

Simple event nominals do (not) exist in Serbian: Theoretical and empirical evidence

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Simple event nominals (SENs) in English fall into a category in between complex event nominals (CENs) and result nominals (RNs), as they share features of both. Crucially, unlike CENs, SENs do not take arguments (e.g. Grimshaw, 1990). In Serbian, however, CENs can appear with no arguments at all when they are formed out of detransitivized verbs (Zlatic, 1997), patterning thus with SENs rather than CENs in English. To the best of our knowledge, there are no previous studies addressing the differences between SENs and CENs in Serbian from either theoretical or empirical perspective. In this study, we investigate the notion and relevance of the category of SENs in Serbian from both perspectives. The used stimuli were based on the existing tests (Roy & Soare, 2012) focusing on the morpho-syntactic differences between these two categories, such as the presence of PP- modification, the use of adverbs 'frequent' and 'constant', and the presence of an obligatory argument. The stimuli were pairs of sentences with deverbal nominals divided into CENs and SENs, but also the presence and absence of the obligatory argument was varied. The stimuli were presented in a self-paced reading task. Linear Mixed-Effects Regression model showed that there are no significant differences in the processing of SENs and CENs, and that the presence of the obligatory argument does not significantly affect sentence processing. The results obtained in this study suggest that the distinction between SENs and CENs is not relevant in Serbian, but further research is needed for a more concrete conclusion about that distinction.

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