

## Variation in the nominal layer of Event Nominalizations

It is commonly assumed in recent syntactic literature that the functional domain of Event Nominalizations (ENs) contains both verbal FPs (like AspP, vP, VP) and nominal FPs (like NumP, DP, NP). Moreover, the internal syntactic structure of ENs is argued to be subject to variation within and across languages (see e.g. Van Hout & Roeper 1998, Alexiadou 2001, Borer 2003). However, the current discussion mainly focusses on variation related to the *verbal* layer, opposing e.g. languages in which ENs can or cannot be combined with manner adverbs (cf. Greek (1) and English (2)), a contrast ascribed to the presence / absence of AspP respectively. The *nominal* layer, which has been paid much less attention to in this respect, is often supposed to be more uniform, in accordance with the strong claim of Grimshaw 1990, that ENs can *never* be pluralized neither within nor across languages (compare (3) and (4)).

In this talk, I show that this asymmetry is not justified and I propose an analysis of some less well understood nominal properties of ENs related to „Number“ and „Bareness“, taking data from French as a starting point. More in particular, I argue that French ENs violate the supposed ban on pluralization, and that restrictions on this possibility do not only involve the nature of the EN itself (e.g. its argument structure or its aspectual properties), but also the structural syntactic environment in which the EN appears. Of particular interest appears to be whether its complement(s) are introduced or not by an overt determiner. The results of the discussion are compared to other Romance and Germanic languages and are integrated into a framework that attempts to give more insight into the relation between syntactic structure and semantic interpretation (i.e. the syntax/semantics interface).

My discussion on Number touches on a central factor in the well known distinction between (Complex) ENs and Result Nominals (RNs) (Grimshaw 1990), which differ as for their denotation (event vs. object), the choice of their determiner (restricted to *the* vs. non-restricted), the presence of complements (obligatory vs. optional), and their aspectual properties (compare (5) and (6)). Theoretically, the described distinction has been argued to represent a crucial difference at the level of their internal syntactic structure (cf. Alexiadou 2001): while RNs have a functional domain containing exclusively nominal layers, the functional domain of (Complex) ENs also has verbal functional layers. The impossibility to pluralize ENs derived from e.g. transitive predicates, as in (7), could then by hypothesis be ascribed to the lack of NumP. Moreover, an example like (8) is only an apparent counterexample, because the plural mark is commonly considered as having triggered a shift from EN to RN. This supposed shift can be made explicit in languages like German and Greek by a parallel interpretational shift of its *of*-complements from Theme to Possessor (Alexiadou 2001: 81): while the birds are the objects being observed in (9), they are interpreted as the observers in (10).

However, that languages do not present a uniform behaviour at this point is clearly illustrated by the French plural Nominalization in (11), whose status as an EN is illustrated by the obligatory Theme interpretation of the complement, showing that no shift from EN to RN has been triggered by the pluralization (see Van Hout 1991 for comparable data in Dutch). Even more surprising is the behaviour of ENs derived from unaccusative verbs – which are known from a language like Greek to raise questions by requiring plurality (see (12)), instead of excluding it, for reasons that remain to be fully understood. Recently discussed facts show that unaccusative ENs in French also behave unexpectedly by requiring the head noun to be plural for the event reading to become available in case its complement is “bare” (see (13)): in that case, the interpretation of the plural complement and the plural EN co-vary. On the contrary, if the head noun remains singular as in (14), a proper non-punctual event reading is not available. In my analysis of these facts, I shed new light on these cases by giving particular interest to Number underspecification, [ $\emptyset$ PI], that has recently been argued to play a crucial role for the syntactic licensing of “Bare Nouns” and to be involved in the account of their crosslinguistic variation (Roodenburg 2004).

## Examples

- (1) I katastrofi ton egrafon (prosektika). [Alexiadou 2001: 15]  
“The destruction [of] the documents carefully.”
- (2) Pat’s collection of mushrooms (\*carefully). [Alexiadou 2001: 15]
- (3) The *destruction* of the city by the soldiers.
- (4) \*The *destructions* of the city by the soldiers.
- (5) The/\*a/\*one (frequent) examination<sub>Event</sub> of papers for hours.
- (6) The/a/one exam<sub>Result</sub> \*for hours/was long.
- (7) \*The (frequent) examinations of the papers. [Alexiadou 2001: 11]
- (8) The assignments were long. [Grimshaw 1990: 54]
- (9) Die Beobachtung<sub>Event</sub> von Vögeln<sub>Theme</sub>.  
“The observation of birds.”
- (10) Die Beobachtungen<sub>Result</sub> von Vögeln<sub>Possessor</sub>.  
“The observations of birds.”
- (11) Seules les observations<sub>Event</sub> d’animaux adultes<sub>Theme</sub> ont été prises en compte.  
“Only the observations of adult animals have been taken into account.”
- (12) I afiksi\*(s) turiston oli ti nihta. [Markantonatou 1992]  
“The arrivals [of] tourists during the whole night.”
- (13) Les départs de réfugiés s’étaient multipliés.”  
“The departures of refugees had increased.”
- (14) Le départ de réfugiés s’était multiplié.  
“The departure of refugees had increased.”

## References

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