

## On argument supporting nominals and the mass vs. count noun distinction

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### 1. Introduction

Grimshaw (1990) argues in detail that de-verbal nouns do not form a homogeneous class.<sup>1</sup> They are argued to be ambiguous between a complex event reading that supports argument structure (AS), and a result/referential (R)-reading that does not. (1a) instantiates the AS-interpretation of the nominal, while (1b) instantiates the R one.

- (1) a. the examination of the patients took a long time AS  
 b. the examination was on the table R

Table 1 summarizes the criteria Grimshaw introduced to distinguish between the two types of nominals in English (Borer 2001):

**Table 1**

R Nominals	AS Nominals
1. Non- $\theta$ -assigner, No obligatory arguments	$\theta$ -assigners, Obligatory arguments
2. No event reading	Event reading.
3. No agent-oriented modifiers	Agent-oriented modifiers
4. Subjects are possessives	subjects are arguments
5. <i>by</i> phrases are non-arguments	<i>by</i> phrases are arguments
6. No implicit argument control	Implicit argument control
7. No aspectual modifiers	Aspectual modifiers.
8. Modifiers like <i>frequent, constant</i> only with plural	Modifiers like <i>frequent, constant</i> appear with singular
<b>9. May be indefinite</b>	<b>Must be definite</b>
<b>10. May be plural</b>	<b>Must be singular</b>

Let us concentrate on properties (9) and (10): according to Grimshaw, AS nominals can only be definite, while result nouns may be modified by the indefinite determiners *a, one*.

- (2) a. \*An examination of the cat was interrupted by the fireworks.  
 b. One exam was rejected because it was written in red ink.

Moreover, the claim is made that AS nouns behave like mass nouns, they cannot pluralize. R-nouns are count nouns, and they may pluralize. When AS nominals pluralize, they are no longer AS nominals, rather they carry the R-interpretation (3c):

- (3) a. \*{the, some, a lot of} examinations of the cat  
 b. one exam, two exams  
 c. one examination, two examinations

- The claim was that this partition is a universal property of nominalization.

<sup>1</sup> Note that Grimshaw actually distinguishes between three classes of nominals: (i) complex event nominals that license AS, (ii) event nominals that do not license AS but still have an eventive interpretation and (iii) result nominals that do not license AS and lack an eventive interpretation.

- But: Is it a universal constraint on AS nominalization or a parameter?

At first sight, there seems to be evidence that we are dealing with a parameter.

Recent studies of Romance provide evidence against the generalization that AS nominalizations are unable to pluralize. Romance languages are said to contrast with Germanic in exhibiting plural nominalizations (4):

*French* (Roodenburg 2006, also on Italian):

- (4) a. les destructions fréquentes de quartiers populaires pour élever des tours staliniennes  
 the destructions frequent of quarters popular for raise towers stalinist  
 b. \*the destructions of the city by the enemies

*Romanian* (Iordachioaia & Soare 2007):

Romanian has two types of event nominalizations: infinitive and supine. As (6) shows, the infinitival one can pluralize, while the supine one can:

- (5) demolarea/ demolatul cartierelor vechi de către comuniști  
 demolish-Inf-the/ demolish-Sup-the quarters-Gen old by communists  
 (6) demolările/ \*demolaturile frecvente ale cartierelor vechi de către comuniști  
 demolish-Inf-Pl/ demolish-Sup-Pl frequent-Pl quarters-Gen old by communists

Crucially, in Romanian, the infinitival nominalization can pluralize both under an AS and a non-AS supporting reading.

- What is the relevant group of languages?

Pluralization of AS nominals is also found in e.g. Slavic, illustrated in (7) with Czech examples, from Prochazkova (2006), and has been argued to exist in Greek by Markantonatou (1992):

- (7) Čast-á hlášení výsledk komentátor-em  
 frequent-nom.pl announcement.nom.pl result-gen.pl commentator-instr.sg  
 jsou nezbytn-á.  
 be.3.pl.pres necessary-nom.pl  
 'The frequent announcements of results by a commentator are necessary.'

- So it a special feature of Germanic ASNs?

In this paper:

1. I show that the pattern illustrated in (1)-(7) is not subject to cross-linguistic variation: AS nominalizations generally pluralize across languages.
2. Pluralization is related to aspectual properties such as (a)telicity, (im)perfectivity and/or (un)boundedness.
3. Revisit the syntactic exponence of the interaction between (a)telicity/(un)boundedness and mass vs. count noun properties.

## 2. Plural nominalizations across languages

- In all languages under consideration bounded ASNs can pluralize

### 2.1 English

Mourelatos (1978), Borer (2005: 78f.): Telic event nominals can pluralize and can appear with indefinite determiners. This concerns the *--ing of* nominals (nominal gerunds) and *-ion* nominals, but not verbal gerunds. Verbal gerunds cannot pluralize (8d):

- (8)
- There were three late arrivals of a train
  - There was (\*a) pushing of the cart by John
  - There was one pushing of the cart to New York by John
  - John's pushing(\*s) the cart to New York

The event entailed by the gerund is imperfective (Pustejovsky 1995), irrespectively of the Aktionsart involved. Verbal gerunds cannot be interpreted as R-nominals and they are necessarily definite.

- Conclusion: Grimshaw's criteria apply to telic AS nominals in English as well.

### 2.2 German

Pluralization only with *-ung* nominals, infinitival nominalizations do not pluralize:

*-Ung* nominals project either the theme or the agent of an activity verb (see (9), so they are not necessarily telic. In this case, a plural under the R-reading is possible (9b). However, with “-ung” nominals derived from telic verbs which project the theme obligatorily, plural ASNs can occur just like in English:

- (9)
- die Beobachtung des Verdächtigen/der Polizei  
the observe-UNG the-Gen suspect/ the-Gen police
  - die Beobachtungen der Polizei (Ag) *R-plural*  
the observe-Ung-Pl the-Gen police
- (10)
- die Tötung des Feindes/ des Verbrechers (Th/\*Ag)  
the kill-UNG the-Gen enemy-Gen/ the-Gen criminal-Gen
  - die gezielten Tötungen der politischen Führer durch die Armee *ASN plural*  
the targeted kill-UNG-Pl the-Gen political leaders via the army
- (11)
- die jährliche Überprüfungen des Betriebs  
the annual controlling of the firm
  - Reinholds Besteigungen des K3  
Reinhold's climbings of the K3
  - die Entsorgung der Atomfirma  
the disposals of the nuclear firm

Ehrich (2002): while the singulars denote single events, the corresponding plurals denote sequences of iterated events. 'Plurals are thus homogeneous objects comparable to the denotations of mass nouns'.

## 2.3 Romanian

Iordachioaia & Soare (2007): In Romanian, there are two types of ASNs, both of them productive, derived from the stem of the infinitive and that of past participle (supine):

(12) Infinitive:	Supine:
cânta – cânta-re / cânt-ăr-i	cânta – cânta-t/ *cânta-t-uri
sing- sing-Inf/ sing-Inf-Pl	sing- sing-Sup/ sing-Sup-Pl
iubi – iubi-re / iubi-r-i	iubi – iubi-t/ *iubi-t-uri
love – love-Inf/ love-Inf-Pl	love – love-Sup/ love-Sup-Pl

Only the infinitive nominalization allows (nominal) plural. This appears with two types of readings: the R (a) and AS reading (b):

- (13) a. interpretările acestui actor sînt memorabile  
 interpret-Inf-Pl this-Gen actor are memorable  
 b. interpretările acestui rol de catre diverși actori i-au schimbat stilul  
 interpret-Inf-Pl this role-Gen by different actors CI-have changed style

Supine nominals never have a result reading (cf. (14) from Cornilescu (1999); *de*, an "adjectivizer", is only compatible with the result reading: (14c vs. 14d)):

- (14) a. această/ o cîntare este impresionantă  
 this / a singing-Inf is impressive  
 b. \*acest/ un cîntat este impresionant  
 this/ a singing-Sup is impressive  
 c. cîntarea de pe scenă este impresionantă  
 singing-Inf-the from the stage is impressive  
 d. cîntatul (\*de) pe scena este impresionant  
 singing-Sup-the (from) the stage is impressive

Quantifiers: only massive for the supine, only quantified for the infinitive:

- (15) a. prea mult spălat/ \*zece spălaturi al rufelor distruge țesătura  
 too much washing-Sup / ten washings of the clothes destroys the material  
 b. prea multe/ zece spălări ale rufelor distrug țesătura  
 too many / ten washings-Inf of clothes destroy the material

- Singular infinitive is understood as [+b]; can only become [-b] in the plural
- Supine is always [-b]; it usually carries a habitual operator; it takes a [+b] event and turns it into [-b]

"Until": a function that bounds an unbounded event with a time, producing a bounded event.

- (16) a. #arestarea lui Miron Cozma pina la schimbarea guvernării  
 arrest-Inf-the M.C.-Gen until changing government-Gen  
 - "until" only understood as "before", not as a boundary  
 b. arestările lui Miron Cozma pina la schimbarea guvernării  
 arrest-Inf-Pl M.C.-Gen until changing government-Gen

Ambiguous, scope interaction: HAB> until midnight/ until 16> HAB

- (17) Cititul lui Ion cu glas tare pina la miezul noptii/ pina la virsta de 16 ani  
read-Sup-the John-Gen with voice loud until midnight/ until at age of 16 years

#### **Ioardachioaia & Soare's conclusions:**

1. The supine behaves like mass nouns; the infinitive behaves like count nouns.
2. The supine denotes unbounded events as opposed to the infinitive, which denotes bounded events.

#### **General Conclusions:**

- Both in Germanic and Romance, telic/bounded nominals can pluralize.
- In agreement with Borer (2005): Grimshaw was wrong about telic AS nominals, but she was right about atelic AS nominals.
- Atelic AS nominals are mass nouns and thus cannot pluralize unless they are interpreted as R-nominals.
- This predicts that if an R-interpretation is independently unavailable, the nominalizations will not have plurals.

In what follows I pay special attention to nominalization patterns in English and Romanian that show significant similarities.

The guiding hypothesis is that an R-interpretation as well as pluralization arise in the context of nominal internal structure. Hence we need to identify the layers that across languages are responsible for these properties.

### **3. On the internal structure of ASNs**

Note: I assume that formation of ASNs is syntactic. In other words those nominals that take arguments do so because they share certain layers with their corresponding verbs, crucially those that are responsible for the licensing of AS (see Marantz 1997, Alexiadou (2001) and Borer (1993, 2001, to appear).

- Which nominalizations do not pluralize?

There seems to be a correlation between a certain kind of nominal internal structure, the ability to pluralize and the availability to have R-readings.

From the patterns to be discussed, two never allow R-readings: verbal gerunds in English and supine nominalizations in Romanian. These also lack nominal functional categories apart from D.

#### **3.1 Verbal vs. nominal gerunds in English**

See e.g. Vendler (1967), Fraser (1970)

Nominal gerunds: take adjectival modifiers and do not license adverbial modification (18-19). On the other hand, verbal gerunds license adverbial modifiers and disallow adjectival modifiers.

- (18) a. Pat disapproved of me/my quietly leaving the room before anyone noticed  
b. \*Pat's fortunately collecting the money rescued the operation  
c. \*the carefully restoring of the painting took six months

- (19) a. His prompt answering of the question *nominal gerund*  
 b. \*His prompt answering the question *verbal gerund*

Under the standard assumption that adverbs are (at least) VP modifiers, while adjectives are noun modifiers, this contrast suggests that the verbal gerund contain a verbal internal structure (Abney 1987, Kratzer 1993, Borer 1993 and others), while the nominal gerund has a nominal internal structure. In addition the observation that higher adverbs are not licensed within verbal gerunds (18b) suggests that the internal structure of the gerund cannot be as 'big' as an IP (assuming that sentence adverbs attach to IP or other high functional heads).

- Further evidence that the verbal gerund has a verbal internal structure:

The subject DP, e.g. Pat's in (18b) cannot be replaced by any determiner in the case of the verbal gerund, while this is possible for the nominal gerund (20b):

- (20) a. \*that/the criticising the book annoyed us  
 b. the destroying of the manuscript annoyed the author

- The verbal gerund cannot form the plural, while the nominal gerund can:

- (21) a. many readings of the poem    b. \*Emma's readings the poem

- What does it mean to have a verbal internal structure one as opposed to a nominal or a mixed one (verbal + nominal)?

All nominals contain the DP layer.

- (22) [DP [.....]]  
 a. [DP [NominalFP....]] *nominal internal structure*  
 b. [DP [VerbalFP...]] *verbal internal structure*  
 c. [DP [NominalFP... [VerbalFP...]]] *mixed internal structure*

Non-derived nominals contain only nominal functional layers internally (22a).

A nominal internal structure is characterized by the presence of nominal functional projections below D (22a/c).

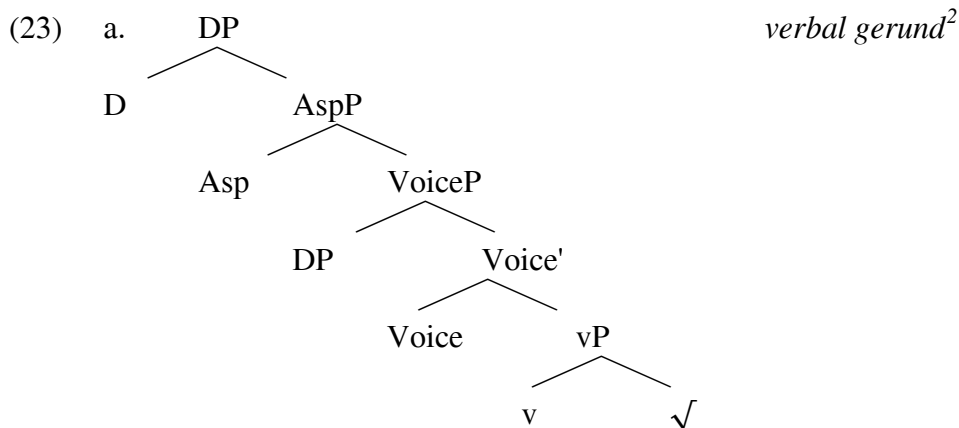
As verbal gerunds occupy DP positions, they contain a DP layer, where 's is located. Hence 'externally' they are DPs.

A verbal internal structure is characterized by the presence of verbal layers below D.

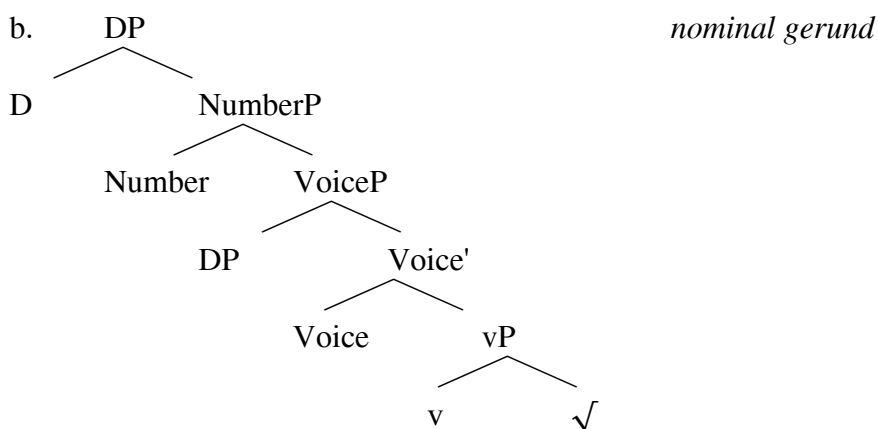
A mixed internal structure contains both nominal and verbal layers and nominals with that structure show a mixed behavior .

As to nominal structure, there are at least two projections to consider, NumberP and a projection below NumberP, which has been given various names in the literature, e.g. ClassifierP (Borer 2005), Class/GenderP in Picallo (2006), PIP in Heycock & Zamparalli (2003) to mention a few.

- nominal gerunds contain NumberP (Alexiadou 2001, 2005).
- verbal gerunds are AspPs (Borer 1993, 2001, Alexiadou 2001, 2005) but lack Number (Alexiadou 2001, 2005):



In (23a) the internal structure is 'verbal'.



In (23b) the internal structure is mixed.

**Table 2**

<i>Properties</i>	<i>verbal gerund</i>	<i>Functional Structure</i>
article	*	D contains 's', no NumbP
adjectival modification	*	No NumbP
adverbial modification	√	AspectP
overt subject	√ (gen)	Spec,DP movement from Spec, vP
accusative object	√	VoiceP [+external argument]

**Table 3**

<i>Properties</i>	<i>nominal gerund</i>	<i>Functional Structure</i>
article	√	D
adjectival modification	√	+ NumberP
adverbial modification	*	no AspectP
overt subject	√ (gen)	Spec,DP
accusative object	*	Voice [-ext arg]

The crucial argument by Borer and Alexiadou concerning the presence of Aspect had to do with the interpretation of the verbal gerunds (imperfective) as well as with the licensing of adverbs. For Borer (1993), bare adverbials in e.g. Hebrew and *-ly* adverbials in English cannot be licensed in a VP which is directly dominated by a nominal head. A related explanation is offered in Alexiadou (2001), who attributes the cross-linguistic distribution of adverbials within nominalizations to the presence of AspectP.

<sup>2</sup> Representations follow the structures proposed in Alexiadou & al. (2006).

- (24) a. Harisat ha-cava et ha-kfar be-axzariyut  
destruction the army ACC the village cruelly  
'The army's destroying the village cruelly'  
b. \*pinui ha-ca 'et ha mit naxlim le'at  
evacuation the army ACC the settles slowly (Borer 1993, Siloni 1997)
- (25) a. Pat disapproved of me/my quietly leaving the room before anyone noticed  
b. \*Pat's fortunately collecting the money rescued the operation

Polish vs. Russian nominalizations (Alexiadou 2001): the former show true aspectual oppositions. This opposition is not found in Russian. Only Polish nominals license adverbs:

- (26) a. ocenienie studentow przez nauczycieli nastapilo szybko *Polish*  
evaluation-PF the students-GEN by teachers occurred quickly  
'The teacher's evaluation of the students took place quickly.'  
b. ocenianie studentow przez nauczycieli ciagnelo sie  
evaluation-IMP students-GEN by teachers lasted REFL  
przez caly tydzien  
through the whole week  
'The teacher's evaluation of the students lasted the whole week.'
- (27) razrušit-razsušat razrušenie  
destroy-PERF/destroy-IMP destruction

Borer (2005) claims that plural inflection in English as well as indefinite determiners are located in ClassP, i.e. plurality is not number specification and plurals are morphologically classifiers.

In view of the fact that verbal gerunds lack all signs of a nominal internal structure, plurality indefinite determiners, etc, they lack both ClassP and NumbP (23a).

### 3.2 Infinitive vs. Supine in Romanian

Iordachioaia & Soare (2007) note that the two types of ASNs differ in their gender features:

- (28) Infinitive: -e ending -> only feminine  
Supine: => Supine has no/ default gender (i.e. no gender features)

Following Picallo (2006), they analyse gender features as classifiers that feed nominal number:

- Infinitive: feminine gender, and number (plural: ok)
- Supine: default gender, and no number (plural: \*)

GenderP is thus a first piece of evidence for internal nominal structure. The claim is made by Iordachioaia & Soare that NumP is also present in infinitives but **not** in supines.

In addition, the supine structure contains Aspect. Specifically, the supine affix **-at-** is analysed as an aspectual affix which contributes imperfectivity. This is reminiscent of the analysis of



the affix **-ata** in Italian by Ippolito (1999) who claims that **-at-** is a realization of an Aspect head.

### **Summary: similarities between English verbal gerunds and Romanian supines.**

1. The event entailed by the gerund nominal is imperfective (Pustejovsky 1995). The supine is imperfective/unbounded.
2. There is no sense in which a gerund or a supine can be interpreted as an R-nominal.
3. *Ing* in gerunds has been analysed as a progressive marker; the Romanian supine affix has been analysed as a habitual marker.
4. As mentioned, unbounded/atelic nominals either cannot pluralize or shift to an R-interpretation. Since for both verbal gerunds and Romanian supines the R-interpretation is unavailable, no pluralization is possible.
5. Both lack nominal internal structure.
  - Presence of (Imperfective) Aspect in English verbal gerunds and Romanian supines and lack of nominal internal structure block pluralization.

#### **• Correlations to be explained**

1. Interaction between imperfective Aspect and Plurality
2. AS/R-nominals and the mass vs. count noun distinction

### **4. Aspect and Pluralization**

Following Sharvy (1978), Borer (2005) and others, the distinction between mass and count nouns is a structural one. Let us assume that a projection like PIP in Heycock & Zamparalli (2003) or ClassP in Borer (2005) is the projection in which this is realized.

The shift from count to mass is basically reduced to switching on and off this particular projection.

Mass nouns and plurals are taken to share two properties. Let us subsume these under the term (un)boundedness:

- (i) cumulative reference and (ii) homogeneity.

As known, the mass/count distinction in the nominal domain has often been compared to aspectual distinctions in the domain of verb phrases see e.g. Mourelatos (1978), Bach (1986), Krifka (1992), Borer (2005) to mention just a few:<sup>3</sup>

- What is the relevant aspectual property in the domain of VPs?

Aspectual distinctions at different levels, Verkuyl (1993), Borer (2005), Filip (1996), Cappelle & Declerck (2005):

1. (Un)boundedness (as in coming to end point or not)
2. (A)telicity
3. (Im)perfectivity

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<sup>3</sup> There is a difference between the verbal domain as opposed to the nominal domain: the former makes reference to VPs and not to lexical items (Doetjes 1997).

- All these are related, but presumably separate categories

Certain amount of consensus: <sup>4</sup>

- (29) count nouns are similar to bounded events  
 mass nouns are similar to (Un)bounded events

As known, activities can become bounded, when endpoints are introduced. The same applies in the domain of NPs, as seen above:

- (30) a. Sue is running. Sue has run  
 b. Sue is running a mile ./ Sue has run a mile (from Doetjes 1997)  
 c. There was one pushing of the cart to New York by John  
 d. There was (\*one) pushing of the cart by John

Let us assume that the problem lies in 'matching the information' of the lower verbal structure and the upper nominal structure, for those nominalizations that have an internal nominal structure.

Introducing (un)boundedness (see also Engelhardt 2000):

- (i) Pluralization (inflectional plural, nominal structure)
- (ii) Aktionsart
- (iii) Morphological Aspect

If the function of pluralization, realised in e.g. ClassP, is to introduce unboundedness, pluralization of structures that are already unbounded via Morphological Aspect, realised in AspP, and/or Aktionsart, realised within VoiceP would be non-sensical.

This is the case with the verbal gerunds in English and supine in Romanian. These structures contain an AspectP that introduces (un)boundedness, progressive/habitual.

- What happens to mass nouns and atelic ASNs?

Pluralization of atelic ASNs is out for the same reason pluralization of a mass noun is anomalous.

It is only allowed if the noun is able to be construed as picking out distinct units. In the case of derived nominals pluralization is possible only under an R-interpretation, i.e. when no AS is licensed.

- Why?

As known, there is a difference concerning boundedness in the verbal domain as opposed to boundedness in the nominal domain: the former makes reference to VPs and not to 'lexical'

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<sup>4</sup> Mourelatos (1978) talks about (im)perfectivity:

- (i) perfective events = count quantified
- imperfective events = mass quantified

Mourelatos discusses the perfective vs. Imperfective opposition known from e.g. Slavic languages and Greek.

items. Since atelic derived nominals are VPs, which are already unbounded, further pluralization is out. However, the ‚nominal’ part can pluralize, in the absence of AS, since it is not unbounded.

## 5. An issue concerning achievement nominals

Markantonatou (1992) notes that in Greek achievement nominals receive an AS interpretation only when the nominal is inflected for plural number. This happens when the reference of their theme argument changes from a quantitized to a cumulative one.

- (31) \*i afiksi/√ i afiksis turiston oli ti nihta  
 the arrival/the arrivals tourists-gen whole the night  
 '\*The arrival of tourists'  
 √'The arrivals of tourists'

Something similar seems to hold in English as well; while one finds examples such as (32), one does not find examples where a bare theme argument is in the singular:<sup>5</sup>

- (32) a. Included are sample departures and **arrivals of trains** during various eras  
 b. The startings and **arrivals of (train) cars**.

The point is here that pluralization is obligatory, as if some sort of agreement existed between the two nouns.

It has been argued that achievements behave like activities if they co-occur with indefinite plural or mass nouns direct objects, i.e. the presence of an unbounded object triggers a shift to an unbounded interpretation:

- (33) a. \*John discovered the buried treasure for six weeks  
 b. John discovered fleas on his dog for 6 weeks

Furthermore, if a bare plural is the subject of an achievement verb the sentence is acceptable with durative adverbials:

- (34) a. \*John discovered that village for years  
 b. Tourists discovered that village for years

Now for (31) and (32) the above seem to suggest that contrary to what we established thus far unbounded events can pluralize.

But: as explicitly argued in Mittwoch (1991) and Borer (2005), a characteristic property of achievements is the existence of telicity with a non-quantity argument. The predicates below receive a single event interpretation:

- (35) hitxilu ccaqot ve-parcu mehumot Hebrew (Borer 2005: 259)  
 started screams and-erupted riots  
 'Screams started (first) riots erupted (second)

- (36) a. Robin found oil on Monday and on Tuesday (two diggings) (Mittwoch 1991)

<sup>5</sup> In contrast examples such as *the arriving of the train* are found, contra Borer (2001).

- b. The prospectors discovered gold and found rare coins
- c. The prospectors found rare coins and discovered gold

Thus the nominals have a single event interpretation, hence they can pluralize.

## 6. Questions

- Different types of nominalizations across dialects. Which patterns are available? What are the generalizations that we can formulate
- Morphological clues from dialects?
- Interaction with other elements introducing boundedness (PPs)
- Determination of mixed projections and the features they make reference to

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