

Nominalizations at the morphology-syntax interface

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Abstract

Nominalizations have played a central role in generative grammar since its earliest stages, as they have long been understood to be an interface phenomenon involving the lexicon, morphology, and syntax, and thus a privileged testing ground for fundamental principles of grammatical theory. This course provides an overview of the main research topics on nominalizations developed in the generative tradition over the past few decades, leading up to current debates in the field.

We begin with Chomsky's (1970) seminal distinction between *derived nominals* (e.g. *their refusal of the offer*), which exhibit most of the properties of lexical nouns, and *gerunds* (e.g. *their refusing the offer*), which retain much of the structural and interpretive behavior of their clausal counterparts with only limited nominal properties. We then turn to crosslinguistic research that empirically documents this distinction and the main theoretical approaches that offer an in-depth investigation of the two patterns. These studies show that, rather than a strict dichotomy between two discrete types, languages typically display a continuum of nominalization strategies. These strategies combine different layers of verbal (or adjectival) functional structure inherited from the base with nominal structure of varying complexity, as reflected in their morphosyntactic behavior. The course concludes with a discussion of current research questions and ongoing theoretical developments, as reflected in recent work on nominalizations.