

Argument-Structure and Referential Participant Nominals in Malagasy

Deverbal nominals referring to arguments of the verbal base (participant nominals, PNs) have received limited attention in the literature of nominalizations. The main reason is that while a subpart of action nominals exhibit core verbal and clausal properties, PNs in better-studied languages resemble common noun phrases in most of their structure-internal properties. However, recent work on agentive and instrumental nominals in English and other Indo-European languages (Alexiadou and Schäfer, 2007, and references therein) shows that certain elements of structure such as eventive interpretation and argument structure realization are possible in these nominals. In this paper, I provide further data from Malagasy, showing that Malagasy PNs fall into at least two different categories, in the same way that action nominals do (Grimshaw, 1990; Borer 2005; Alexiadou et al, 2007; Alexiadou, 2010): *argument-supporting* PNs (ASPNs), which contain event and argument structure; and referential PNs (RPNs), which allow only for incorporated arguments and in general behave like common noun phrases in their internal syntax and external distribution but do maintain some basic properties associated with their verbal base. The examples in (1) illustrate the distinction for agentive nominals, while the examples in (2) do the same for instrumental nominals. While the “noun-like” nominalizations in (1.a) and (2.a) allow productively for adjectival and quantifier modification and lack definite, case-marked internal arguments and eventive interpretations, the agentive nominal in (1.b) and the instrumental nominal in (2.b) allow for case-marked definite internal arguments, low adverbial modification (e.g. manner and frequency adverbs), and force an eventive interpretation (e.g. events of “teaching” in (1.b) and “drilling” in (2.b) have occurred in some unspecified time). The implied events can be interpreted as “episodic” in that they may have occurred at a specific time (i.e. they are not necessarily habitual), but are not time-anchored with respect to the time of utterance. The two types of nominals produce robust results with respect to further diagnostic tests designed to tease apart a similar distinction in the morphosyntactic behaviour of action nominals (Alexiadou et al, 2007; Alexiadou, 2010 and references therein). Thus, the linked element in RPNs is interpreted as a possessor (3.b), while it is necessarily an agent in ASPNs (3.a); finally, ASPNs are compatible with aspectual modifiers while RPNs are not (4). Both ASPNs and RPNs are assumed to be formed from a relative clause source, with the nominalizer acting as a type of relativizer which can attach at different heights in the clausal structure. Core verbal or nominal properties of resulting nominals are directly related to this attachment height. In ASPNs the nominalizer merges below tense, and thus contains the full argument and event structures associated with the higher verbal functional domain. Lack of tense explains the complementary distribution between the nominalizer and tense morphology and in addition explains the inability of time-anchoring the event. In RPNs, the nominalizer merges above the lower projections of AspP for agentive nominals and ApplP for instrumentals, and thus higher projections responsible for accusative case and the eventive interpretation become unavailable. This explains the lack of adverbial modifiers and definite themes in these nominalizations. Further evidence for the relative clause character of the nominalizing structure is provided by the type of voice morphology attached to the verbal source, as well as binding and reconstruction facts drawn from ASPN nominals. Finally, while pluralisation of argument structure nominals is in general forbidden (at least when non-telic aspect is available within the nominalized structure, see Iordachioaia & Soare, 2008), ASPNs can be interpreted as plural (5). This is a direct consequence of the structure adopted here, since these nominals are relative clauses referring to entities, i.e. what pluralizes is the null nominal head of the reduced relative clause.

1. a. n.an.asa [mp.aka sary telo] i Raso a t.ami.n'ny f.an.ambadi.ana
PST.V.invite NMLZ.take picture three DET Raso a PST.for.LNK'DET NMLZ.V.marry.CT
'Raso a invited three photographers to the wedding.'
- b. Rakoto dia ny mpampianatra teny gasy an-dRaso a isan'andro
Rakoto TOP DET NMLZ. CAUS.V.learn language Malagasy ACC-Raso a every day
'Rakoto is the one who teaches Raso a Malagasy every day.'
2. a. n.i.vidy ilay f.i.as.ana vaovao roa aho
PST.V.buy DEM NML.V.work.CT new two 1SG/NOM
'I bought these (aforementioned) two new tools (*lit. things to work with*)'
- b. ny f.an.doah.an-dRabe rindrina tsara dia ilay fantsika
DET NMLZ. V.drill. CT/LNK-Rabe wall well TOP DEM nail
'The (instrument for) Rabe's drilling walls well is this nail.'
3. a. ny f.an.doah.an-dRabe rindrina dia an-dRaso a
DET NMLZ. V.drill. CT/LNK-Rabe wall TOP LOC-Raso a
'Rabe's (instrument for) drilling walls belongs to Raso a.'
Rabe can only be interpreted as the user of the drill.
- b. no.hita.ko ny f.i.pasohan-dRaso a
PST.find.1SG/GEN DET NMLZ.V.iron.CT/LNK-Raso a
'I found Raso a's iron.'
The iron Raso a used, borrowed, talked about, and so on...
4. * tia.ko ilay mp.amp.i.anatra matetika
like/TT.1SG/GEN DEM NMLZ.CAUS.V.study frequent
'I like this frequent teacher (the one who teaches frequently).'
5. Rakoto sy Rabe dia mpampianatra teny gasy an-dRaso a
Rakoto and Rabe TOP NMLZ.CAUS.V.learn language Malagasy ACC-Raso a
'Rakoto and Rabe are the teachers of Malagasy to Raso a.'

References

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