

Nominalisatie and nominalizacija walk into a pub, where nominalisering and nominaliziranje are already sitting: Latinate nominalisations in Germanic and Slavic

The issue of deverbal nominalizations, such as the English *assimilation*, and their mixed verbal and nominal properties, is far from new, see Alexiadou (2010) for an overview. The debate is crucially related to the question of the preservation of verbal structure, as first shown in Grimshaw (1990). In this talk, we again address this question by focusing on a comparison of Latinate and native deverbal nominalizations in Germanic (specifically, Dutch) and Western South Slavic (WSS), i.e., Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (BCMS) and Slovenian. We present results from corpus studies that show that the two types of nominalizations differ systematically in both groups and that Latinate nominalisations behave as carrying less verbal structure than the native one. This behavior points towards a more general conclusion that, at least in these languages, Latinate nominalizations are generally deradical, as previously proposed for BCMS in Simonović&Arsenijević (2018).

Latinate nominalisations, i.e., nominalizations of verbal bases with loan-word suffixes, such as WSS *-cija* and the Dutch *-atie* (cognates of the English *-ation*), as in (3c) and (4c), respectively, have spread throughout both Germanic and Slavic, see for example Pauwels (1964) for Dutch and Simonović&Arsenijević (2018) for BCMS. In these, Latinate nominalizations enter into different competition patterns with native derivations, i.e., derivations with native suffixes. For WSS, the latter include the nominalizing suffix *-nje/-tje*, as in (1b), that can arguably be further decomposed into the passive participial suffix *-n/-t* and the nominalizing suffix *-j*, e.g. Marvin (2002), cf. Simonović et al. (2025). Dutch, on the other hand, has two different native strategies for nominalization: (i) native nominalizing suffix *-ing*, shown in (2b), and (ii) the nominalised infinitive. The latter functions as a noun and can take a genitive (P-marked) argument, which is potentially related to the fact that native derivational nominalisations in *-ing* are not fully productive in Dutch (cf. *distribuer-en* ‘distribute, distributing’ vs. **distribuer-ing*). On the other hand, in WSS, the infinitive cannot be nominalised. Because of this, we leave the Dutch nominalised infinitive aside.

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|--------|---------------------------------------|----|--|----|--------------|
| (1) a. | gled-a-ti
look-TV-INF
‘to look’ | b. | gled-a-n-j-e
look-TV-PASS.PTCP-NMLZ-N.SG.NOM
‘looking’ | c. | * gled-acija |
| (2) a. | weg-en
weigh-INF
‘to weigh’ | b. | weg-ing
weigh-NMLZ
‘weighing’ | c. | * weg-atie |

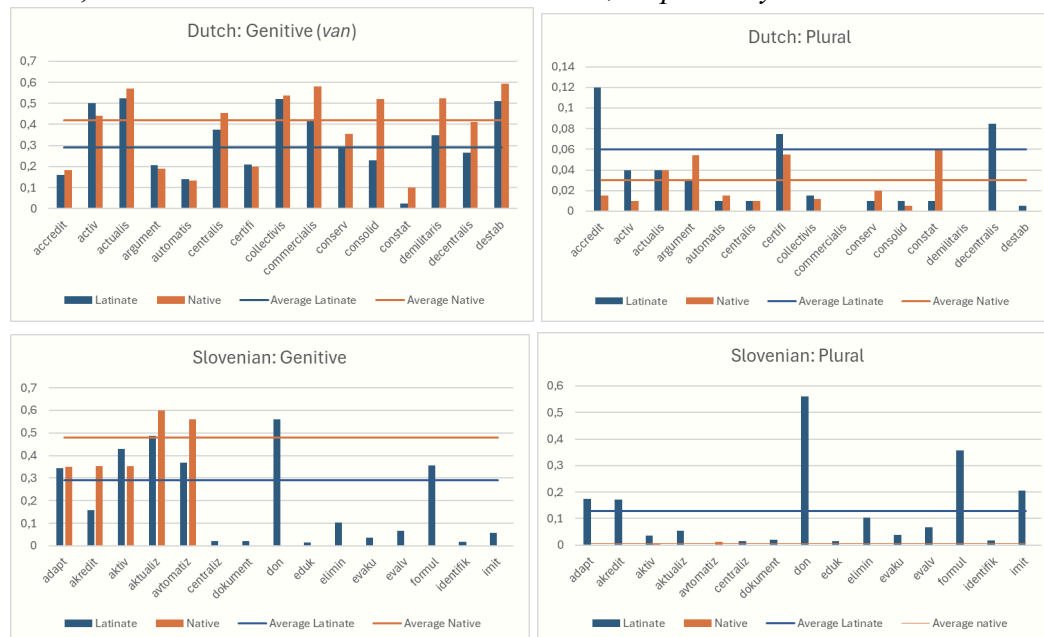
Despite their differences, WSS and Dutch share a feature distinguishing them from languages such as English: Latinate verbs have an obligatory overt verbalising morpheme, which is crucially also preserved in native nominalisations. In WSS, one such verbalizer is *-ir*, which appears together with the theme vowel *-a*, as in (3a), in Dutch, the relevant verbalizer is *-er*, (4a). These verbalizers surface in native nominalisations (3b, 4b), which compete with Latinate nominalisations, (3c, 4c), and lack verbal morphology. This common feature serves as the motivation for choosing both Dutch and WSS as the central source of data.

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|--------|---|----|--|----|---|-----|
| (3) a. | konzerv- ir -a-ti
conserve-V-TV-INF | b. | konzerv- ir -a-n-j-e
conserve-V-TV-PASS.PTCP-NMLZ-N.SG.NOM | c. | konzerv-acij-a
conserve-NMLZ-F.SG.NOM | (3) |
| (4) a. | conserv- er -en
conserve-V-INF
‘to conserve’ | b. | conserv- er -ing
conserve-V-NMLZ
‘conserving’ | c. | conserv-atie
conserve-NMLZ
‘conservation’ | |

Importantly, the lack of verbalizing morpheme is an initial indicator that Latinate nominalizations can plausibly be analysed as deradical, that is, that they do not contain any verbal projections, but rather just the root. On the other hand, the presence of verbal suffixes indicate that native nominalizations do include verbal projections. If this observation is on the right track, it can also be related to other properties, i.e., preserving verbal structure will be

associated with preserving other verbal properties, specifically, argument structure. In turn, the lack of verbal structure can be related to deverbal nominal having more nominal properties, such as plural, see Grimshaw (1990).

We tested this prediction with corpus studies in which we have adapted standard tests in the syntactic literature on nominalizations (Grimshaw 1990 *inter alia*). We hypothesize that plural marking indicates less verbal structure, while genitive complements signal more verbal structure. Consequently, we compared the frequency of Latinate and native nominalisations (i) in the plural and (ii) followed by a genitive-marked form. The frequencies were determined based on 64 Dutch, 20 BCMS and 60 Slovenian pairs of nominalizations (one member a native, one a Latinate nominalization) using the Corpus Querier for CLARIN.SI Corpora script (Kovačević 2025). The data was collected from *Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands*, *CLASSLA-web.rs* and *CLASSLA-web.sl*, respectively.



These charts give the results in the form of relative frequencies of plural forms per item and relative frequencies of genitive complements per item for 15 pairs of nominalization in Dutch and Slovenian. The lines show the average for all items. That is, across the dataset Latinate nominalisations behave as carrying less verbal structure, especially in pairs. For instance, in 64 Dutch pairs, the average percentage of nominalisations followed by a genitive (*van*) was 29% for Latinate forms and 42% for native ones. In Slovenian, the figures are 29% vs. 48% and for BCMS 48% vs 77% with Latinate and native nominals, respectively. Regarding plural, Dutch shows plural marking in 6% Latinate vs. 3% native nominalizations, while Slovenian shows it in 13% Latinate vs. only 0.5% native. Finally, in BCMS, 19% of Latinate nominalizations show plural marking compared to only 2% of native ones.

Nominalizations in both Dutch and WSS behave as predicted. In both native nominalizations are more likely to get a genitive complement (compared to their Latinate counterparts), which is in line with their overt verbal morphology. In turn, Latinate nominalizations are more likely to appear in plural (compared to their native counterpart), as predicted based on their lack of verbal morphology. This lends support to the deradical analysis proposed for Latinate nominalizations in BCSM in Simonović&Arsenijević (2018), but also indicates that this analysis can potentially be extended cross-linguistically.

References: Alexiadou, A. 2010. Nominalizations: A probe into the architecture of grammar part i: The nominalization puzzle. *Language and linguistics compass* 4.7. • Arsenijević, B. and M. Simonović. 2018. The importance of not belonging: Paradigmaticity and loan nominalizations in Serbo-Croatian. *Open linguistics*. • Grimshaw, J. 1990. Argument structure. MIT Press. • Kovačević, P. 2025. Corpus-querier-clarin. • Marvin, T. 2002. *Topics in the stress and syntax of words*. Doctoral dissertation. MIT. • Pauwels, J.L. 1964. *Woorden op -atie en -ering in het Nederlands. Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde (nieuwe reeks)*. Simonović M. et al. 2025. How departicipial are “I-participle” nominalisations in Western South Slavic. In *Advances in formal Slavic linguistics* 2022.