyser and Roeper 1984, RH&L, van Hout and Roeper 1998, A&S, R&S, McIntyre 2014). DEA-nominals with CS are eventive (animate agents), while those without CS are non-

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1 These are the main thematic roles that we operate with in the paper (though holder and causer could be added to the group, at least). In this paper we also use the description profession, which is short for "humans in professional or temporary functions".
eventive (instruments and professions), RH&L, (1). As a test for eventivity, RH&L propose the use of event-related adjectival modification with *frequent*, available only in the eventive type, (2).

(1) a. grinder of coffee, wiper of windshields (eventive, event implication)  
   b. coffee-grinder, (windshield) wiper (non-eventive, no event implication)  
(2) a. a frequent grinder of coffee  
   b. *a frequent coffee-grinder

In syntactic approaches to external argument nominals, as A&S and R&S, eventivity and non-eventivity are directly linked to the structural representations of the nominals, i.e. whether they contain a little *v* in their structure (eventive) or not (non-eventive), though the approaches differ in how they deal with instrument-denoting nominals. A&S treat all DEA-nominals, including instruments, as eventive—some as episodic (those that imply a specific event, animate agents), and others as dispositional (those that imply a generic event; instruments and professions), the difference between the two groups lying in the type of the Aspect head in the structure of the nominalization. In their account, dispositional nominals, while having an available object position in the structure, do not take the of-phrase because of a special requirement for the object to be unquantized (*of*-insertion being in their view related to quantized phrases).

(3) a. saver of lives (eventive-episodic, Asp.episodic in structure)  
   b. life-saver, grinder (eventive-dispositional, Asp.dispositional in structure)

R&S, on the other hand, propose that instruments are non-eventive and thus contain no little *v* or Asp in their structure, (4c), while other nominals are eventive—some episodic, involving a particular event (4a), while others are dispositional, involving a generic event, (4b). Instruments are in both analyses treated as not having a possibility of taking the object of-phrase, either because there is no object position (R&S) or the object position is somehow suppressed (A&S).

(4) a. le conducteur du train lit. ‘driver of the train’ (eventive-episodic)  
   b. le conducteur de trains lit. ‘driver of trains’ (eventive-dispositional)  
   c. ventilateur ‘ventilator’ (non-eventive) adapted from (R&S)

2. Proposal in a Nutshell

I propose that Slovenian DEA-nominals fall in three distinct classes that differ according to the type of Asp head: i) episodic eventive nominals, ii) dispositional eventive nominals and iii) functional nominals. The group of nominals in (i) corresponds to the eventive episodic nominals in R&S, the group in (ii) to their dispositional eventive nominals (minus professions). The group in (iii) is newly introduced to treat Slovenian data and includes profession and instrument-denoting nominals. As to the structural representation of DEA-nominals, I express the

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2 The test is based on the analysis of process-denoting and result-denoting deverbal nominals as found in Grimshaw (1990) and subsequent work.
differences among the three groups by using the framework from A&S, adding an additional type of Asp (Asp_{functional}) that appears with professions and instruments:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEA-rominals:</th>
<th>EPISODIC, DISPOSITIONAL, FUNCTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a#</td>
<td>AspP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asp_{EP,DIS,FUN}</td>
<td>VoiceP</td>
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<td>s</td>
<td>Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>vP</td>
<td>RootP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v(e)</td>
<td>Root Object</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Discussion

3.1. Main Data and Arguments for the Proposal

In this section I state the main arguments for the proposal with special emphasis on introducing a third type of structure (Asp_{FUN}). The definitions of the episodic and dispositional readings are taken from R&S. The episodic reading involves a particular event and the object in CS is specific in nature. The dispositional reading involves a generic event with a generic object in CS. In this paper I argue for an additional category, the functional interpretation, following McIntyre (2014) in teasing apart the functional and the dispositional readings of nominals (contra A&S)³. The functional interpretation is in McIntyre (2014) defined as the one that names entities whose intrinsic or designated purpose or function is to participate in the event named by the underlying verb, including artefacts designed for particular uses (referred to as instruments in this paper) or humans in professional or temporary functions (referred to as professions in this paper). All three possibilities are shown in (5). In (5a), the nominal denotes someone who has visited a particular exhibition, while in (5b) it denotes someone who generally visits exhibitions; in both cases the event of visiting must have occurred. In (5c) no event is implied, the nominal denotes a function that someone takes (e.g. a visitor status in an institution/company) and exists without the actual event of visiting taking place.

³ R&S treat instruments separately from dispositions, but are not explicit about the treatment of professions; these are understood as subsumed under dispositions.
a. obiskovalec (te razstave) lit. 'visitor of this exhibition' — episodic
b. obiskovalec (razstav) lit. ‘visitor of exhibitions’ — dispositional
c. obiskovalec (podjetja) lit. ‘visitor of company (as a status)’ — functional

A strong argument for assigning functions a type of structure with a little v (but a different Asp from AspPe and AspDis) is that in Slovenian, all three kinds of DEA-nominals, including instruments and professions, take the genitive object, (6), with neither of the previous approaches being able to accommodate this fact.4

(6) a. gledalec te nadaljevanke watcher this series-GEN
lit. 'watcher of this series' (episodic)
b. gledalec televizije watcher TV-GEN
lit. 'watcher of TV' (dispositional)
c. lupilec krompirja peeler potato-GEN
lit. 'peeler of potato' (functional-instr.)
c’. polagalec parketa layer parquet-GEN
lit. 'layer of parquet' (functional-prof.)

What is more, the object is obligatory with some nominalizations, as in (7):

(7) a. izdelovalec '(lesenega pohištva) lit. 'maker of'(wooden furniture)'
b. odstranjevalec '*.madežev) lit. 'remover of 'stains'
c. popravljalec '*.zadrg) lit. 'fixer of 'zippers'

A further argument for positing a vP comes from morphological considerations, in which I follow A&S's reasoning. One of the reasons for their positing the little v head in the structure of instrument and profession-denoting nominals in English, is the fact that these nominals can contain overt verbal derivational morphology, realized by -ize, -ate or -ify in e.g. colonizer, humidifier, Harley (2009). We observe that in Slovenian, CS-taking nominals are morphologically complex in a similar way and can be broken down as in (8). Moreover, instruments/professions share morphological structure with episodic and dispositional nominals, which do contain the v head in all the syntactic approaches considered.6

(8) gled+a+l+ec 'watcher'=v+theme vowel+participial affix+nominalizer

R&S observe that in French, instruments seem to be capable of taking the of-phrase object (de-phrase), however, they claim that this is not a real object but rather an adjunct as it can always be replaced by a for-phrase (à-phrase), (9).

(9) broyer de végétaux → broyer à végétaux lit. 'shredder of/for plants' (R&S)

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4 Recall that in these approaches instruments cannot take the object either because there is no object position (R&S) or the object position is somehow suppressed (A&S).
5 Due to space limitations, I only consider the nominalizations in -(V)/ec, which is the most numerous and productive class in Slovenian, Stramljic Breznik (1999).
6 In Slovenian, the nominalizations with CS (as well as those without CS) are indeed ambiguous between a person-tool reading, contrary to English, where only the person reading occurs.

(i) lupilec krompirja 'peeler of potato-person' or 'potato-peeler-tool'
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In Slovenian, the genitive object that appears with instruments and professions cannot be reduced to a for-phrase, since it can sometimes (10a) but not always be replaced by it, (10b,c).7

(10) a. lupilec krompirja → lupilec za krompir lit. 'peeler of for potato'
    b. polagalec parketa → polagalec za parket lit. 'layer of for parquet'
    c. odstranjevalec madežev → odstranjevalec za madež lit. 'remover of stains'

3.2. More on AspFUN and Frequency Adjectives

In this part I elaborate on the possibility of the modification with the frequency adjectives such as frequent, constant and rare. In principle, all three groups of DEA-nominals should be able to bear such modification, given that in my proposal they all contain a little v head, which is standardly linked to an event occurrence. However, we observe that only episodic (11a) and dispositional (11b) but not functional nominalizations (12a,b) allow such modification:

(11) a. zvesti gledalec naše oddaje lit. 'constant watcher of our show'
    b. zvesti gledalec TV programa lit. 'constant watcher of TV program'
(12) a. 'pogosti polagalec parketa lit. 'frequent layer of parquet'
    b. 'pogosti lupilec krompirja lit. 'frequent peeler of potato'

The question is how to account for the incompatibility of the modification with frequency adjectives in functional nominals and still keep the structure with a little v and Asp heads (at least in Slovenian). It is after all a fact in English as well as in Slovenian that functional nominals do not imply an event in the sense that dispositional and episodic nominals do: a potato peeler need not have peeled any potatoes and a carpet-layer need not have laid any carpets. I propose that this incompatibility follows from the nature of AspFUN, which I take to mean "to be in the specific function of what is denoted by the verb" and which is static and permanent in nature and thus inherently incompatible with frequency adjectives.8,9

7 In general, the for-phrase is more readily available in instruments than in professions.
8 If these nominals happen to allow such modification (marginally with some speakers), the adjective never modifies the event expressed by the verb (in such case only the dispositional reading would surface, suppressing the functional one), but modifies the nominal. In (ia), the phrase pogosti reševalec can only be marginally understood as ta, ki je pogosto reševalec lit. "the one who is frequently a life-saver". (ia) is only marginally better than (ib), which contains a non-DEA-nominal, where such modification is clearly ungrammatical.
   (i) a. */??pogosti reševalec lit. 'frequent life-saver' (as profession)
       b. *pogosti kirurg lit. 'frequent surgeon' (as profession)
9 It appears that functional nominals contain within them a predication phrase, which prevents adjectival modification from above. The pursuit of a predication analysis goes beyond the scope of the present paper despite being an exciting option in a syntactic approach.
4. Conclusions

In this paper I argued that Slovenian DEA-nominals fall in three distinct classes differing according to the type of the Asp head in their structure (episodic, dispositional and functional), leaving aside many important questions relating to DEA-nominals. For example, can we show that a functional type is needed in French and English as well? Or why do languages differ in terms of their allowing CS with instruments and professions in the way they do? As this work focuses on only the most productive class of Slovenian nominalizations, a more thorough analysis, though desirable, will have to left for future research.

References