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WHAT VERB CLASSES CAN TELL US ABOUT THE FORMATION OF ZERO-DERIVED NOUNS

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Zero derivation (or conversion) is a controversial word formation process, which has received a wide variety of theoretical implementations that may vary depending on the word classes involved or language-specific considerations (Valera 2015). In this talk, I am concerned with deverbal zero-derived nominals in English (ZNs: e.g., *to climb* > *the climb-∅*) and I will address two issues that have been raised in their comparison with suffix-based nominals (SNs: e.g., *to climb* > *the climb-ing*, *to examine* > *the examin-ation*):

- i) Are ZNs formed by a process of derivation similar to that of SNs?
- ii) How is their suffix different from the overt suffixes of SNs? Is there such a zero suffix?

First, I will discuss previous claims in the literature according to which ZNs essentially differ from SNs in interpretation and morphosyntactic behavior and show that these arguments hold only for ZNs derived from some but not all verb classes. In this respect I will contrast ZNs derived from psych verbs with those derived from change of state verbs, following recent insights from Beavers & Koontz-Garboden (*to appear*) on verb semantics. Second, I will address some arguments that have been brought before against a zero suffix and show that, at least for nominalizations, this suffix exhibits cross-linguistic regularities that deserve a unitary account and cannot straightforwardly be explained by theories that treat conversion as underspecification or creative coinage (Farrell 2001, Lieber 2004).

My general thesis is that the formation of ZNs much resembles that of SNs based on Latinate suffixes (i.e., *-ation*, *-al*, *-ance*, *-ment*) in English and the differences between the two patterns of nominalization reside in the different selectional constraints that the two types of suffix impose on their bases: Latinate suffixes require Latinate bases, while zero prefers native/nativized bases.

References:

- Farrell, P. 2001. Functional shift as category underspecification. *English Language and Linguistics* 5.1: 109-30.
Lieber, R. 2004. *Morphology and lexical semantics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Valera, S. 2015. Conversion. In Müller, P. O., I. Ohnheiser, S. Olsen & F. Rainer, *Word-formation. An international handbook of the languages of Europe*, vol. 2: 322-329. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.