

Nominalization and Functional Heads

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Abstract

One of the key historical documents behind the search for structural parallels between Clauses and Nominals is Chomsky's 1970 treatise *Remarks on Nominalization*. Three types of nominals were distinguished, Gerundive (1a), Derived (b) and 'mixed' (c):

1. a. John's refusing the offer
- b. John's refusal of the offer
- c. John's refusing of the offer

A 'Transformationalist' (i.e. productively morpho-syntactic) account was considered feasible for (a), a 'Lexicalist' (i.e. a non-productive and largely idiosyncratic) account for (b) and, perhaps, (c). The treatise, as a whole, was a plea for a 'Lexicalist' position as far as possible, a position more or less tacitly adopted in various developments of generative grammar since then.

I'll be concentrating here on Derived Nominals (type 1b), and I want to address two points:

- Why should Clauses and (Derived) Nominals be assumed to be structurally parallel?
- Granted that the assumption is justified, what kind of functional heads could, or should, be assumed in order to secure such parallelism?

The first question is generally answered with reference to facilitation of language acquisition. If there is only one 'deep' structural pattern, then – all else being equal – this would be easier to acquire than two competing ones. This might threaten to relegate whatever superficial differences there might be between them to a matter of language use – a position otherwise scorned in generative theory. This argument cannot be dismissed on empirical grounds. However, it does not say much about the reason why such parallelism should exist. This reason, obviously, is semantic in nature. Although both Clauses and Derived Nominals have propositional content, the denotations of Clauses – in Austin's terms – are *historical* situations (i.e., they carry truth values), whereas for Derived Nominals they are situation *types* (i.e., they carry factual presuppositions).

Since Abney (1987), the second question has been answered with reference to the functional structure of Clauses and Nominals, leading to DP analyses of the latter, and to the introduction of a variety of functional heads to handle inflexional morphology in both. I'll explore the possibility of shifting some of the burden of explanation to the area of derivational morphology, arguing that standard categorial labels like N, V, A, etc., are in fact labels for *functional* heads, merged from 'sub-syntactic' processes of derivation, and that the notion of *lexical* head properly belongs to (derivational) morphology.