

**Overview.** In this paper we discuss effects of nominalization on actional properties of verb stems, aspectual composition and restrictions on causative-inchoative alternation in Ossetian. We argue that nominalizations provide a more direct access to the properties of uninflected *v*Ps since they do not contain at least a part of the functional structure projected above *v*Ps in fully inflected clauses.

**Data.** The vast majority of Ossetian non-prefixed verbs yield imperfective finite clauses; perfective clauses are derived by prefixation (1a-b). Such clauses exhibit a number of syntactic and semantic peculiarities. First, a clause with a prefixed verb must be telic (1b-c). Secondly, prefixation produces a Slavic type of aspectual composition (Verkuyl 1999, Piñon 2001, Filip 1999 and elsewhere), whereby the perfective verb restricts the interpretation of its incremental argument (2). Thirdly, perfective clauses do not allow for causative-inchoative alternation even if their non-prefixed counterparts do (3).

Crucially, these effects are only observed in fully inflected clauses, whereas nominalizations show a completely different pattern. First, verbs that are imperfective in inflected clauses exhibit a considerable degree of actional variability in nominalizations, including telic and atelic perfective interpretations (4). Secondly, the aspectual composition is of English type, whereby it is not the verb that affects the interpretation of the argument, but, the other way round, properties of the argument determine telicity of the whole predicate (Krifka 1992, 1998) (5). Finally, nominalizations of prefixed verbs do allow for the causative-inchoative alternation despite the fact that corresponding fully inflected clauses do not (6).

**Discussion and outline of the analysis.** As a point of departure we take Kratzer's (2003) discussion of the problem of indirect access (7). We suggest that nominalizations differ from fully inflected clauses in that they contain less functional structure above *v*P (Alexiadou 2001, 2004, Fu et al. 2001, among others), hence provide a more direct access to true characteristics of uninflected verbs/*v*Ps. If fully inflected clauses show any differences from nominalizations, these differences can only emerge at later stages of syntactic derivation where clausal functional structure merges on top of *v*P (8).

If this view is correct, then actional variability is not an outcome of nominalization but is characteristic of *v*P to begin with. There is crosslinguistic evidence suggesting that this is indeed the case. Data from Turkic and North-Caucasian languages (Kibrik 1999, Kibrik et al. 2001, Lyutikova et al. 2005, Lyutikova et al. 2006) show that counterparts of verbs like 'die', 'tear' and 'sink' tend to produce exactly the range of actional interpretations we see in Ossetian nominalizations. Some of these interpretations, then, are blocked when aspectual functional structure is projected in the course of derivation of fully inflected clauses in Ossetian. The same line of reasoning applies to aspectual composition effects. At the *v*P level aspectual composition in languages like English and Ossetian works exactly the same way. The Slavic type of aspectual composition comes at later stages of syntactic derivation, when functional (specifically, aspectual) structure is projected. Finally, causative-inchoative alternation in Ossetian nominalizations obtains precisely for those predicates that allow for the alternation in fully inflected clauses in languages like English (Levin&Rappaport Hovav 1995, 2005; Rappaport Hovav&Levin 1998). This suggests that the peculiarity of Ossetian does not have to do with the *v*P construal, but rather with the functional structure dominating *v*P.

### Examples

- |     |      |   |                            |                      |
|-----|------|---|----------------------------|----------------------|
| (1) | a.   | zalinæ fonz minut-ı                             | ændax šqui-d-ta.           |                      |
|     |      | Z. five minute-GEN                              | thread tear-PST-TR.3SG     |                      |
|     |      | 'Zalina was tearing a thread for five minutes'. |                            | <imperfective>       |
|     | b.   | zalinæ fonz sekund-mæ                           | ændax a-šqui-d-ta.         |                      |
|     |      | Z. five second-LAT                              | thread PRF-tear-PST-TR.3SG |                      |
|     |      | 'Zalina tore a thread in five seconds'.         |                            | <perfective, telic>  |
|     | c. * | zalinæ fonz minut-ı                             | ændax a-šqui-d-ta.         |                      |
|     |      | Z. five minute-GEN                              | thread PRF-tear-PST-TR.3SG |                      |
|     |      | 'Zalina tore a thread for five minutes'.        |                            | <perfective, atelic> |
| (2) | a.   | alan ba-xor-d-ta                                | fætqui.                    |                      |
|     |      | A. PRF-eat-PST-TR.3SG                           | apple                      |                      |
|     |      | 'Alan ate up an / the apple'.                   |                            |                      |
|     | b.   | alan ba-xor-d-ta                                | fætqui-tı.                 |                      |
|     |      | A. PRF-eat-PST-TR.3SG                           | apple-PL                   |                      |
|     |      | 'Alan ate up the / *<Ø> apples'.                |                            |                      |

- (3) a. alan duar gom kod-ta.  
A. door open.PST-TR.3SG  
'Alan was opening the door'.  
b. duar gom kod-ta.  
door open.PST-TR.3SG  
'The door was opening'.
- (4) a. [zalinæ-jɪ fonz sekund-mæ ændax šqui-d]-ɪ fæštæ...  
Z.-GEN five second-LAT thread tear-NMN-GEN after  
'After Zalina tore a thread in five seconds...' **<perfective, telic>**  
b. [zalinæ-jɪ fonz minut-ɪ ændax šqui-d]-ɪ fæštæ...  
Z.-GEN five minute-GEN thread tear-NMN-GEN after  
'After Zalina tried to tore a thread for five minutes...' **<perfective, atelic>**
- (5) a. [alan-ɪ fætqui xor-d]-ɪ fæštæ...  
A.-GEN apple eat-NMN-GEN after  
'After Alan ate up an/the apple...' **<quantized argument, telic VP>**  
b. [alan-ɪ fætqui-tɪ xor-d]-ɪ fæštæ...  
A.-GEN apple-PL eat-NMN-GEN after  
'After Alan ate up the apples...' **<quantized argument, telic VP>**  
'After Alan ate <Ø> apples...' **<cumulative argument, atelic VP>**
- (6) a. [alan-ɪ duar baj-gom kon-d]-ɪ fæštæ...  
A.-GEN door PRF-open-NMN-GEN after  
'After Alan opened the door...'  
b. [duar-ɪ baj-gom kon-d]-ɪ fæštæ...  
door-GEN PRF-open-NMN-GEN after  
'After the door opened...'
- (7) "The verbs we see – surrounded by their arguments and with all their inflections tucked on – might not be the verbs that are ultimately fed to the semantic interpretation component... We would have to formulate hypotheses about the meaning of uninflected, tense- and aspectless forms, even though we might never encounter those forms in reality." (Kratzer 2003)

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