

## **Nominalizations and the Noun/Verb Distinction**

William Foley

Nominalizations are constructions in which a verb or predicating expression is derived into a nominal, prototypically a referring expression.

In many cases this is straightforward, and the derived form has all the properties of a basic noun in the language and none of a basic verb. But in many other cases, nominalizations are mixed hybrid categories with the properties of both basic nouns and verbs.

But the pattern is not random, typologically across languages verbal properties are ceded in a cline, with mood inflection least likely to be preserved and the ability to assign case the most likely.

This pattern of typological variation in ceding verbal properties and taking up nominal ones will be a focus of the course. For some languages, notably those of the Northwest Coast of North America and northwestern Austronesian, the actual distinction between basic lexical classes of nouns and verbs has been queried.

Clearly this would throw the question of nominalizations in these languages into stark relief: there cannot be nominalizations if there are no basic verbs to derive into nouns.

Or perhaps all forms are nominalizations to start with, as has been suggested for Tagalog and other Philippine languages? If so, what does this say about universal lexical categories?