

On the internal structure of Serbian *-nje* nominalizations

According to Marvin (2002), Slovenian deverbal nominalizations with gerundive semantics are derived from passive participles ending in *-n* or *-t* by the addition of the suffix *-je*. This goes against numerous traditional grammars that treat these nominalizations as derived from verbal stems by means of two different suffixes *-nje* or *-tje*. Such nominalizations are available in Serbian, too, where traditional grammars also adopt the view that they are derived by combining the verbal stem with *-nje* or *-će(tje/)*. Following Grimshaw (1990), Bašić (2010) divides Serbian deverbal nominals into Complex Event Nominals (CENs) and Result Nominals (RNs). CENs are derived from imperfective verbs and can be combined with expressions measuring out the runtime of the event (1a) while RNs are derived from perfective stems and cannot combine with such expressions (1b). Moreover, CENs require a genitive case-marked internal argument which is optional with RNs.

- (1) a. Potpisivanje dokumenata je dugo trajalo
signing documents.gen AUX long lasted
'Signing the documents lasted long'
b. *Potpis je dugo trajao
signature AUX long lasted
'The signature lasted long' (Bašić 2010 p. 42)

Bašić (2010) analyzes Serbian CENs as derived from passive participles involving complete split vP structure (Ramchand 2008) and RNs as derived from structures that involve only ResP.

Simonović and Arsenijević (2014) (S&A) arrive at a very similar conclusion following a different route. They observe that CENs are semantically compositional, fully productive and retain the same prosodic shape of the underlying verb whereas RNs are less productive, and they involve a different prosodic shape as well as tending towards semantic opacity (2). They do not give precise criteria they use to distinguish between compositionality and semantic opacity.

- (2) a. pri'znavati ('admit.impf') – pri'znavanje ('admitting')
b. 'priznati ('admit.pf')- pri'znanje ('admittance')¹ (Simonović and Arsenijević 2014)

These two authors account for the observed facts by assuming that CENs are derived from participles, and hence, they belong to the verbal paradigm and contain verbal structure, while RNs are listed as separate items and contain no verbal structure.

Both Bašić (2010) and S&A predict the lack of internal verbal structure with RNs and its presence with CENs. An extensive line of research suggests that the licensing of expressions introducing event participants can be used as a diagnostic to broach the presence of internal verbal structure in participles and deverbal nominalizations (Alexiadou et al. 2014, Bruening 2014, a.o.). In this paper, I will provide evidence that the combinability with *by*-phrases and instrumental NP/DPs introducing causers/instruments diagnoses the presence of VoiceP as the highest layer of verbal structure. The predictions derived from Bašić 2010 and S&A are not borne out entirely with respect to these tests. CENs tend to license *by*-phrases and instrumental NP/DPs while RNs tend to reject them (3).

- (3) a. razrešavanje generala od strane Petra / telefonskim pozivom CEN
dismissing general.gen from side Peter.gen / phone.inst call.inst
'The dismissing of the general by Peter /via phone call'
b. razrešenje generala *od strane Petra / ?telefonskim pozivom RN
dismissal general.gen from side Peter.gen phone.inst call.inst
'The dismissal of the general by Peter / via phone call'

Note that the instrumental NP/DP in (3b) is only slightly degraded. However, Gehrke (2013) observes that the ban on *by*-phrases with German adjectival passives applies only when the DP inside the *by*-phrase is definite and not when it is indefinite. She accounts for this observation by assuming that VoiceP is present with adjectival passives as well, which means that *by*-phrases are, in principle,

¹ Prosodic stress notation is simplified here, and only the syllable carrying main stress is marked with an apostrophe because that is sufficient to demonstrate the point.

licensed. The reason why *by*-phrases containing definite DPs are rejected is because adjectival passives do not instantiate the event. They merely denote an event without referring to it. Consequently, they only accept event modifiers that remain in the kind domain.

I argue that this explanation applies to RNs in Serbian, which is why the instrumental NP/DP in (3b) is only slightly degraded and the *by*-phrase in (4) is acceptable. As soon as a strongly referential NP/DP is used inside the *by*-phrase the outcome becomes ungrammatical.

- (4) *razočaranja od strane prekaljenih majstora* /*Petra RN
 disappointments from side seasoned.gen master.gen Peter.gen
 ‘disappointments by seasoned masters’

Still, there are RNs that reject event modifiers, but these are restricted to those that do not even denote events let alone refer to them (5).

- (5) *uzemljenje strujnog kola* (*od strane električara)
 ground electric circuit from side electrician.gen
 Literally: ‘the ground of the electric circuit by the electrician’

I propose to modify S&A’s proposal to make the cut not between CENs and RNs but between event-denoting and non-event-denoting nominalizations and analyze those nominalizations that denote events as members of the paradigm with verbal structure, and those that do not denote events as listed items without internal verbal structure derived by means of an independently existing nominalizing suffix *-nje*. The reason why *-nje* needs to be an independent suffix to derive nominalizations without internal verbal structure is because participles are built on top of full-fledged VoicePs (Bruening 2014, Alexiadou et al. 2014).

I show that S&A’s motivation for the distinction between CENs and RNs on the basis of prosodic faithfulness to the base is empirically deficient as there are doublets of nominalizations derived from imperfective verbs where one version is faithful to the base while the other one is not. The faithful one denotes an eventuality and licenses a genitive case-marked internal argument while the non-faithful one denotes an attitude or feeling and licenses a PP complement (6).

- (6) a. *Njegovo naglašeno ‘poštovanje oca/*prema ocu me je jako iznenadilo*
 him emphatic respecting father.gen/*towards father me AUX strongly surprised
 ‘Him respecting his father emphatically surprised me very much’
 b. *Njegovo naglašeno pošto’vanje *oca / prema ocu me je jako iznenadilo*
 his respect father.gen / towards father.dat me AUX strongly surprised
 ‘His emphatic respect towards his father surprised me very much’

The existence of such doublets is ruled out by S&A’s account contrary to fact as imperfective verbs are expected to derive only prosodically faithful nominalizations.

An independent suffix *-nje* also explains the existence of deverbal nominalizations derived from unergative and unaccusative verbs that do not generate passive participles at all.

- (7) a. *trčanje* b. *padanje*
 run-nje fall-ing
 ‘running’ ‘falling’

In terms of the distinction between prosodic (un)faithfulness, I suggest an analysis whereby non-event denoting deverbal nominalizations derived by means of the *-nje* suffix systematically exhibit prosodic unfaithfulness. When it comes to event denoting nominalizations, prosodic faithfulness applies according to the Elsewhere Principle unless there is a more specific rule with a different requirement.

References

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