

No escape from syntax: Evidence from Gĩkũyũ subject nominalizations

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Abstract

In his influential work on Bantu nominalizations, Mugane (1997) identifies two types of individual-denoting nominalizations in Gĩkũyũ: [mu...a]-type (small subject nominalizations or loose compounds) and [mu...i]-type (big subject nominalizations). He argues that [mu...i]-type nominalizations are phrasal and that [mu...a]-type nominalizations exhibit a paradoxical nature, displaying both lexical and syntactic properties. This study revisits Mugane's characterization, challenging the notion of a lexicon-syntax divide. By applying Wood's (2023) 'small syntax' approach, originally developed for Icelandic nominalizations, this paper demonstrates that Gĩkũyũ small subject nominalizations can be fully explained within a syntactic framework without resorting to the lexicon. The analysis reveals that what Mugane perceived as a paradox is merely an illusion, and that syntax alone can account for both types of Gĩkũyũ nominalizations. This finding aligns with cross-linguistic evidence from English, Greek, and German, further validating the applicability of the 'small syntax' approach across different languages.

Keywords: Nominalizations; Gĩkũyũ; Lexicon; Phrasal Layering analysis; Complex Head analysis

1 Introduction

In his seminal work on Bantu nominalizations, Mugane (1997) presents a set of empirical facts from Gĩkũyũ (Bantu) that cannot be readily accounted for under a syntactic approach such as the Phrasal Layering analysis (Alexiadou & Schäfer 2010, among others):

“... [O]ne type of Gīkūyū agentive nouns marked with [mu-...-a] morphology present something of a paradox in that they exhibit lexical properties while still maintaining some phrasal characteristics ... [P]hrases cannot be syntactically attached to words. Yet such an attachment is precisely what we find with the formation of [mu-...-a] expressions, apparently calling to question the lexicon/syntax divide.” (Mugane 1997:127, 129)

Gīkūyū [mu-...-a]-type nominalizations (also referred to as loose compounds) are characterized as “phrases that are in the process of becoming lexicalized,” and “a lexicalization process involving phrases” (Mugane 1997:127). Despite such characterizations, I argue that syntax can handle this type of nominalizations without resorting to the lexicon. I adopt Wood’s (2023) Complex Head analysis, which has been proposed to account for Icelandic nominalizations. I show that Gīkūyū loose compounds share various syntactic properties with Icelandic deverbal nominals. This naturally leads to another important point which is that the Phrasal Layering analysis alone cannot account for the same set of facts observed in Gīkūyū. An implication of this work is that syntax on its own can handle the two types of nominalizations. Hence, the current analysis is more parsimonious than the one suggested in the previous literature.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides the basic information about the Phrasal Layering analysis and the Complex Head analysis. Section 3 lays out the empirical facts about the two types of Gīkūyū nominalizations at issue. Section 4 fleshes out an analysis that makes use of both syntactic approaches presented in Section 2. Section 5 presents independent evidence from English, Greek, and German in order to add weight to the claim that the Complex Head analysis is applicable in different parts of the grammar. Section 6 concludes.

2 Phrasal Layering analysis and Complex Head analysis

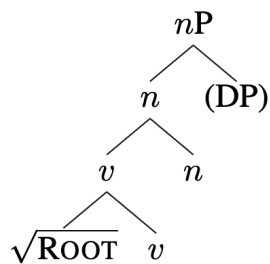
The Phrasal Layering analysis puts forward a unified approach to handling the clausal domain and the nominal domain. It works under the assumption that verbal phrases such as ν P, VoiceP, and Asp(ect)P can be realized inside noun phrases (see Alexiadou 2020). Relatedly, Gotah & Lee (2023) claim that NegP can be realized in Ewe (Kwa) individual-denoting nominalizations.

While a unified approach of handling the clausal and the nominal domain is theoretically desirable, the Phrasal Layering analysis is challenged by some important discrepancies observed between the two domains. For instance, in most Indo-European languages, adverbs are readily available in the clausal domain, while they are rarely observed inside individual-denoting nominalizations. The mismatch in Case distribution also sets the stage for the conundrum at play. It has been a long-standing puzzle why *of*-insertion is only observed in the nominal domain and not in the clausal domain (e.g., *driver *(of) trucks* vs. *drives (*(of) trucks*). Analyses attempting to emphasize the parallels between the two domains have not been free from this puzzle and have been questioned to a point where their validity has been questioned.

Taking these differences into consideration, Wood (2023) argues for a maximal projection(XP)-less verbal structure for Icelandic deverbal nominalizations. (1) schematizes Wood's way of handling the nominalization facts in Icelandic. Note that ν P is absent in the derivation. In (1), syntactic heads undergo Merge without projecting XPs. Subsequently, this gives rise to a complex head structure that is reminiscent of the one established via head movement. At the heart of Wood's argument is the idea that such complex heads need not rely on head movement. Wood's Complex Head analysis has gained independent and cross-linguistic support in the recent years (see Benz

2023, Embick 2023, and Paparounas 2023). We will return to this topic in Section 5 where we examine the empirical facts showcased in English, Greek, and German.

(1) A structure for Icelandic small deverbial nouns based on Wood (2023)



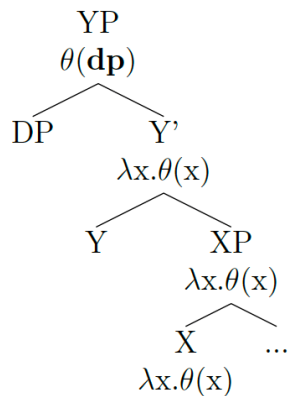
Adopting Wood (2023), the current approach abstracts away from the strict interpretation of the Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH, Baker 1988), which posits a one-to-one mapping between thematic roles and syntactic positions:

(2) Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH, Baker 1988:46)

Identical thematic relationships between items are represented by identical structural relationships between those items at the level of D-structure.

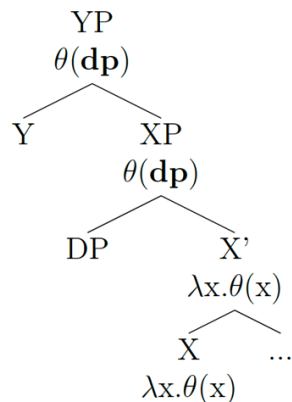
Woods secures enough leeway for a thematic interpretation to be introduced in one place and completed in another, a concept referred to as ‘Delayed Gratification’ (Myler 2014, 2016). This allows a UTAH-like effect to follow from the semantic interpretation of heads, facilitating straightforward semantic composition. As a toy configuration, (2) exhibits the syntactic introduction of DP in Spec,YP even though the semantics of the DP depends on X, not Y per se. The delayed syntactic introduction of the DP is best handled by Myler’s ‘Delayed Gratification.’

(2) Delayed Gratification based on Myler (2014, 2016)



For the sake of clarity, compare (2) with (3). In (3), the object DP is syntactically and semantically realized as the argument of X. This ordinary-looking structure is referred to as ‘Instant Gratification,’ which is in contrast to ‘Delayed Gratification’ schematized in (2).

(3) Instant Gratification based on Myler (2014, 2016)



Note that Wood’s Complex Head analysis of Icelandic nominalizations fleshed out in (1) showcases ‘Delayed Gratification.’ That is, the object DP syntactically introduced as the complement of n is semantically associated with the predicate v downstairs. Abstracting away from

the Phrasal Layering analysis, Wood is able to address the differences between clausal and nominal syntax. The absence of XPs in the nominal-internal verbal structure explains the lack of adverbs and the presence of *of*-insertion in English and many other languages' individual-denoting nominalizations. I argue that Wood's analysis can be applied to Gīkūyū loose compounds. An implication of this work is that the 'small syntax' approach advanced by Wood (2023) gains cross-linguistic support (see also Benz 2023, Embick 2023, and Paparounas 2023). This naturally suggests that the Phrasal Layering approach alone cannot capture the same set of facts in Gīkūyū. Adopting both the Phrasal Layering analysis and the Complex Head analysis, I argue that syntax can fully account for Gīkūyū individual-denoting nominalizations without resorting to the lexicon.

3 Subject nominalizations

Deverbal nominalizations can come in different phrasal sizes (see Alexiadou 2020, among others). English *-er* agent nominalizations (e.g., *a dancer*), for instance, lack syntactic negation (NegP) and tense (TP) (see Baker & Vinokurova 2009): **a not dancer* and **a danceder*. Baker & Vinokurova (2009) assume that the verbal structure of Gīkūyū agent/subject nominalizations also lack NegP and TP, which is in accordance with Mugane's (1997) findings. Unlike agent nominalizations, subject nominalizations can host non-agentive unaccusative predicates such as 'to die.' (4) provides a relevant example.

(4) Subject nominalizations in Gīkūyū

mu-ku-i

1-die-I

'one who dies (a dier)'

(Baker & Vinokurova 2009:547)

Gĩkũyũ exhibits a type of subject nominalizations that does not showcase notable syntactic properties observed in the verbal domain: (i) object prefixes, (ii) adverbs, (iii) reflexive/reciprocal markers, and (iv) applicative/causative suffixes. As mentioned in the previous sections, this type of nominalizations is referred to as loose compounds. Due to the articulated syntactic size of their object DP, Mugane (1997) distinguishes the loose compounds from fully lexical words. (3) provides a relevant contrast between an English compound and a Gĩkũyũ loose compound (also referred to as small subject nominalizations). It is evident that the object DP in Gĩkũyũ loose compounds is full-fledged in syntactic size, unlike the object in English compounds. As already pointed by Mugane (1997), the full-fledged object DP in Gĩkũyũ has to be derived in syntax instead of the lexicon.

(5) English compounds vs. Gĩkũyũ loose compounds (= small subject nominalizations)

- a. a person-lover (/ *a [all these big village people]-lover)
- b. mu-end-a [andu aya othe anene a gichagi]
 1-love-A 2.people 2.DEM 2.all 2.big 2.ASSOC 7.village
 ‘a lover of all these big village people’ (Mugane 1997:149)

The well-formedness of (5b) puts Mugane in a position to argue that the loose compound is derived only when syntax comes into the picture. There is a dilemma here since loose compounds do not display any other syntactic properties that are otherwise expected from a run-of-the-mill verbal or clausal structure. (6) and (7) provide a contrast between the [mu-...-i]-type nominalizations (henceforth big subject nominalizations) and the [mu-...-a]-type nominalizations (henceforth

loose compounds or small subject nominalizations) with respect to the realization of the reflexive marker and the low adverb *uuru* ‘badly.’ Note that the suffix *-i* is used for the big subject nominalizations whereas the suffix *-a* is used for the small subject nominalizations. The big subject nominalization in (6) accommodate both the reflexive marker and the adverb. The small subject nominalization in (7), on the other hand, cannot host any one of the two elements.

(6) Big subject nominalizations in Gĩkũyũ

a. mu-**i**-end-**i**

1-**REFL**-love-**I**

‘one who loves himself/herself’

b. mu-thiinj-**i** mburi **uuru**

1-slaughter-**I** 10.goat **badly**

‘one who slaughters goats badly’

(Mugane 1997:132, 134)

(7) Small subject nominalizations in Gĩkũyũ

a. *mu-**i**-end-**a**

1-**REFL**-love-**A**

Intended: ‘one who loves himself/herself’

b. mu-thiinj-**a** mburi (***uuru**)

1-slaughter-**A** 10.goat **badly**

‘one who slaughters goats (*badly)’

(Mugane 1997:132, 133)

(6) suggests that VoiceP (Kratzer 1996) is present in big subject nominalizations, which aligns with Baker & Vinokurova's (2009) analysis. The presence of the reflexive marker in (6a) suggests that the reflexive anaphor needs to be locally bound by an antecedent. Baker & Vinokurova argue that the antecedent is the external argument (EA), PRO, introduced in Spec, VoiceP. In order for the specifier position to be available, VoiceP must be projected in the derivation. Moreover, the realization of the manner adverb in (6b) is only possible if the adverb is introduced in the derivation as an adjunct or a specifier depending on one's theory. In either case, VoiceP must be projected in the derivation. We arrive at the conclusion that the subject nominalizations in (6) are associated with phrase-level syntax. (7) is quite distinct from (6). The unavailability of the reflexive marker in (7a) and the adverb in (7b) suggest that VoiceP is absent in small subject nominalizations.

Another set of facts worth mentioning relates to the realization of applied arguments. As attentive readers may have already noticed, an applied argument, along with its applicative marker, can be introduced in big subject nominalizations but not in small subject nominalizations. (8) and (9) illustrate these points.

(8)	mu-end- er-i	andu	mbiya	
	l-like- APPL-I	2people	l0money	
	'one who likes people for money'			(Mugane 1997:133)

(9)	*mu-end- er-a	andu	mbiya	
	l-like- APPL-A	2people	l0money	
	Intended: 'one who likes people for money'			(Mugane 1997:132)

The facts are in harmony with our findings so far. Recall that big subject nominalizations can host XPs that accommodate nominal arguments in their specifier positions. Also, recall that this is not the case for small subject nominalizations since they lack XPs to begin with. This is exactly the kind of discrepancy we need in order to make sense out of the contrast between big and small subject nominalizations. A maximal projection, such as Appl(icative)P, along with its applied argument, needs to be realized in (8), which is not the case in (9).

Table 1 summarizes our findings from Gīkūyū subject nominalizations. I highlight that the only similarity between the two types of nominalizations under discussion is their ability to host a full-fledged object DP.

	[mu...a]-type small subject nominalizations	[mu...i]-type big subject nominalizations
Full-fledged object DP	✓	✓
Reflexive marker	✗	✓
Adverb	✗	✓
Applicative DP	✗	✓

Table 1. Two types of subject nominalizations in Gīkūyū

Mugane (1997) claims that [mu...i]-type deverbal nominals are derived entirely in syntax, whereas [mu...a]-type deverbal nominals cannot be derived in the same manner. Instead, they have resort to the lexicon, at least to a certain extent. In the next section, I argue that *both* types of deverbal

nominals can be handled in syntax. Based on my analysis, there is no escape from syntax for the small and big subject nominalizations under discussion. Hopefully, this brings parsimony into the picture.

4 Putting the pieces together

The empirical picture sketched out in (5)–(9) is best described under a syntactically deprived structure akin to (1), proposed for Icelandic nominalizations (Wood 2023). I argue that Gīkūyū small subject nominalizations involve Voice without VoiceP. One reason for assuming Voice inside the structure relates to the fact that small subject nominalizations can be agentive as in (7b). When dealing with non-agentive subject nominalizations, I adopt the view that Voice is defective (see Legate 2003, Deal 2009, Lee 2024, among others). The reason why VoiceP is absent should be clear by now based on our discussion in Section 3.

It is worth mentioning that small subject nominalizations exhibit a valency restriction. They can only host predicates that are realized with one and only one object DP. Big subject nominalizations, on the other hand, are not subject to this restriction. In fact, they can host a ditransitive verb with more than one internal argument (IA) in the absence of a preposition:

(10) Big subject nominalizations can host a ditransitive predicate with two IAs

mu-tum-i marua thukuru

1-send-I 5letter 9school

'a sender of a letter to a school'

(Mugane 1997:131)

Unsurprisingly, this is not possible with small subject nominalizations. Recall that small subject nominalizations do not accommodate XP-level verbal structure. Hence, nominal arguments cannot be showcased under the verbal syntax of small subject nominalizations.

(11) Small subject nominalizations cannot host a ditransitive predicate with two IAs

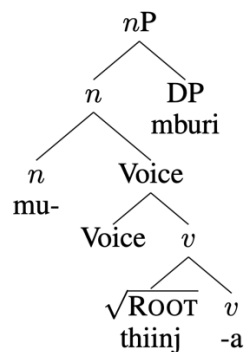
*mu-tum-a marua thukuru

1-send-A 5letter 9school

Intended: 'a sender of a letter to a school' (Mugane 1997:131)

I argue that the verbalizing head (v) cannot take a DP as its complement in (11). Otherwise, we run the risk of projecting vP inside small subject nominalizations. When a head X and a phrase undergo Merge, the dominating node is an XP. Recall that XPs are ruled out inside small subject nominalizations (see Section 2). I endorse Wood's analysis based on Myler (2014, 2016) that an object DP inside nominalizations can be introduced as the complement of the nominalizing head n . I posit that v is realized as $-a$ when it is unable to take a DP complement and when it is unable to project vP . Otherwise, v is realized as $-i$ inside subject nominalizations.

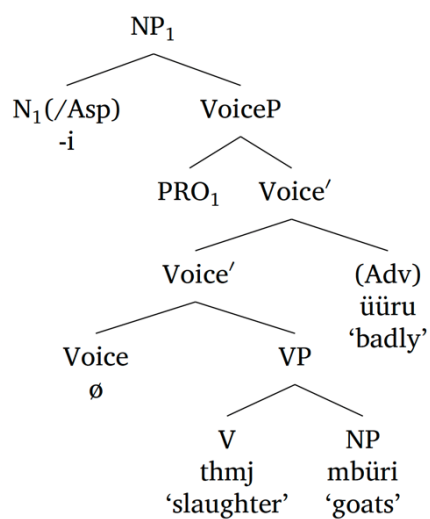
(12) The structure for (7b)



The syntactic divorce between the predicate and its DP in (12) raises an important question: how is Case assigned to the object DP subject to Delayed Gratification, if at all? According to Diercks (2012) among others, Case licensing is absent in Bantu languages. For one, there is no morphological reflex or syntactic indication of Case assignment. Diercks takes this as supporting evidence suggesting that Case is not necessary. Under the view that Case assignment is a language parameter, the foregoing inquiry about Case can be readily addressed. Following Diercks, I assume that the DP in (12) does not require Case. Therefore, restrictions on Case assignment does not apply in (12), allowing Delayed Gratification to take place without challenge.

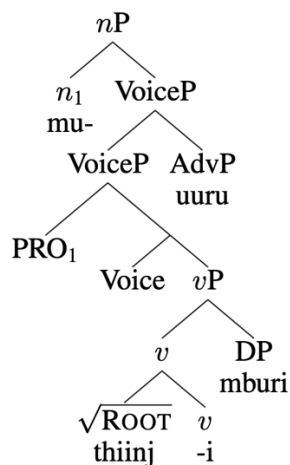
As opposed to small subject nominalizations, big subject nominalizations are best described under the Phrasal Layering analysis. The EA, PRO, has to c-command the object so that the object reflexive marker can satisfy the local binding condition. I follow Baker & Vinokurova (2009) in positing that an object DP is the complement of the verb in big subject nominalizations. (13) fleshes out Baker & Vinokurova's structure.

(13) A derivation for the big subject nominalization in (6b) (Baker & Vinokurova 2009:548)



I take a slight departure from Baker & Vinokurova and present (14) as the structure for Gĩkũyũ big subject nominalizations. The structure showcases a syntactic configuration in which the resulting noun phrase hosts verbal XPs. This is in tandem with Baker & Vinokurova’s general claim that parallels can be drawn between the nominal and clausal syntax. However, I take Bantu noun classes to be the nominalizer (*n*), following Fuchs & van der Wal (2022) and Lee & Lee (2019) among others. I also take the suffix *-i* to be the verbalizer (*v*) based on our discussion surrounding (12). Lastly, I take adverbs to be an adjunct of XP. The derivation I have in mind for (6b) is schematized in (14).

(14) Revised structure for (6b)



An aspect of the Gĩkũyũ grammar that deserves further attention relates to DP coordination. Mugane (1997) claims that the coordination facts add a layer of complication to the empirical picture at hand. One of the challenges involves the various ways in which small subject nominalizations can be coordinated, along with their restrictions. Note that coordination targets maximal projections instead of heads. As discussed in the previous section, both big and small

subject nominalizations are at least the size of *n*Ps, which suggest that both types of nominalizations can be coordinated:

(15) a. [mu-thiinj-i mburi] na [mu-rug-i ngflku]
 1 slaughter-I 9goat and 1-cook-I 9chicken
 'goat slaughterer and cook of chickens'

b. [mu-thiinj-a mburi] na [mu-rug-a ngflku]
 1 slaughter-A 9goat and 1-cook-A 9chicken
 'goat slaughterer and cook of chickens'

(Mugane 1997:150)

Mugane uses the discrepancies of the sort presented in (16) to assume that loose compounds (small subject nominalizations) are derived in the lexicon. I show, however, that the coordination facts do not pose a challenge to the current syntactic approach to handling the same set of data. A syntax-based analysis does as well as a lexicon-based analysis in terms of accounting for the mismatch at issue.

(16) a. mu-thiinj-I na [mii-rug-i nguku]
 1-slaughter-I and 1-cook-I 9chicken
 'a slaughterer and cook of chicken'

b. *mu- thiinj-a na [mii-rug-a nguku]
 1-slaughter-A and 1-cook-A 9chicken

Intended: 'a slaughterer and cook of chicken'

(Mugane 1997:150)

(16a) is felicitous because two XPs are coordinated by *na* ‘and,’ satisfying the coordination requirement. Note that big subject nominalizations are phrasal regardless of whether an overt object DP is realized in the derivation. Setting aside the issue of whether the object is syntactically present or not, the idea that the subject nominalization projects an XP remains unchanged. (16b), unlike (16a), is infelicitous because the first conjunct is an XP-less complex head that is coordinated with an XP. This violates the coordination requirement stating that coordination must be carried out between two syntactically identical XPs.

The empirical facts above can be captured under a syntactic approach to handling small and big subject nominalizations. Taking the Complex Head analysis into consideration, I argue that the aforementioned coordination data do not constitute a knock-down argument favoring a lexical approach over a syntactic approach. A take-home message I wish to convey here is that the two types of nominalizations discussed in Mugane (1997) can be fully accounted for under the jurisdiction of syntax. To put it in another way, there is no need to entertain a hybrid (‘lexicon plus syntax’) approach when handling Gikūyū small subject nominalizations.

5 Cross-linguistic evidence for small syntax

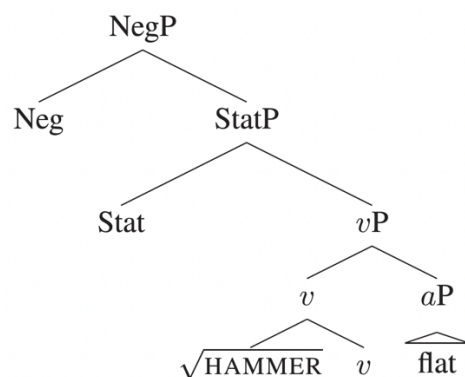
In this section, I provide cross-linguistic evidence supporting the presence of ‘small syntax.’ Evidence comes from English, Greek, and German. Embick (2023) analyzes English negated stative passives using Wood’s (2023) Complex Heads analysis. Consider the following examples that show a minimal contrast between negated and non-negated stative passives. All of the examples in (17) contain a Resultative Secondary Predicate (RSP). The examples in (18), on the other hand, cannot host an RSP. Otherwise, they are ungrammatical. From this, it becomes evident that the negative prefix *un-* blocks the modification of an RSP.

- (17) a. The metal is hammered flat.
 b. This box is kicked open.
 c. The soles of Mary's shoes are run thin. (Embick 2023:302)

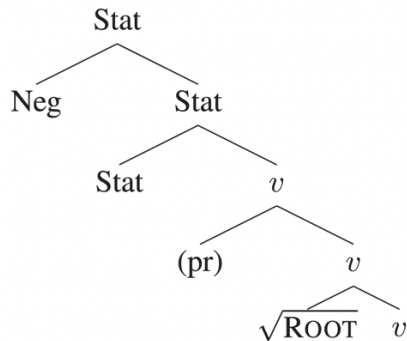
- (18) a. *The metal is/remained/looked unhammered flat.
 b. *This box is/remained/looked unkicked open.
 c. *The soles of Mary's shoes are/remained/looked unrun thin. (Embick 2023:303)

In order to capture the discrepancy between (17) and (18), Embick suggests that the former involves a derivation with verbal XPs while the latter does not. The modification of the sort under discussion is possible only when an XP is there to accommodate an adjunct (see also sections 3 and 4). Embick provides the following tree representations for (17) and (18), respectively. Note that an RSP can adjoin to the structure schematized in (19) but not to the structure in (20).

(19) A tree representation for (17)



(20) A tree representation for (18)



While English non-negated stative passives are analyzed using maximal projections, Greek non-negated stative passives have been characterized under the Complex Head analysis. Paparounas (2023a, b) reports that the Greek reflexive marker *afto-* can be realized in eventive passives but not in stative passives:

- (21) a. O Janis **afto-** katastraf-ik-e me to poli potō.
 the.NOM John.NOM REFL destroy-PST.NACT-3SG with the much drink
 ‘John destroyed himself from too much drinking.’
- b. Toso pu pini, o Yanis ine (***afto-**) katestra-men-os.
 that.much COMP drink.2SG the.NOM John.NOM be.3SG REFL destroy-PTCP-NOM
 ‘From drinking so much, John is (self-)destroyed.’

This is reminiscent of the mismatch between (6a) and (7a). The Gikūyū examples there show that big subject nominalizations can host the reflexive marker *i* whereas small subject nominalizations cannot. This has led me to suggest that Gikūyū small subject nominalizations are XP-less with

respect to their verbal structure. A similar conclusion is drawn with respect to Greek eventive and stative passives (Paparounas 2023a, b).

Adverbs also reveal a difference between eventive and stative passives. The following example shows that the adverb *almost* induces semantic ambiguity. Note that (22) is eventive passive:

- (22) I çonati sçeðon efaje to milo.
the.NOM Snow.White almost eat.PST.3SG the.ACC apple.ACC
‘Snow White almost ate the apple.’
- ✓ ‘Snow White almost finished eating the apple.’ *scalar*
- ✓ ‘It almost happened that Snow White ate the apple.’ *counterfactual*

The ambiguity is lost in stative passives, as shown in (23). The scalar reading is available while the counterfactual reading is not. Paparounas (2023a) takes this to mean that the high attachment of the adverb is possible, whereas the low attachment is not. Under this view, the high attachment yields the scalar reading, and the low attachment, if possible, yields the counterfactual reading. The absence of the low attachment reading makes sense under a small syntax analysis. Simply put, the maximal projection that accommodates the low interpretation of the adverb is absent in the derivation.

- (23) To milo ine sçeðon fago- men- o.
the.NOM apple.NOM be.3SG almost eat PTCP N
‘The apple is almost eaten.’ (~~counterfactual~~ ✓ scalar)

Idioms are also used as a diagnostic to examine the syntax of Greek passives. Below is a baseline example that carries both a literal and idiomatic interpretation. Note that the sentence is active.

- (24) I θοριვი mu exun kopsi ta ipata.
the.NOM.PL noise.NOM.PL 1SG.GEN have.3PL cut.PFV the.ACC.PL liver.ACC.PL
[Id.] ‘The noises have scared me to death.’ ([Lit.] ‘The noises have cut my livers.’)

Paparounas (2023a) reports that eventive passives preserve idiomatic interpretations whereas stative passives do not.

- (25) Mu exun kopi ta ipata apo tus θοριβυς.
1SG.GEN have.3PL cut.PASS.PFV the.NOM.PL liver.NOM.PL from the noises
[Id.] ‘I have been scared to death by the noises.’

- (26) #Mu ine ko- mena ta ipata (apo tus θοριβυς).
1SG.GEN be.3PL cut PTCP the.NOM.PL liver.NOM.PL from the noises
Intended: [Id.] ‘I am scared to death (by the noises).’

Paparounas attributes this type of discrepancy to the XP versus no XP distinction that we have familiarized ourselves with. Under Paparounas’s view, idiomatic interpretations are possible when they are showcased inside XPs. The lack of XPs in (26) blocks the intended idiomatic reading.

German provides additional evidence for the small syntax approach. Benz (2023) applies Wood's Complex Head analysis to German nominalizations. Similar to English, German exhibits result and event nominalizations (see Grimshaw 1990).

(27) Die Beobachtungen der Astronomin sind für immer verloren.
the observe-NMLZ-PL the.F.GEN astronomer are for ever lost
'The astronomer's observations are lost forever.' (result nominalization, Benz 2023)

(28) Die Beobacht-ung des Nachthimmels dauerte drei Stunden.
the observe-NMLZ the.M.GEN night.sky took three hours
'The observation of the night sky took three hours.' (event nominalization, Benz 2023)

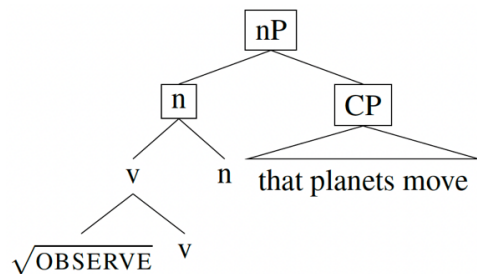
Benz pays particular attention to nominalizations that take a CP complement. They are referred to as Complex Content Nominalizations (CCNs):

(29) Seine Beobacht-ung, dass Planeten sich bewegen, veränderte die Wissenschaft.
his observe-NMLZ that planets REFL move changed the science
'His observation that planets move changed the science.' (CCN, Benz 2023)

Benz provides a unified syntactic account for all three types of nominalizations showcased in (27)–(29). The derivation unfolds in a manner parallel to (1). In (30), the complex head *n* undergoes Merge with the CP complement. Benz argues that *n* and the CP complement are subject to

predicate modification which gives rise to the appropriate semantics of the nominal. The tree for (29) is presented below:

(30) A tree derivation for (29) (Benz 2023)



Overall, we see precedence in the literature that the Complex Head analysis is applicable to various aspects of the grammar. It is also worth mentioning that all of the languages that have been claimed to exhibit small syntax belong to the Indo-European family (Icelandic, English, Greek, and German). As one of its contributions, this work demonstrates that the Complex Head analysis is applicable to a language *outside* of this ‘charted’ territory.

6 Conclusion

In his seminal work, Mugane (1997) has presented two types of individual-denoting nominalizations in Gĩkũyũ: [mu...a]-type and [mu...i]-type nominalizations (small and big subject nominalizations). Mugane argues that the [mu...i]-type nominalizations are phrasal. The [mu...a]-type nominalizations (loose compounds), on the other hand, resort to the lexicon and its inner workings prior to undergoing syntactic operations. Mugane highlights the mixed lexical and syntactic nature of loose compounds in Gĩkũyũ. For this reason, he characterizes the loose compounds as a ‘paradox.’ I emphasize that this problem dissolves when Wood’s (2023) small

syntax approach is taken into consideration. I argue that this approach captures the facts about small subject nominalizations without having to resort to the lexicon. Cross-linguistic evidence has been presented to support the validity of this analysis.

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