



Arguments and modifiers in deverbal nominals: Romanian Genitives and *de*-PPs

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Introduction

1. Arguments vs. modifiers in deverbal nominals

- Two kinds of “deverbal” nominals : **AS-Ns** (argument structure and event properties) and **R-Ns** (no AS, no event properties)

(Chomsky 1970, Grimshaw 1990, Borer 2013, a.o)

- Across languages:

- **arguments** of deverbal nominals, unlike those of verbs, are expressed either by PPs (*de, of, etc*) or by Genitives.
- **modifiers** are generally expressed by PPs.

(1) [The enemy's] destruction [of the city] [in two hours]
Genitive PP-Arg PP-modif

Introduction

- In languages where case is not morphologically marked, e.g. French, PPs realize indiscriminately arguments and modifiers:

(2) La destruction [de la ville] [par les ennemis] [en deux heures]
the destruction of the city by the enemies in two hours

de-PPs in French can realize arguments and modifiers:

(3) La destruction [d'hier soir] [de cette ville]
the destruction of yesterday evening of this city
'Yesterday evening's destruction of this city'

Introduction

- In other languages, such as Romanian, which is the focus of this study

- (specific) arguments are realized as a Genitive

(4) distrugerea **orasului** vs. ***de oras**
destruction town-Gen of town ‘destruction of the city’

- while modifiers are expressed by *de*-PPs.

(5) distrugerea **de ieri seara**
destruction of yesterday evening ‘yesterday evening’s destruction’

- Romanian offers thus an empirical test for the internal structure of derived nominals as either AS-Ns (argument structure nominals) or R-Ns (referential, non verb-derived)

Introduction

2. Individual-denoting deverbal nominals : *dancer, diver, assistant, stapler*

- Are individual denoting (including instruments) deverbal nominals AS-Ns or R-Ns?
- Chomsky 1970: all non-derived (*the general secretary of the party, assistant vice-chancellor of the university*) and do not have an argument structure also Borer (2013).
- Rappaport Hovav & Levin (1992), van Hout & Roeper (1998), Alexiadou & Schäffer (2008, 2010), Roy & Soare (2014, 2020):
 - at least of sub-class of individual-denoting deverbal nominals are syntactically derived from a verbal base
 - they have an argument structure

Introduction

In earlier work we have argued for a three-way typology of individual-denoting nominals, for French and Romanian (Roy & Soare 2014, 2020)

Agent nominals	<i>episodic</i>	le vendeur de la voiture / vânzătorul mașinii
	<i>dispositional</i>	le vendeur de voitures / vânzătorul de mașini

a. Eventive -er nominals / Argument structure Ns (AS-Ns)

$$[{}_{\text{NP}} \text{N} [{}_{\text{AspEvP}} \text{-er} [{}_{\text{AspEv}} \text{ev}] [{}_{\text{AspQP}} \text{DP}_{\text{object}} [{}_{\text{AspQ}}] [{}_{\text{C=V}} \text{Root}]]]]$$

Instruments	le broyeur de végétaux / tocătorul de vegetale
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b. Non-eventive -er nominals / Root derived (R-Ns)

$$[{}_{\text{NP}} \text{N} \text{-er} [{}_{\text{C=N}} \text{Root}]]$$

Introduction

(Roy & Soare 2014, 2020)

Agent nominals

episodic

i. le vendeur de **la / cette voiture**

the seller of the this car

ii. **vânzătorul mașinii/ acestei mașini**

seller-the car-Gen / this-Gen car-Gen

DP_{DEF} argument
(specific)

dispositional

i. le vendeur de **voitures**

ii. **vânzătorul de mașini**

the seller of cars

Bare plural argument
(non-specific)

Episodicity is correlated with specificity of the **internal argument**:

- **specificity** (of the internal argument) → episodic reading
- **non specificity** (of the internal argument) → dispositional reading

\exists / GEN [_{NP} N [_{AspEvP} -er [_{AspEv} ev] [_{AspQP} DP_{object} [_{AspQ}] [_{C=V} Root]]]]

Introduction

Non-specific (bare plural) DPs → dispositional reading
but also instruments

Dispositional agent nominals
Instruments

le vendeur de voitures / vânzătorul de mașini
le broyeur de végétaux / tocătorul de vegetale

Test: ‘internal eventive reading’: *big/frequent* type adjectival modification (Roy&Soare 2013, 2020)

- (6) a. nous avons trouvé *un gros vendeur de voitures* ‘sells a lot of cars’
b. nous avons trouvé *un gros broyeur de végétaux* ‘big machine **only**’
- (7) a. *am gasit un mare vânzător de mașini* ‘sells a lot of cars’
b. *??am găsit un mare tocător de vegetale* event-modifying adj. (prenominal position) not accepted

Introduction

Roy & Soare (2014, 2020)

episodic and dispositional Agent nominals behave on a par in having an argumental structure, instruments lack an argumental structure.

➤ **French** arguments and modifiers are introduced by *de*-PPs indistinctively

<i>episodic AS-N agent eur-nominals</i>	→ le vendeur <i>de la voiture</i>	‘the seller of the car’
<i>dispo AS-N agent eur-nominals</i>	→ le vendeur <i>de voitures</i>	‘the seller of cars’
<i>instruments R-N</i>	→ le broyeur <i>de végétaux</i>	‘the shredder of plants’

➤ **Romanian** has an argumental Genitive; the Genitive is expected to show up in episodic and dispositional Agent nominals (AS-Ns).

<i>episodic AS-N agent tor-nominals</i>	vânzatorul <i>masinii</i>	‘the seller of the car’
<i>dispo AS-N agent tor-nominals</i>	vânzatorul <i>de masini</i>	‘the seller of cars’
<i>instruments R-N</i>	tocătorul <i>de vegetale</i>	‘the shredder of plants’

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Issue

Why is it that Dispositional Agent AS-Ns in Romanian take *de*-PPs and not Genitives?

<i>episodic AS-N agent tor-nominals</i>	vânzatorul	masinii	the seller of the car
<i>dispo AS-N agent tor-nominals</i>	vânzatorul	de masini	the seller of cars
<i>instruments</i>	tocătorul	de vegetale	the shredder of plants

Apparent problem for

- ❑ Roy & Soare (2014, 2020): if dispositional Agents are AS-Ns, then they have an argument structure
→ why is the genitive out?
- ❑ more generally for other approaches which treat *-er* nominals as a homogeneous class:
 - ❑ either as R-Ns (Borer/Chomsky perspective)
 - ❑ or as AS-Ns (Alexiadou & Schäffer 2008, 2010)
→ why are there *both* genitives and *de*-PPs in Romanian?

Claims

- Specificity is the key to understand the distribution of argumental Genitives in Romanian
- Genitive correlates with specificity
 - Specific DPs → Genitives
 - PPs → non-specific
- specific DPs correlate with *episodic AS-Ns*
 - *episodic Agent -tor AS-Ns* involve **Genitive** arguments

Only episodic agent AS-Ns can take a Genitive argument

Claims

- Romanian *de*-PPs can be arguments and modifiers

Romanian dispositional Agent *-tor* nominals take non-specific bare arguments

Bare arguments are realized as (pseudo-incorporated) *de*-PPs

Outline

- ❖ Genitive case marking supports the existence of two classes of *-tor* nominals
 - AS-Ns (agents)
 - R-Ns (instruments)
- ❖ Distribution of the Genitive is dependant on specificity
- ❖ de-PPs in Romanian can be arguments (dispositional Agent nominals)
- ❖ Concluding remarks on cross-linguistic patterns of individual denoting deverbal nominals

AS-Ns vs. R-Ns (*-tor* nominals)

Roy & Soare (2014; 2020)

- **Agent *-er* nominals**, as opposed to Instruments, have argument structure properties, and hence are syntactically derived → AS-Ns
 - **Instruments** are *not* syntactically derived (contra Alexiadou & Schäffer 2008, 2010) → R-Ns
- Romanian Genitive supports the split between AS-Ns and R-Ns for *-er* nominals

I. Argumental genitives: *episodic Agent -tor* nominals

Roy & Soare 2020:

episodic Agent -tor nominals, as opposed to Instruments, take *argumental* Genitive DPs.

(8) a. Aducătorul **scrisorilor** va primi o recompensă.
bring-er letter.GEN will receive a reward
'the bringer of the letter will receive a reward'

b. *Copiatorul **articolului** s-a stricat.
copy-er article.GEN se-has broken
'the copy-machine of the article is broken'

II. Argumental vs. possessive genitives

with **Instruments**, the only interpretation of the Genitive is that of a **possessive**.

→ Possessive Genitives are *not* related to internal argumental structure properties.

(8) b. *Copiatorul articolului s-a stricat.
copy-er article.GEN se-has broken
'the copy-machine of the article is broken'

(9) Copiatorul **catedrei** s-a stricat.
copy.er.the department.GEN se.has broken
'the copy machine of the department is broken'
(≠ *'the copy machine that copied the department'*)

III. *-de-PP* modifiers: Instruments

- Instrument *-tor* nominals, in turn, take *de-PP* modifiers

(10) transmițătorul **de semnale** s-a stricat.
transmitter.the of signals se-has broken
'The transmitter of signals is broken.'

- By contrast, *episodic Agent -tor* nominals never allow *de-PP* modifiers

(11)*vindecătorul **de acest bolnav**
healer-the of this sick-person
'the healer of this sick person'

→ iterim conclusion: AS-Ns vs R-Ns

Complementary distribution:

Genitive case	→ episodic Agent AS-Ns ;	*instrument R-Ns
<i>de</i> -PP	→ instrument R-Ns ;	*episodic Agent AS-Ns

Genitive is associated with realization of an AS

Argument in favor of Roy & Soare 2014, 2020: a sub-class (and only a sub-class) of *er*-nominals are AS-Ns

Genitive case and specificity

➤ Why *dispositional AS-Ns* cannot take Genitive arguments?

Dispositional Agent nominals

- non specific arguments expressed by bare plurals
- absence of overt D leads to impossibility to mark Case in Romanian

vânzator.ul de mașini / *mașinii
seller.Det-Def of cars car.Det-Def-Gen

masinii → necessarily leads to an **episodic** reading (Det.Def)

vânzător.ul mașini.i
seller.Det-Def car.Det-Def-Gen ‘the seller of the car’

- Genitive case marked arguments in AS-Ns are specific DPs
 - Specificity leads to an episodic interpretation

I. Morphological case

- Case is morphologically marked on Determiners in Romanian

➤ e.g., Possessive Genitive

(12) fata rege.lui
daughter.Det-Def king.Det-Def_{Gen} ‘the daughter of the king’

➤ e.g., Argumental Genitive

(13) distrugerea orasu.lui
destruction.Det-Def city.Det-Def_{Gen} ‘the destruction of the city’

➤ e.g., Dative

(14) Am dat bani rege.lui
have given money king.Det-Def_{Dat} ‘We gave money to the king’

II. Bare DPs

- Bare (plural or singular) DPs cannot be marked with the Genitive/Dative (because of the lack of an overt D)
→ they are introduced by PPs

Bare plurals:

- (15) a. **fata** **de oameni saraci**
daughter of people poor
- b. **am dat** **bani** **la saraci**
have given money to poor

Bare singulars:

- (16) a. **fata** **de rege**
daughter of king ‘daughter of a king / a king’s daughter’
- b. **am dat** **bani** **la rege**
have given money to king ‘we gave money to the king’

III. *De*-PPs with *dispositional AS-Ns*

- Dispositional Agent *-tor* nominals call for a non specific argument expressed by a bare nominal
 - A bare nominal can only be introduced in a PP, here *de*-PP

(17) **Un mare vânzător de mașini ne-a facut o ofertă**
a big seller of cars us-has made an offer

- A non-specific bare argument cannot be a Genitive DP
(because of the lack of an overt D)

→ Interim conclusion: Genitive case and specificity

Distribution of case / PPs in Romanian is not a counter-argument to the analysis of dispositional agent nominals as AS-Ns

...but is rather expected

→ dispositional Agent nominals involve non-specific arguments.

and it supports R&S:

→ specificity is involved in the episodic/dispositional contrast

PP arguments in Romanian

- *de*-PPs can be arguments with bare nominals

(repeated example)

(17) **Un mare vânzător de mașini** ne-a facut o ofertă
a big seller of cars us-has made an offer

I. *De*-PP arguments with all AS-Ns (complex event nominals)

- Across the board: absence of Genitives with *all* deverbal AS-Ns when the argument is a bare nominal

(18) *distrugerea* (frecventa a) **orașelor**
destruction-the (frequent) cities-GEN
ok: 'the destruction of the cities'
#: 'the destruction of cities'

(19) *distrugerea* (frecventa) **de orașe**
destruction-the (frequent) of cities
#: 'the destruction of the cities'
ok: 'the destruction of cities'

- *de*-PPs are interpreted as non-specific while Genitive arguments are specific

(20) *distrugerea* (frecventa a) **Bucureștiului** / **de București*
destruction-the frequent Bucharest-GEN of Bucharest

AS-Ns : *de*-PPs are argumental

II. Pseudo-incorporated arguments

- Bare nominals are pseudo-incorporated in Romanian (Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2015)
- Pseudo incorporated arguments (Massam 2001, Dayal 2003, Dobrovie Sorin 2005, 2006)
 - have a tighter than usual relationship to the (V) head
 - must be adjacent to the nominal head
 - cannot have a strong/specific interpretation

Dispositional agent AS-Ns involve pseudo-incorporated (bare plural) arguments

III. Argumental *de*-PPs in AS-Ns

- **There are argumental *de*-PPs in AS-Ns in Romanian (with bare nominals)**
Just like French has argumental *de*-PPs.
- Knittel (2010): French event-denoting AS-Ns
non-specific internal arguments are pseudo-incorporated

(21) **une vente de bijoux à domicile**
a sale of jewelry at home

Romanian dispositional Agent *-tor* nominals combine with a pseudo-incorporated argumental PP.
while Romanian Instrument *-tor* nominals do not take arguments.

Conclusion

In Romanian,

- ❑ specificity correlates with Genitive case marking
- ❑ Bare arguments can only be (pseudo-incorporated) PPs

Romanian provides further evidence in favor of a three-way typology: (R&S 2014, 2020)

- split between Agent (AS-Ns) and instruments (R-Ns)
- split between dispositional and episodic Agent AS-Ns, linked to specificity of the internal argument

	Romanian / French
Episodic AS-Ns	Genitive (K/ <i>de</i>)
Dispositional AS-Ns	<i>de</i> -PP (pseudo incorporated)
Instrument R-Ns	<i>de</i> -PP modifier

→ English?
phrasal (*of*-PP) vs.
synthetic compounds

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