



# Action Nominals in the Grammar Matrix

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# Outline

- Definition and different types of action nominals
- Description of the current nominalized clauses library
- Potential additions and discussion questions

# Different Types of Nominalization

- **Action/event vs Argument**
  - **Action:**
    - The fact/act of the original verb/adjective
      - create → creation
      - destroy → destruction
  - **Argument:**
    - Agentive
      - sing → singer
    - Instrumental
    - Manner
    - Locative
    - Objective
    - Reason

(Comrie and Thompson, 1985)

# Action Nominals Constructions (ANCs)

Intermediate position between verbs and nouns

## Nominal properties:

- Occur in nominal positions
- Decline as nouns and can combine with nominal adpositions

## Verbal properties:

- Reference participants in engaging in the action described by the original verb
  - **The enemy** destroyed **the city** (finite clause)
  - **The enemy's** destruction **of the city** (action nominal)
  - **The enemy's** map **of the city** (non-derived NP)

# Action Nominals cross-linguistically

- **Most Common**
  - Sentential (SENT)
  - Possessive-Accusative type (POSS-ACC)
  - Ergative-Possessive type (ERG-POSS)
  - Nominal Type (NOM)

# Sentential Type

(Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2013)

- All arguments are marked as in the finite clause

Godoberi (Kazenin, 1996, p. 160)

aHmadi-di maHamadi-ḥi    rec'i            iḱ-ir

**Ahmad-ERG** Mahamad-DAT **bread.ABS**    give-NMLZ

'**Ahmad's** giving **bread** to Mahamad.'

# Possessive-Accusative Type

- **Agent/subject** are treated as possessors, **patient** retains sentential marking

Meadow Mari

möj-ön pis'ma-m voz-öm-em

**I-GEN** **letter-ACC** write-NMLZ-1SG.POSS

'**my** writing **of the letter**'

# Ergative-Possessive Type

(Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2013)

- **Patient/subject** are treated as possessors, **agent** treated as a peripheral NP
- Russian

ispoln-enij-e                  **sonat-y**                  **pianist-om**

Perform-NMLZ-NOM **sonata-GEN** **pianist-INSTR**

'the performance **of the sonata by the pianist**'



# Nominal Type

(Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 1993)

- All arguments are treated as possessors, or agent/subject are treated as possessors and the patient is marked as an oblique NP
- English

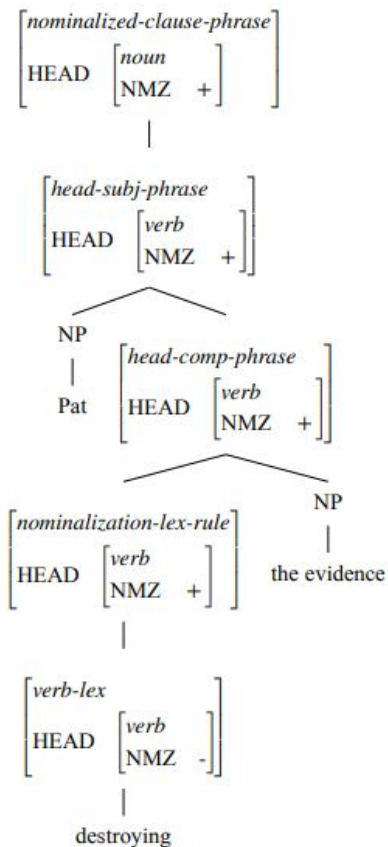
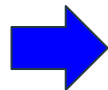
**The enemy's** destruction **of the city**

# Nominalized Clauses library

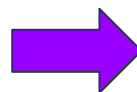
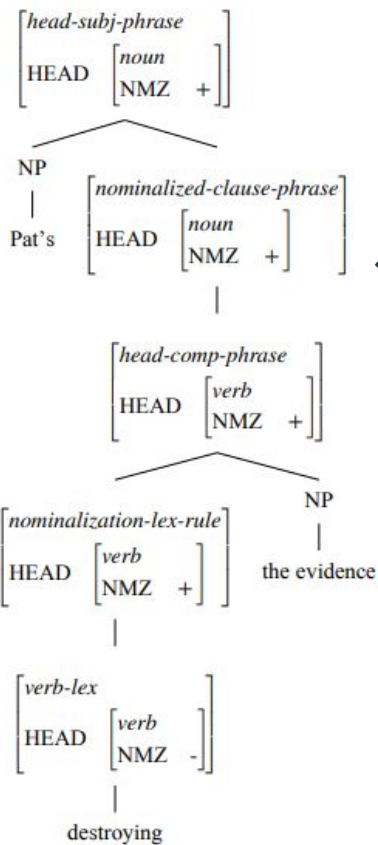
(Howell et al., 2018)

- Allows for morphological nominalization
- Change-over approach: HEAD value changes from *verb* to *noun*
- Change can occur at three levels:
  - High (S):
    - No case change allowed on arguments
    - Adverbial modifiers
  - Mid (VP)
    - Case change allowed only on the subject
    - Adverbial modifiers
  - Low (V)
    - Case change allowed on either the subj or obj, both, or neither
    - Adjective modifiers

## High

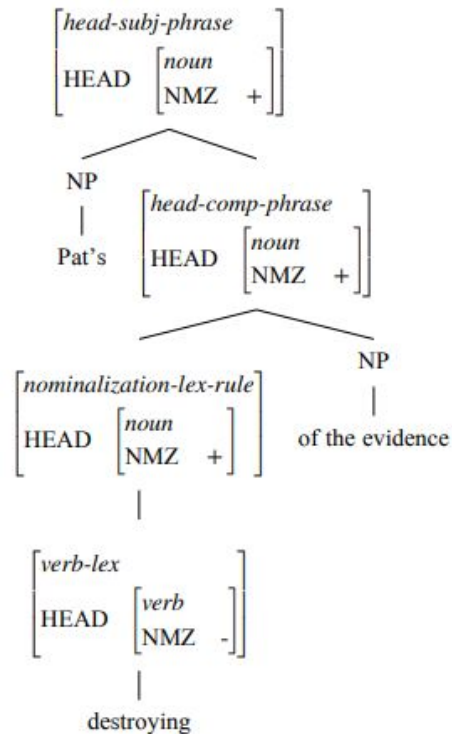


## Mid



## Low

(Howell et al., 2018)



## Assimilation to Nominal syntax

- Whether to conform more strongly to nominal syntax (Derbyshire, 1985)
  - SPR instead of SUBJ
  - Remove verbal flags
  - Include possessive semantics (poss\_rel)

### Intransitive Verb Hixkaryana (ERG-POSS)

k-rata-no                      uro    toto    **y-omoki-ni-ri**                      ke  
1.S-wept-IMM.PST 1            person 3-come-NMLZ-POSS because  
I wept because the man came

koso **y-kanawa-ri**  
deer 3-canoe-POSS  
'the deer's canoe'

### Transitive verb

k-rata-no                      uro wya biryekomo **r-tayma-ni-ri**                      ke  
1.S-wept-IMM.PST 1    by    boy                      1-push-NMLZ-POSS because  
I wept because the boy pushed me

# Example MRS

(Derbyshire, 1985)

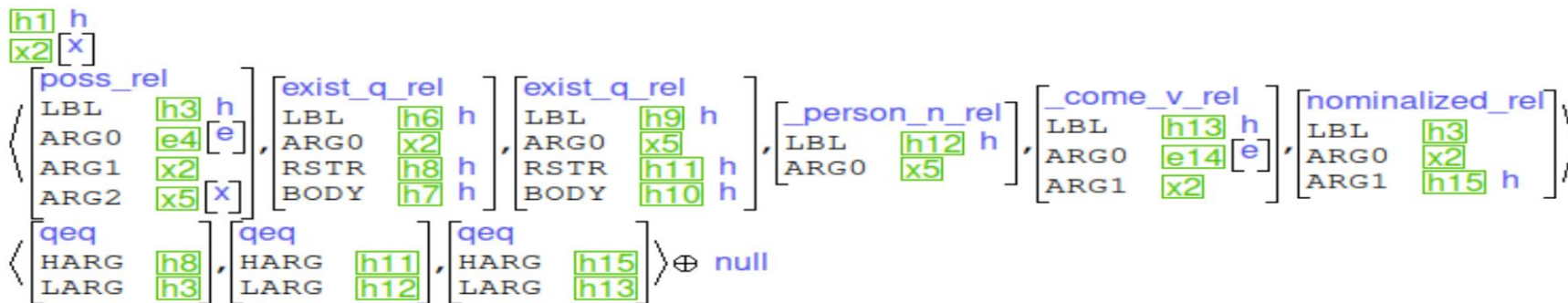
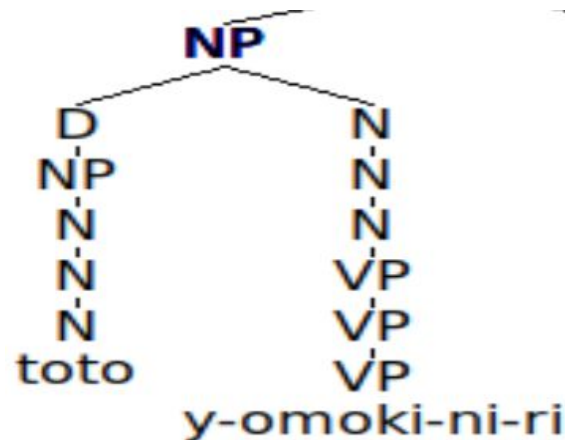
**Intransitive Verb** Hixkaryana (ERG-POSS)

Result of both low nominalization and co-indexing the index  
of the original verb's SUBJ with the noun's SPR and not SUBJ

toto **y-omoki-ni-ri** ke

person 3-come-NMLZ-POSS because

I wept because the man came



## Valence properties

- Different valence properties between verbs and their nominalized equivalents
  - **The enemy** destroyed **the city**
  - **The enemy's** destruction **of the city**
  - **The enemy's** destruction
  - The destruction **of the enemy**
  - The destruction
- Might be a more productive process in certain languages over others

## Subjective vs objective argument marking

Interpretation ambiguous between a subjective/objective reading when only a singular argument is present

**Russian** (Comrie, 1976, p. 182)

(1) čtenie Puškina

Reading Pushkin(GEN)

‘Pushkin’s reading’(subjective reading) or ‘the reading of Pushkin (objective reading)’

No direct translation of “the pianist’s performance of the sonata”

(2) spoln-enij-e sonat-y pianist-om

Perform-NMLZ-NOM sonata-GEN pianist-INSTR

‘the performance of the sonata by the pianist’

(Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2013)

## Subjective vs objective argument marking

**Turkish** (Comrie & Thompson, 1985, p. 47)

Hasan-ın mektub-u yaz-ma-sı

Hasan-GEN letter-ACC write-NMLZ-his

‘Hasan’s writing of the letter’

mektub-u yaz-ma

letter-ACC write-NMLZ

‘the writing of the letter’



# Summary/Discussion

- Nominalizations for languages that don't have case, or have multiple genitive constructions
  - Arguments with a different word order/different number of arguments compared to the matrix clause
  - Assimilation to NP structure (subj vs spec)
  - Semantics (should they include the poss\_rel relation?)
- How to handle different valence properties
- Differences in objective/subjective argument interpretation
- Other areas to explore:
  - Non morphological nominalization
  - Argument nominalizations
  - Non-embedded nominalizations

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