

# A clausal embedding argument for small syntax of Russian nominalizations\*

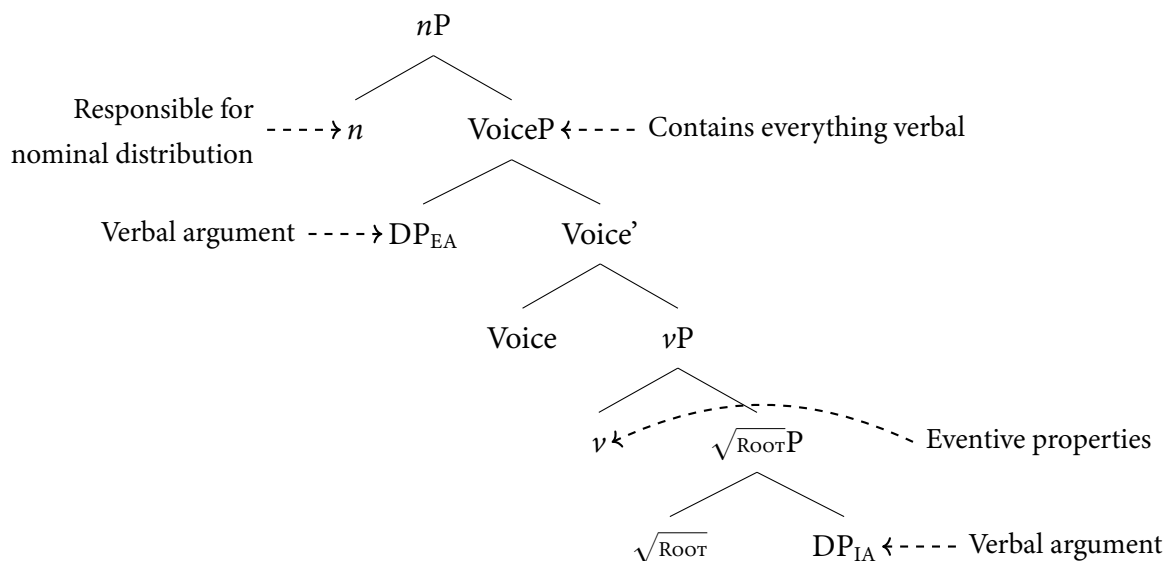
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## 1 Phrasal layering and how to argue against it

The dominant approach to nominalizations is the phrasal layering approach: a verbal projection is embedded under a categorizing head  $n$  (Hazout 1991; Borer 1997; Fu, Roeper & Borer 2001; Alexiadou 2001; Borer 2013; Bruening 2013 i.a.). The idea is that such structures account for verb-like argument structure, eventive interpretation, and external distribution of a nominal. The core property of the phrasal layering approach is *inheritance*: whatever is allowed in the verbal XP should be allowed in the nominalization. Any failure of inheritance is thus an argument against the phrasal layering approach.

(1) A phrasal layering structure for deverbal nominalizations

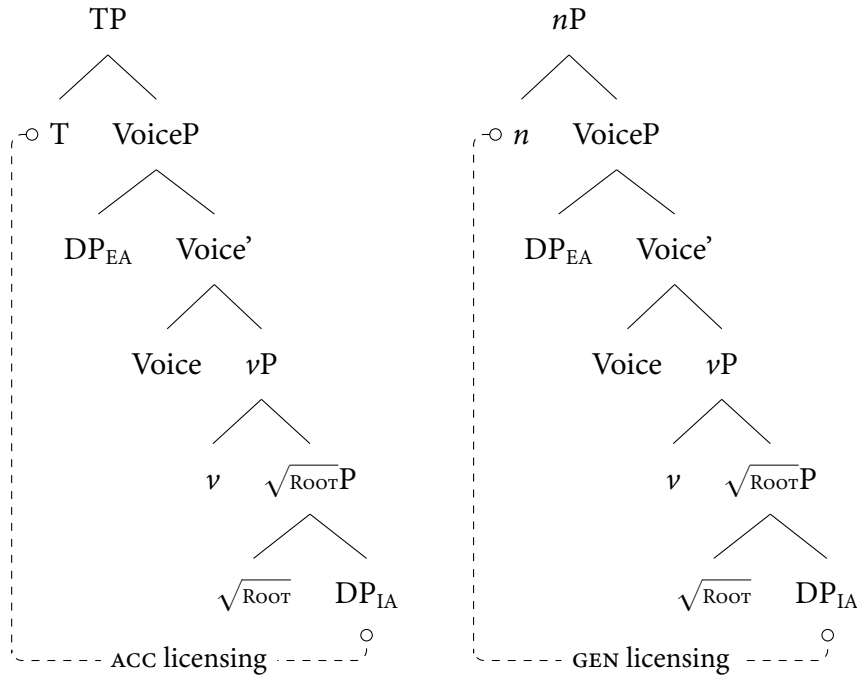


It's not that easy to find a failure of inheritance! Here's a non-argument: one finds ACC-marked DPs inside VPs but not inside nominalizations. Hence, phrasal layering is wrong. It's a non-argument because ACC-marked DPs are *licensed* by a higher functional head, absent in the nominalization.

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(2) Case assignment in clausal and nominal domain assuming phrasal layering



This is instructive: we should look for failure of inheritance for properties of verbal phrases that do not require licensing by higher functional heads. One of the strongest arguments against the phrasal layering approach in Wood (2023) concerns lexical case in Icelandic: DAT-marked themes of unaccusative verbs surface as GEN-marked arguments of nominalizations.

- (3) a. *Menningunni hefur hnig-na-ð.*      b. *hnig-n-un menningarinnar*  
 culture.the.DAT has declined-VBLZ-PTCP      decline-VBLZ-NMLZ culture.the.GEN  
 ‘The culture has declined.’      ‘the decline of the culture’
- c. *Vélinni sein-ka-ði.*      d. *sein-k-un vélarinnar*  
 plane.the.DAT late-VBLZ-PST      late-VBLZ-NMLZ plane.the.GEN  
 ‘The plane delayed.’      ‘the delay of the plane’
- e. *Sjúklingum hefur fæ-kka-ð.*      f. *fæ-kk-un sjúklinga*  
 patients.the.DAT have decrease-VBLZ-PTCP      decrease-VBLZ-NMLZ patients.the.GEN  
 ‘The number of patients has decreased.’      ‘the decrease of patients’

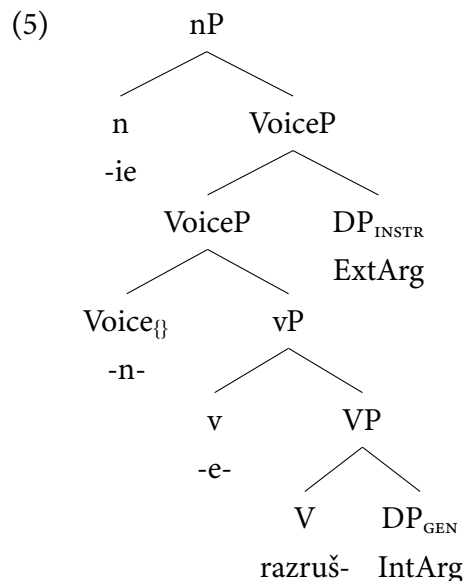
Today, I present another argument of the same schema. My focus is on clause-embedding predicates. The claim: there is a class of clause-embedding predicates in Russian that either cannot form eventive nominalizations or cannot embed a clause when nominalized. Based on theoretical and empirical grounds, embedded clauses require no licensing by a higher functional heads, if any selection at all. We then have a failure of inheritance. Here are the details & complications.

## 2 The argument

Russian eventive nominalizations are morphologically derived from passive participles (4a-b), even when the verb is unaccusative and lacks a passive participles (4c-d). The point is, formation of eventive nominalizations is rather general.

- (4) a. *razruš-e-n-ie*      *goroda*    *vragom*      b. *gorod razruš-e-n*      *vragom*  
 destroy-TH-PASS-NMLZ city.GEN enemy.INSTR      cit    destroy-TH-PASS enemy.INSTR  
 ‘Destruction of the city by the enemy.’      ‘The city is destroyed by the enemy.’  
 c. *pad-e-n-ie*      *snega*      *zimoj*      d. \**pad-e-n*  
 fall-TH-PASS-NMLZ snow.GEN winter.INSTR      fall-TH-PASS  
 ‘Falling of the snow during winter.’

The morphologically supported view: a Voice<sub>PASS</sub>P is nominalized (Rudnev & Volkova 2020; see 5 in a phrasal layering spirit, following Pazel’skaya & Tatevosov 2008).



Now, consider the verb *načatj* ‘to begin’ (6a). Its eventive nominalization is severely degraded (6b). I consider mere proclamation of a paradigm gap to be unsatisfactory—why does this verb lack a nominalization? Some related verbs with the same root do have one: *zač-a-tj* ‘conceive-TH-INF’ ~ *zač-a-t-ie* ‘conceive-TH-PASS-NMLZ’.

- (6) a. *ja nača-l*      *kur-i-tj*      b. \**nača-t-ie*      *kur-i-tj*  
 I start-PST.M.SG smoke-TH-INF      start-PASS-NMLZ smoke-TH-INF  
 ‘I started smoking.’      Int: ‘Starting to smoke.’

It seems that the embedded clause is partially the culprit: consider the verb *prekratitj* ‘to stop’. It can take embed an eventive nominalization or an infinitival clause (7a-b). When embedding an infinitival clause, nominalization formation is impossible (7c-d).

- (7) a. *ja prekrat-i-l obšč-e-n-ie s nej* b. *prekrašč-e-n-ie obšč-e-n-ija*  
 I stop-TH-PST.M.SG talk-TH-PASS-NMLZ with her stop-TH-PASS-NMLZ talk-TH-PASS-NMLZ  
 ‘I stopped talking to her.’ ‘Stopping to talk.’
- c. *ja prekrat-i-l obšč-a-tj-sja s nej* d. *\*prekrašč-e-n-ie obšč-a-tj-sja*  
 I stop-TH-PST.M.SG talk-TH-INF-REFL with her stop-TH-PASS-NMLZ talk-TH-INF-REFL  
 ‘I stopped talking to her.’ Int.: ‘Stopping to talk.’

Some speakers accept (7d) in sentences like (8a) but they reject it under a clear eventive construal (8b) while accepting a nominalization embedded by nominalization. I will return to construals like (8a) towards the end.

- (8) a. *Trebuju prekrašč-e-n-ija obsužd-a-tj sluxi*  
 demand.PRES.1SG stop-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN discuss-TH-INF-REFL rumours  
 ‘I demand that you stop discussing rumours.’
- b. *\*prekrašč-e-n-ie Vasi/Vasej obsužd-a-tj sluxi vse x udivilo*  
 stop-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN Vasja.GEN/INST discuss-TH-INF-REFL rumours all surprised  
 Int: ‘Everyone was surprised that Vasja stopped discussing rumours.’
- c. *prekrašč-e-n-ie Vasej obsužd-e-n-ija sluxov vse x udivilo*  
 stop-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN Vasja.GEN/INST discuss-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN rumours all  
 surprised  
 ‘Everyone was surprised that Vasja stopped discussing rumours.’

The verb *prodolžiti* ‘to continue’ presents a similar pattern: it can embed both nominalizations and non-finite clauses but can’t embed a non-finite clause as a nominalization (9). While some speakers report accepting (9d), the contrast in (10) seems more robust.

- (9) a. *ja prodolž-i-l obšč-e-n-ie* b. *prodolž-e-n-ie obšč-e-n-ija*  
 I continue-TH-PST.MSG talk-TH-PASS-NMLZ continue-TH-PASS-NMLZ talk-TH-PASS-NMLZ  
 ‘I continued to talk.’ ‘Continuing to talk.’
- c. *ja prodolž-i-l obšč-a-tj-sja* d. *\*prodolž-e-n-ie obšč-a-tj-sja*  
 I continue-TH-PST.MSG talk-TH-INF-REFL continue-TH-PASS-NMLZ talk-TH-INF-REFL  
 ‘I continued to talk.’ Int.: ‘Continuing to talk.’
- (10) a. *\*prodolž-e-n-ie Vasi/Vasej obsužd-a-tj sluxi vse x udivilo*  
 continue-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN Vasja.GEN/INST discuss-TH-INF-REFL rumours all  
 surprised  
 Int: ‘Everyone was surprised that Vasja continued discussing rumours.’

- b. *prodolž-e-n-ie*                      *Vasej*                      *obsužd-e-n-ija*                      *sluxov*  
 continue-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN    Vasja.GEN/INST    discuss-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN    rumours  
*vsex udivilo*  
 all    surprised  
 ‘Everyone was surprised that Vasja stopped discussing rumours.’

Clausal embedding on its own is insufficient to account for the pattern: other verbs retain their clause-embedding powers as eventive nominalizations: *rešitj* ‘to decide’ embeds non-finite clauses (11a-b), *utverždatj* ‘to claim’ embeds finite clauses (11c-d).

- (11) a. *ja reš-i-l*                      *pitj*                      *toljko pivo*                      b. *reš-e-n-ije*                      *pitj*                      *toljko pivo*  
 I    decide-TH-PST.M.SG    drink.inf    only    beer                      decide-TH-PASS-NMLZ    drink.inf    only    beer  
 ‘I decided to only drink beer.’                      ‘Decision to only drink beer.’  
 c. *ja utveržd-a-l*                      *čto on durak*                      d. *utveržd-e-n-ije*                      *čto on durak*  
 I    claim-TH-PST.M.SG    that he moron                      claim-TH-PASS-NMLZ    that he moron  
 ‘I claimed that he is a moron.’                      ‘The claim that he is a moron.’

To make sure, eventive construals are available for *rešenie* ‘decision’ and *utverždenie* ‘claim’.

- (12) a. *reš-e-n-ije*                      *Vasi*                      *pitj*                      *toljko pivo*                      *vsex udivilo*  
 decide-TH-PASS-NMLZ    Vasja.GEN    drink.inf    only    beer    all    surprised  
 ‘Vasja’s decision to only drink beer surprised everyone.’  
 b. *utveržd-e-n-ije*                      *Maši*                      *čto on durak*                      *vsex udivilo*  
 claim-TH-PASS-NMLZ    Masha.GEN    that he moron    all    surprised  
 ‘Masha’s claim that he is a moron surprised everyone.’

Non-deverbal nominals can embed non-finite clauses too! Therefore, the relevant generalization is fine-grained and can’t be stated using coarse categories like nominals and non-finite clauses. This is an inability of a certain class of clause-embedding predicates to embed clauses as deverbal nominalizations.

- (13) a. *strastj vypiv-a-tj*                      *po utram*                      b. *pravo prodav-a-tj sigarety*  
 passion drink.-TH-INF    in mornings                      right sell.-TH-INF cigarettes  
 ‘The passion for drinking in the morning.’                      ‘The right to sell cigarettes.’

The observations are enough for me to make my case against the phrasal layering approach. The problem lies in the fact that not all clause-embedding verbs embed clauses as nominalizations.

- (14) The inheritance failure argument:  
 a. Verbs like *prekratitj* ‘to stop’ embed non-finite clauses  
 b. Nominalizations of verbs like *prekratitj* can’t embed non-finite clauses  
 c. There is no ban on embedding non-finite clauses by nominals  
 d. (Non-finite) clauses require no licensing by verbal functional structure

The last premise is based on the assumption that it is *nominal* arguments that need licensing: clausal arguments are largely thought to only be constrained by s-selection (Grimshaw 1979; Petsky 1982), as supported by the recent work on clausal embedding (Elliott 2020; Bondarenko 2022; Wurmbrand & Lohninger 2023 i.a.). While it's possible to argue that the premise is false for argument-introducing functional structure (e.g., Wurmbrand & Shimamura 2017), I take it to be true for Asp, T, etc—stuff that's absent from the Russian deverbal nominalizations (with reservations about Asp; Pazel'skaya & Tatevosov 2008).

### 3 Addressing the issues with the argument

#### 3.1 On the distinction between clauses

The argument relies on examples with nominalizations like *rešenie* 'decision' to involve a different type of non-finite clause, since they are able to embed a non-finite clause. Also, obvious CP-embedding cases must be explained away as well. In other words, what unifies the clauses that can't occur with nominalizations? Here's an idea: verbs that can't embed clauses as nominalizations are verbs that allow cross-clausal negative concord licensing and genitive of negation licensing (see Lyutikova & Gerasimova 2023 for experimental evidence that cross clausal negative concord licensing is possible in Russian— by the way, none of the verbs they test allow clause-embedding nominalizations, see Appendix I).

- (15) a. *Maša ešče ne načala ni-čego delatj*  
M yet not started NC-what do.INF  
'Masha hasn't started doing anything yet.'
- b. \**Maša ešče ne rešila ni-čego delatj*  
M yet not decided NC-what do.INF  
'Masha hasn't decided to do anything yet.'
- c. *Anton ešče ne načal tratitj svoix deneg*  
Anton yet not started spend.INF his.own money.GEN  
'Anton hasn't yet started spending his own money.'
- d. \**Anton ešče ne rešil tratitj svoix deneg*  
Anton yet not decided spend.INF his.own money.GEN  
'Anton hasn't yet decided to spend his own money.'

Negative concord, as an AGREE dependency (see Zeijlstra 2022 for an overview), is sensitive to the TP boundary. Hence, smaller clauses are transparent for inter-clausal licensing, while larger clauses are not (*modulo* covert scrambling: overt scrambling feeds negative concord licensing in Russian, even across a finite clause boundary, as shown by Rudnev 2024).

- (16) a. [Neg V<sub>VoiceP</sub>[*ni* -wh ...]]                      b. \*[Neg V<sub>TP</sub>[*ni* -wh ...]]

Similar conclusion can be drawn from possibility of cross-clausal inverse scope. As suggested by Grano (2012), the less bi-clausal a structure is (the less functional heads the embedded clause has), the easier is QR from the embedded clause (ibid.: 62). Grano takes the pattern to diagnose restructuring.

- (17) a. At least one person tried to solve every problem.  $\forall > \exists$   
 b. At least one person claimed to have solved every problem.  $?\forall > \exists$   
 c. At least one person said that Bill solved every problem.  $*\forall > \exists$

Russian presents a similar contrast. To ensure inverse scope I use distributed numeral quantifier *po dva* X ‘two X per Y’.

- (18) Context: well, our seminar series has got off the ground! Students A and B attend seminar 1, students C and D attend seminar 2, . . .
- a. *Po dva studenta načalo xoditj na každyj seminar*  
 PO 2 students started go to each seminar  
 ‘Each seminar has started getting attended by two students.’
- b. *?Po dva studenta rešilo xoditj na každyj seminar*  
 PO 2 students decided go to each seminar  
 ‘For every seminar, two students have decided to attend it.’

The conjecture, then, is that the clauses that can’t be embedded by nominalizations are less than TP—VoiceP-size, perhaps. Two issues: (i) I am both unaware of and have been unable to come up with other diagnostics for clause size in Russian; (ii) making the VoiceP cut still leaves it mysterious why they should be unable to occur in nominalizations under the small syntax analysis. Re: (ii), the part of the explanation must be the claim that VoiceP-size clauses cannot be embedded by nominals. There are counterexamples.

### 3.2 Apparent VoicePs embedded by verb related nominals

Consider the verb *pytatjsja* ‘to try’ (19a). According to the negative concord diagnostic, it embeds a VoiceP (19b). While it is unable to form a regular *-nie/-tie* nominalization, a morphologically related nominal *popytka* ‘an attempt’ can embed non-finite clauses (19c).

- (19) a. *Ja pytalsja bros-i-tj kur-i-tj*  
 I tried stop.TH-INF smoke-TH-INF  
 ‘I tried to quit smoking.’
- b. *Ja ne pytalsja ni-kogo obidetj*  
 I not tried NI-who offend  
 ‘I didn’t try to offend anyone.’
- c. *Eto moja vtoraja popytka brositj kuritj*  
 this my second attempt stop.TH-INF smoke-TH-INF  
 ‘This is my second attempt at quitting smoking.’

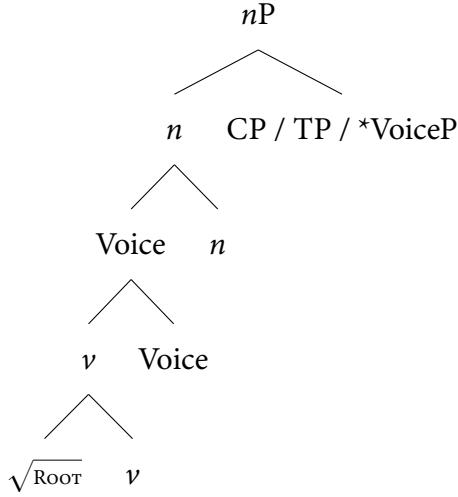
I don’t think this is a problem—as Wurmbrand et al. (2020) and Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2023) show, there is no guaranteed inference from the semantics of the embedding item to the size of the embedded clause. That is to say, I do not think there is a guarantee that the root-derived nominal *popytka* ‘an attempt’ must embed the same type of clause as the verb *pytatjsja* ‘to try’. Additionally, the diagnostics I employ only show *possibility* of a VoiceP complement, not necessity. I think any counterexample like *pytatjsja* ‘to try’ ~ *popytka* ‘an attempt’ can be explained away similarly: by claiming that the nominal embeds a larger clause (although, I am yet to find independent evidence for that).

I merely shift the burden of explanation, though. Now, the question is what determines compatibility of a given root with non-finite clauses of different sizes (and/or of different status regarding presence of a bound variable). I wish to propose a sketch of a semantic account of the impossibility of nominals to occur with smaller, VoiceP-sized, clauses. From the sketch, the property that determines a root’s compatibility with TPs arises.

### 3.3 In direction of a semantic account

To recap: a phrasal layering account cannot in principle account for inability of nominalizations to embed VoiceP-size clauses. Can a small syntax analysis do so? In line with a small syntax account (Wood 2023), all clauses must attach at the *nP* level. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the account must rely on nominals being unable to embed VoicePs.

(20) What small syntax predicts about clausal embedding



Is that plausible? Why should that be the case? I suggest that semantic composition plays a role here. Recent work on finite CP embedding (Elliott 2020; Bondarenko 2022) has defended the view that denotation of a *that*-CP is a predicate over contentful entities and eventualities.

(21)  $\llbracket \text{that } p \rrbracket = \lambda x. \text{CONTENT}(x) = \lambda w. p(w)$  (simplified)

For nominals, the upshot is a straightforward account of constructions like *the rumour that p* using Predicate Modification. The account can be extended to locutions like *my decision that p* (see Portner & Rubinstein 2020 for mood-related complications). Plugging in one's favorite semantics for control, *my decision to p* gets done in a similar way.

- (22) a.  $\llbracket \text{rumour that } p \rrbracket = \lambda x. \text{rumour}(x) \wedge \text{CONTENT}(x) = \lambda w. p(w)$   
 b.  $\llbracket \text{decision that } p \rrbracket = \lambda x. \text{decide}(x) \wedge \text{CONTENT}(x) = \lambda w. p(w)$   
 c.  $\llbracket \text{decision to } p \rrbracket = \lambda y. \lambda x. \text{AG}(x)=y \wedge \text{decide}(x) \wedge \text{CONTENT}(x) = \lambda w. p(y, w)$

The point is, CP-sized clauses have received plausible analyses as content-specifying predicates (presumably, by the virtue of some functional material: Bondarenko 2022) and a similar idea is applicable to TP-sized clauses. In contrast, whatever semantics one assigns to the VoiceP domain, it has to denote an eventuality. Given that VoiceP has a gap/PRO, it's a two-place predicate.

- (23) a.  $\llbracket \text{PRO smoke.NFIN} \rrbracket = \lambda y. \lambda x. \text{CONTENT}(x) = \{\lambda w. y \text{ smokes in } w\}$  (TP-size)  
 b.  $\llbracket \text{PRO smoke.NFIN} \rrbracket = \lambda y. \lambda e. \text{smoke}(e) \wedge \text{AG}(e) = y$  (VoiceP-size)

Here is a semantics for a 'restructuring' verb (loosely in the spirit of Grano 2012).

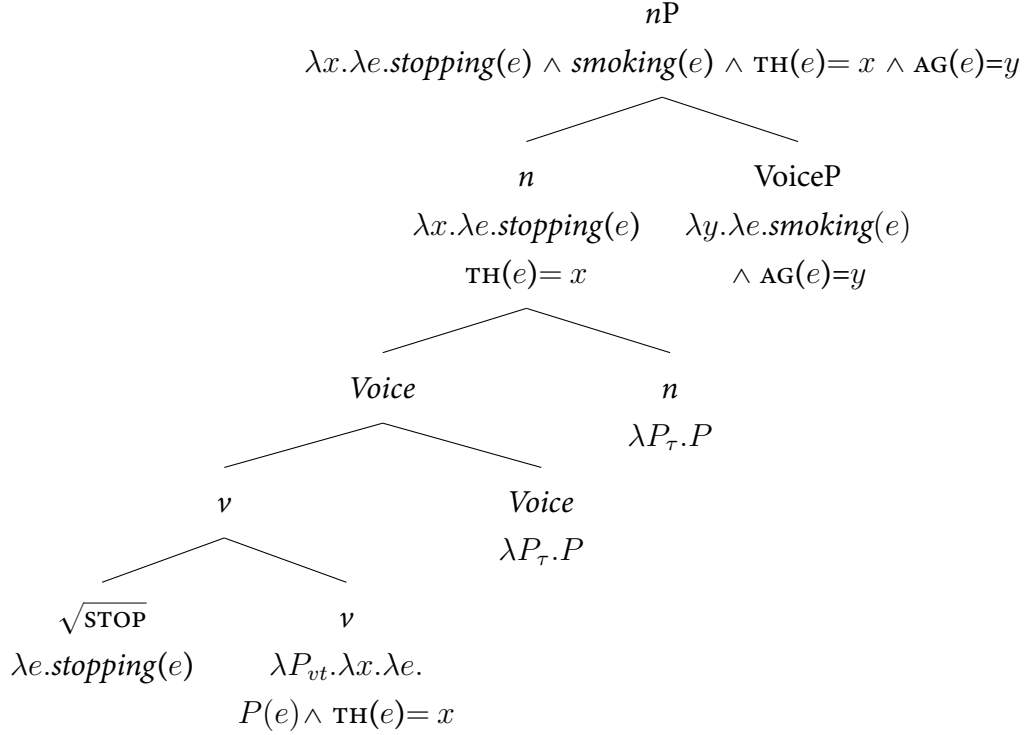
(24)  $\llbracket \sqrt{\text{STOP}} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{e,vt}. \lambda e_1. \exists e_2. \text{stopping}(e_1) \wedge \text{THEME}(e_1) = e_2 \wedge P(\text{AGENT}(e_1), e_2)$

What makes a restructuring verb a restructuring verb? I suggest that a semantics like (24) is only available near a local VoiceP (allosemy, then).

- (25) a.  $\llbracket \sqrt{\text{STOP}} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{e,vt}. \lambda e_1. \exists e_2. \text{stopping}(e_1) \wedge \text{THEME}(e_1) = e_2 \wedge P(\text{AGENT}(e_1), e_2) / \_\_\_\_\_\_ \text{VoiceP}$   
 b.  $\llbracket \sqrt{\text{STOP}} \rrbracket = \lambda e. \text{stopping}(e)$

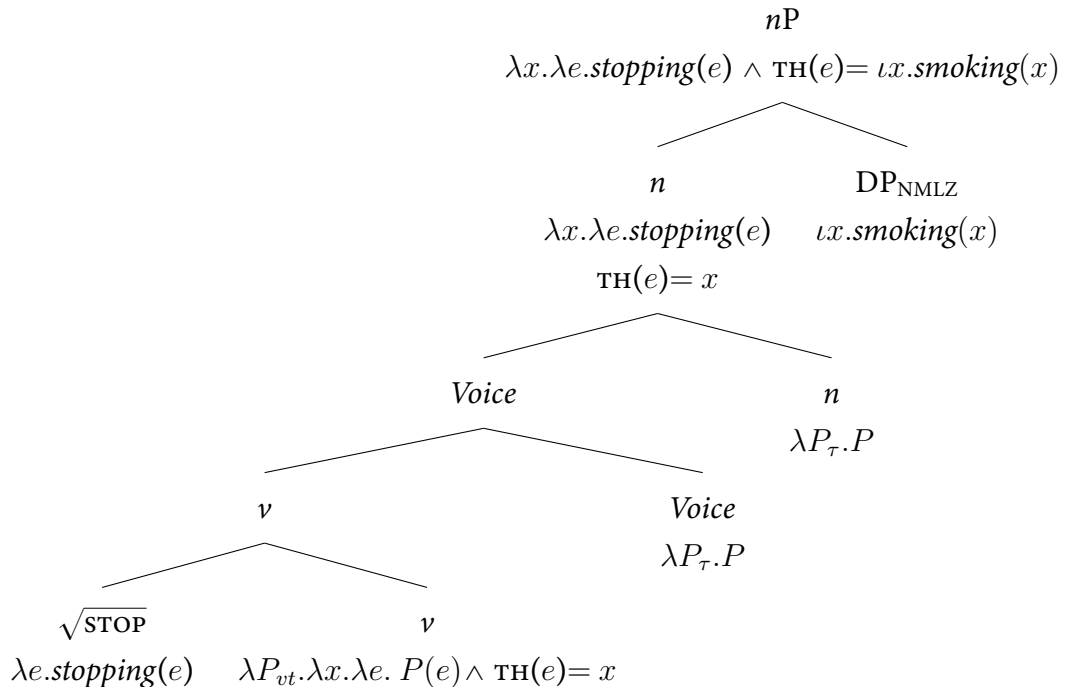
Unless VoiceP is merged to the root, an interpretation that does not take a  $e, vt$  argument is default (cf. Levinson 2014). The result is incoherent interpretation under the complex event reading, as analysed by Wood (2023).

(26)



The problem generalizes: however you cut it, *smoking* and *stopping* will be predicated of the same eventuality, which is incoherent. An embedded nominalization, however, works.

(27)



What about VoiceP-embedding verbs that simply cannot form a nominalization (like *načatj* ‘to begin’ or verbs in Appendix I)? In the spirit of Mendes & Nevins (2022), I suggest that those verbs require a VoiceP near them—they lack an elsewhere alloset. Hence, the small syntax structure of a nominalization is uninterpretable, leading to a lexical gap (as Appendix I shows, *načatj* is far from the only one, showing generality of the account).

- (28) a.  $\llbracket \sqrt{\text{BEGIN}} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{e,vt}. \lambda e_1. \exists e_2. \text{beginning}(e_1) \wedge \text{THEME}(e_1) = e_2 \wedge P(\text{AGENT}(e_1), e_2) / \_\_\_\text{VoiceP}$   
 b. No elsewhere!

Recall the discussion of counterexamples in Section 3.2. It proposes that sometimes verbs that embed a VoiceP can compose with a TP. In terms of this section, then, the embedded clause specifies their CONTENT, but not their THEME—a complex event reading under which  $v$  is interpreted as  $\lambda P_{vt}. \lambda x. \lambda e. P(e) \wedge \text{TH}(e) = x$  is unavailable. That is a testable prediction.

### 3.4 Apparent VoicePs embedded by nominalizations: content reading

Consider the verb *obeščatj* ‘to promise’ (29a). According to the negative concord diagnostic, it embeds a VoiceP (29b). And yet, its nominalization is clause-embedding (29c).

- (29) a. *Ja obeščaju                      bros-i-tj              kur-i-tj*  
           I    promise.PRES.1SG stop.TH-INF smoke-TH-INF  
           ‘I promise to quit smoking.’  
 b. *Ja ne obeščal                      ni-čego delatj*  
           I    not promise.PST.MSG NI-what do  
           ‘I didn’t promise to do anything.’  
 c. *Obešč-a-n-ie                      Vasi              bros-i-tj              kur-i-tj              fuflo*  
           promise-TH-PASS-NMLZ Vasja.GEN stop.TH-INF smoke-TH-INF rubbish  
           ‘Vasja’s promise to stop smoking is rubbish.’

In line with Sections 3.2-3.3, I maintain that (29c) involves TP-embedding (3.2) that specifies the content of an entity (3.3). There’s a way to show this. Benz (2023; 2025) discusses a content reading of nominalizations: a non-eventive clause embedding reading (30).

- (30) Content reading (Benz 2025:73)  
 a. His observation that the Earth is round changed the science forever.  
 b. ?The thorough observation that the Earth is round is correct

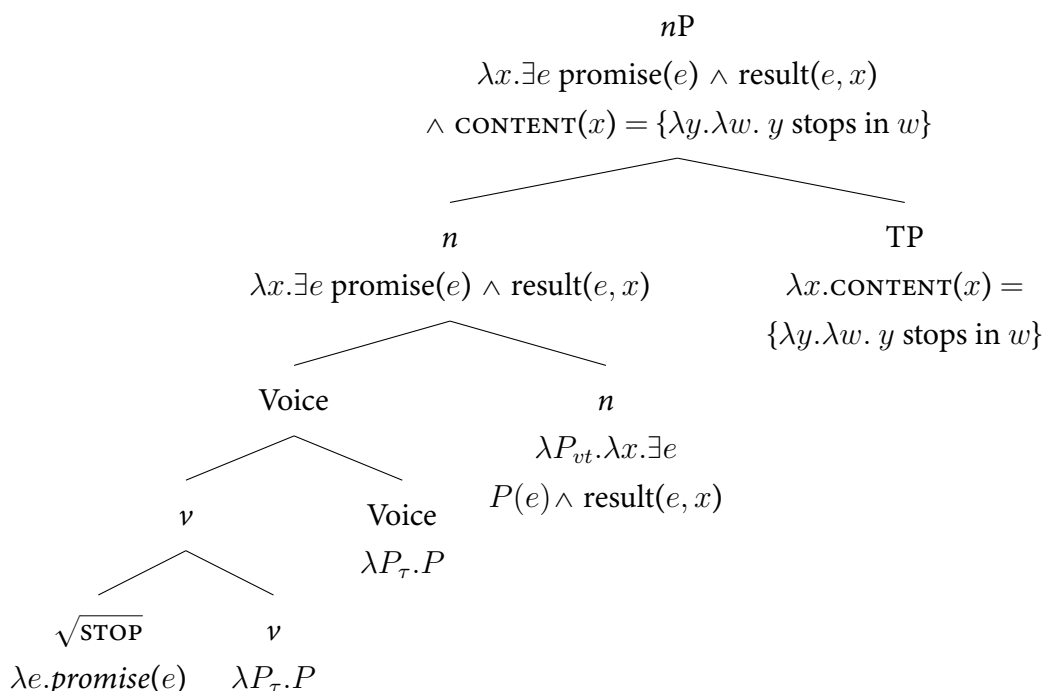
This reading is a plausible candidate for (29c). Example (31) shows incompatibility of clause-embedding *obešč-a-n-ie* ‘promise-TH-PASS-NMLZ’ with eventive modification.

- (31) *\*obešč-a-n-ie                      Vasi              bros-i-tj              kur-i-tj              zanjalo tri              časa*  
           promise-TH-PASS-NMLZ Vasja.GEN stop.TH-INF smoke-TH-INF took              three hours  
           Int: ‘Vasja’s promising to stop smoking took three hours.’

As a sanity check, Russian nominalizations are compatible with such duration specification (32a). A properly TP-embedding verb like *rešitj* ‘to decide’ is compatible too (32b).

- (32) a. *razruš-e-n-ie*                      *goroda*    *vragom*                      *zanjalo tri*    *mesjaca*  
 destroy-TH-PASS-NMLZ city.GEN enemy.INSTR took        three months  
 ‘City’s destruction by the enemy took three months.’  
 b. *reš-e-n-ie*                      *Vasi*                      *broš-i-tj*                      *kur-i-tj*                      *zanjalo tri*    *mesjaca*  
 decide-TH-PASS-NMLZ Vasja.GEN stop.TH-INF smoke-TH-INF took        three months  
 ‘Vasja’s decision to stop smoking took three months.’

Diverging from Benz, I consider content reading to be a subtype of a result nominal (where the result is a contentful entity).



The theoretical move here is to show that an embedded clause is compatible with a result-like interpretation of the nominalization (following Benz 2023). What I am yet to figure out is an extension of the result/content analysis to initial counterexamples for verbs like *prekratitj* ‘to stop’ that fail on eventive construals for speakers who allow it.

- (33) *?Třebuju                      překračč-e-n-ija                      obsužd-a-tj                      sluxi*  
demand.PRES.1SG stop-TH-PASS-NMLZ.GEN discuss-TH-INF-REFL rumours  
'I demand that you stop discussing rumours.'

Although I am open to alternative suggestions of accounting for them without losing the initial generalization.

## 4 Summary

The starting point of this talk was a rather simple observation: in Russian, clausal embedding properties of verbs are not always inherited by deverbal nominalizations (Section 2). The *why* part of the talk took longer. My claim was that the clauses that exhibit the pattern are VoiceP-sized (Section 3.1) and the pattern occurs due to semantic composition (Section 3.3). The apparent counterexamples were explained away by positing that TP-modification of nominals is unrestricted (Section 3.2). Available readings of counterexamples provide indirect support for this move (Section 3.4). See Appendix II for existing reasons to support of phrasal layering for Russian.

## References

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## Appendix I: “subject control” verbs of Lyutikova & Gerasimova (2023)

Lyutikova & Gerasimova (2023) establish that the following verbs allow cross-clausal negative concord licensing: *načínat* ‘begin’, *probovat* ‘try’, *toropit’sya* ‘hurry’, *riskovat* ‘risk’, *starat’sya* ‘endeavor’, *pytat’sya* ‘seek’, *perestavat* ‘cease’. For me, every verb except *starat’sya* ‘endeavor’ does not form a nominalization to begin with. The verb *starat’sya* ‘endeavor’ does not allow a clause-embedding nominalization.

- (34) a. *Ego star-a-n-ie*                      *zametili professora*  
his endeavor-TH-PASS-NMLZ noticed professors  
‘Professors noticed his eagerness.’  
b. \**Ego star-a-n-ie*                      *preuspetj*    *zametili professora*  
his endeavor-TH-PASS-NMLZ succeed.INF noticed professors  
Int: ‘Professors noticed his eagerness to succeed.’

It’s worthwhile to mention that they consider all these verbs to involve subject control. Their diagnostics are inconclusive, however. Lyutikova & Gerasimova (2023) rely on: (i) availability of negation as a TP diagnostic (despite negation being available Russian eventive nominalizations: Gerasimova 2019); (ii) availability of modification by *zavtra* ‘tomorrow’ (which is available in root-derived nominalizations: *vstrecha zavtra* ‘meeting tomorrow’); (iii) availability of the matrix subject corresponding to embedded internal argument of passive / unaccusative sentences (ibid.:40). I take (iii) to be uninformative: while Lyutikova and Gerasimova equate the presence of PRO with presence of Spec,TP, I am unaware of independent arguments for this based on Russian. It’s a bound zero subject. Bound subjects are found in Russian embedded CPs (Shushurin 2017). I fail to see why VoicePs should be left out. Another theoretical possibility is making use of Delayed Gratification (a CCG-like machinery to saturate a semantic argument later in the syntactic derivation: Wood 2015; Myler 2016).

## Appendix II: reasons to support phrasal layering

**Adverbs:** Pazel’skaya & Tatevosov (2008) provide examples that Russian nominalizations are compatible with adverbials, suggesting verbal phrasal structure (Fu, Roeper & Borer 2001 report the same for English; Wood 2023 reports full impossibility of such modification in Icelandic).

- (35) *Poluč-e-n-ie*                      *licensii bystro*    *nevozmožno*  
get-TH-PASS-NMLZ license quickly impossible  
‘Getting one’s license quickly is impossible’

I have no good response yet. A possible response could be that the small syntax is enforced by the participial morphology embedded in the nominalization, to which an adverbial can attach (since

Russian adjectives tolerate manner adverbials). Although it does not generalize to the English observations of Fu, Roeper & Borer (2001) and adverbials are still a problem for the small syntax analysis.

- (36) *Kakoy namerenno glupyj film!*  
what intentionally stupid movie  
'What an intentionally stupid movie!'

**Various aspectual morphology:** Russian, famously, expresses aspectual operators via prefixal and suffixal morphology (see Tatevosov 2020 for a recent treatment). Most of that morphology can appear in the nominalization. I leave it for further work how to accommodate it in a small syntax system (see Benz 2025, ch. 5, for discussion of some issues German prefixal nominalizations raise).

- (37) a. *pere-na-pis-a-n-ie*  
RE-PFV-write-TH-PASS-NMLZ  
'Writing from scratch again.'
- b. *pere-pis-yva-n-ie*  
RE-write-YVA-PASS-NMLZ  
'Writing again.' (-yva- is an imperfectivizing suffix)