

## Kĩitharaka Event and Result Nominals

Peter Kinyua Muriungi Patrick Njue Kanampiu

### Abstract

This paper explores the subject of event and results nominals and finds that the two can easily be distinguished in Kĩitharaka. Kĩitharaka event nominals are in form of infinitive construction while result nominals are ordinary nouns. The paper argues that there is a parametric variation between these nominals in English and Kĩitharaka. While English event nominals disallow modification by indefinite determiners but allow definite determiners, Kĩitharaka counterparts disallow modification by any form of determiners.

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### 1. The Background

The subject of event and result nominals has attracted a lot of debate over the years. To put this paper into context, therefore, we find it necessary to capture some of the views that have been posited by various linguists. Martin (2009) refers to the above class of nominals as derived nominals. Bisetto and Melloni (2005), similarly, call them deverbal nominals, meaning that they are derived from verbs. This class of nominals has been considered ambiguous because of their close relationship with the verbs from which they are derived. However, Grimshaw (1990) uses argument structure to distinguish between the two nominals. She observes that event nominals denote events, allow post-modification by event-related prepositional phrases, have argument structure, allow modification by agent-oriented adverbs, disallows indefinite determiners and are always singular. These properties of event nominals are illustrated in example 1:

- (1) a) *The examination of the patient* (Nominal denotes event)
- b) The examination of the patient *for an hour* (post-modified by a PP)
- c) John's *intentional* examination of the patient (modified by an adverb)
- d) \**An* examination of the patient (Ungrammatical caused by the presence of indefinite article *an*)
- e) \**Five/some* examinations of the cat (Ungrammatical due to pluralization)

On the other hand, result nominals have no event interpretation but refer to the output or rather, the result of the event. Unlike event nominals, they do not license event-related prepositional phrases, lack argument structure, disallow modification by agent-related adverbs, allow indefinite determiners and may be pluralized.

- (2) a) The examination \*(*of the patient*) took a long time.
- b) The exam of the dog \*(*for an hour.*)
- c) Bill's \*(*intentional*) exam of the weak candidates.
- d) *An* exam was rejected because it was written in red ink.
- e) *One/Two/Some* examinations.

Example 2 (a) and (b) illustrates that results nominals *examination* and *exam* respectively, do not allow post modification by prepositional phrases. Likewise, in (c) the result nominal disallows pre-modification by agent-oriented adverb *intentional*. Structure (d), accepts indefinite article *an* while (e) is pluralized. These facts act as a test for distinguishing event result nominals from event nominals in English.

However, several linguists have rejected pluralization as a mode of distinguishing event and result nominals. Martin (2009) notes that a closer investigation into the phenomenon of pluralization has revealed that the standard assumption on pluralization is not accurate or even correct. Roodenburg (2006) notes that pluralization of event nominals is possible and occurs parametrically. More so, others like Mourelatos (1978), Borer (2005) and Alexiadou (2007) claim that the possibility for pluralization is related to the telicity/boundedness of the event denoted by the nominal. Elaborating on the idea of pluralization further, Alexiadou, Iordăchioaia & Soare (2008) and, Alexiadou and Grimshaw (2008) propose that telic/bounded event nominals generally pluralize unless some structural conditions block it. Contributing to this debate too, is Snyder (1998) who investigated English derived nominals and discusses simple and complex event nominals. Citing Bennett (1988) Snyder argues that event nominals can be individuated, pluralized, and quantified. He illustrates the argument as shown in example 3:

- (3) a) *The departmental election* occurred last year.
- b) *The departmental elections* occurred last year.
- c) *Several / three departmental elections* occurred last year.

It is however noted that active derived nominals with an overt object, reject either pluralization and quantification altogether, or radically change their meaning when pluralized or quantified. This is exemplified

below where pluralization and quantification results to ungrammaticality of 4 (b) and (c):

- (4) a) The department’s election of John occurred last year.
- b) \* The department’s elections of John...
- c) \* Several / three elections of John...

In 4(a) the meaning of the nominal *election* is closely related to a particular person (*John*), and pertains to the event in which this person is elected to office. Both (b) and (c) are ungrammatical because the noun *election* has been pluralized.

Noting, that the subject of event nominals is evidently ambiguous, Grimshaw (1990) tests for the two nominals offer useful insight in this research. We will later run the test to capture Kĩtharaka nominals in the light of this debate. Additionally, since English differ from Kĩtharaka in a variety of parameters, studying the syntax that underlie Kĩtharaka event and result nominals is necessary.

## 2. Event and Result Nominals in Kĩtharaka

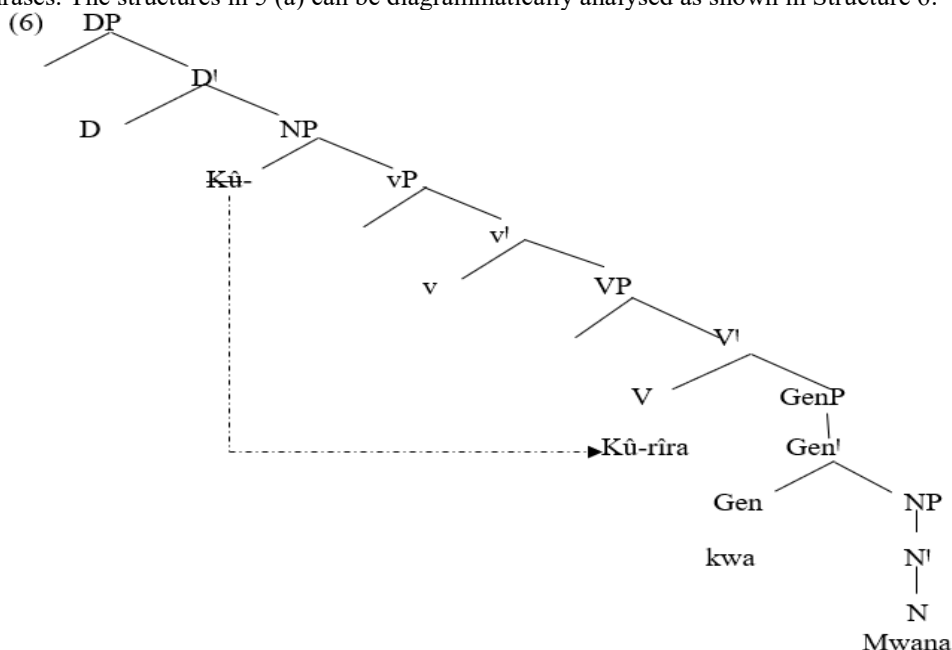
In Kĩtharaka, the event nominals tend to take an infinitive construction form, while result nominal take the form of a noun. This makes the two nominals less ambiguous in the language, thus much easier to distinguish them. Let us analyse each of these nominals.

### 2.1 Event Nominals

The event nominals denote events, thus:

- (5) a) *Kũ-rĩra kw-a mwa-na kaingĩ*  
       c15.inf-cry c15--of c1-baby often  
       ‘Crying of a baby is good often’
- b) *Kũ-gwa ĩ-gerio (kw-a Njoana) kĩ-thingatano*  
       c15.inf-fail c8-exam c15--of John c8-consecutively  
       ‘The consecutive failure of John in the exams’
- c) *Kũ-buutwa n-gũgĩ (na ma-tharaũ) (kw-a makena)*  
       c15.inf- sack c9-job with c6- scorn c15-of c1-Makena  
       ‘The scornful sacking of Makena’

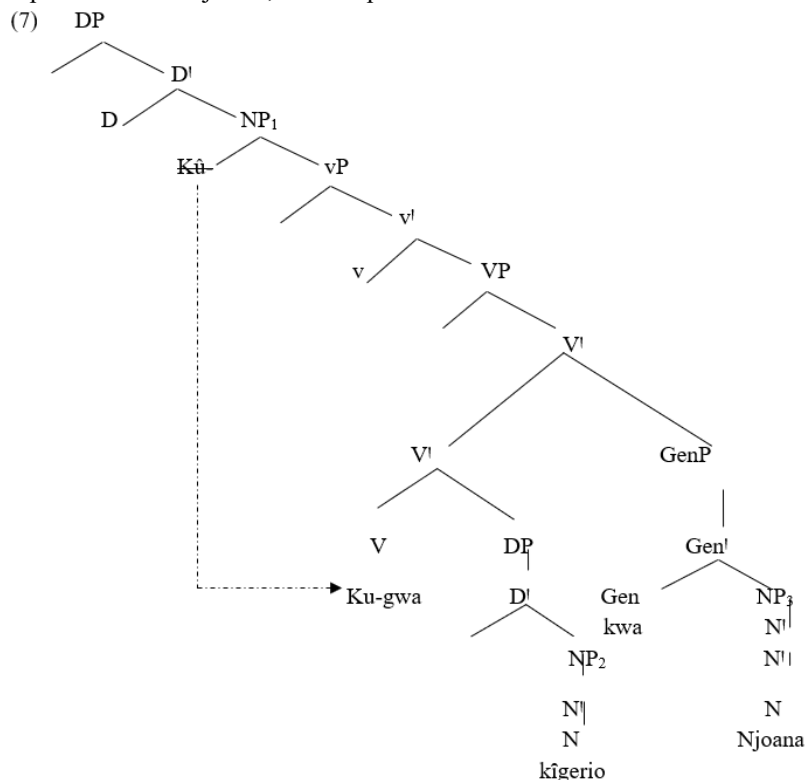
Example 5(a) is a DP in form of an infinitive construction with only one genitive phrase complement<sup>1</sup>. The event nominals in (b) consist of a noun in form of an infinitive construction (*kũgwa*) post modified by another NP (*kĩgerio*) followed by a genitive phrase (*kwa njoana*). The genitive phrase is followed by an adverb (*kĩthingatano*), which modifies the event nominal (*kũgwa kĩgerio*). The structure in (c) has an additional genitive phrase (*na matharaũ*) which serves as an adverbial describing the event. The DP in this case, therefore, has two genitive phrases. The structures in 5 (a) can be diagrammatically analysed as shown in Structure 6:



<sup>1</sup> The concept of a genitive phrase is borrowed from Vitale (1981) and Tamanji and Damsah (2004) who treat the associative marker (Kwa in our case) not as a preposition but a genitive connector. The genitive connector heads the genitive phrase.

The Structure 6 is a DP with a null head. The *-ing* form, realized in Kĩtharaka as *kũ-* is initially projected at the specifier position of NP. The verb root *rĩra*, is projected lower in the structure. The *kũ-* prefix then undergoes affix lowering and attaches itself at the verb root.

The issue of absent determiners is a common phenomenon across the world languages. Citing Campell (1996), observes that a DP can be headed by a null head, when there is no overt determiner. Event nominals may admit both complements and adjuncts, as exemplified in 7:



Evidently, Structure 7 is a DP with three NPs. The first (NP<sub>1</sub>), is initially specified by the prefix *kũ-* before it undergoes lowering. NP<sub>2</sub> is a complement to the null head D, while the GenP is an adjunct to VP. NP<sub>3</sub> complements the GenP. Probably, one may ask why we have arrived at assigning a complement position to NP<sub>2</sub> and the adjunct position to the GenP. The rationale is based on Carnie (2006), who observes that a complement is an XP that is sister to the head, and a daughter to a single bar level.

An adjunct on the other hand is an XP that is sister to a single bar level and a daughter to a single bar level. NP<sub>2</sub> is a sister to D (a head) and a daughter of D'. The PP, on the other hand, is both sister and daughter to D', thus an adjunct, in line with Carnie's observations. Moreover, complements are obligatory elements in the structure while adjuncts are optional. Indeed, in the phrase *kũgwa kĩgerio kwa Njoana*, the NP *kĩgerio* is obligatory while *kwa Njoana* is optional because it can be opted out leaving a structure like *kũgwa kĩgerio* (Failing in an examination).

The Kĩtharaka event nominal, therefore, is a DP with complement(s) or both complement(s) and adjunct(s). While example 6 shows an event nominal with a GenP complement, 7 exemplifies one with a DP complement and GenP serving as an adjunct. The complement may be a genitive phrase or a NP as in illustration 6 and 7 respectively.

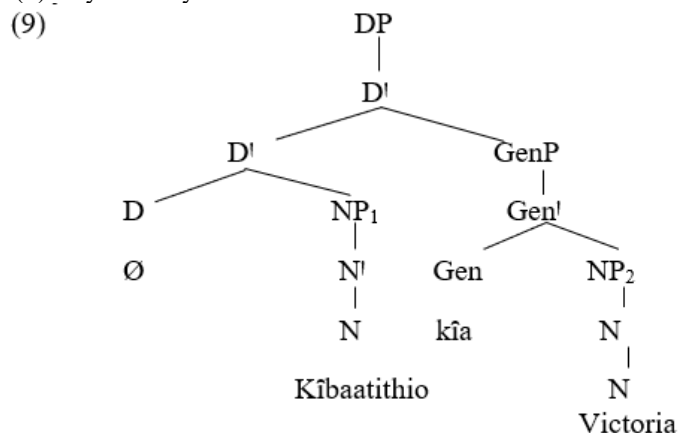
### 2.2 Result Nominals

We noted in section 1, that result nominals have no event interpretation. They refer to the output or result of an event. Let us examine the following examples:

- (8) a) *Kĩ-gerio* i-gĩ- *kũ-* *rĩ* *kĩ-ũmo*  
c7-Exam SM-c7-Perf-aux c7-hard  
'The exam was hard.'
- b) *Kĩ-baatithio* *kĩ-a* *Victoria* i-kĩ- a- *rĩ* na n-kenā  
c7-baptism c7-of Victoria SM-c7-past-aux with c9-happiness  
'The baptism of Victoria was filled with happiness.'

In the two structures, we have the phrases *Kĩgerio* and *Kĩbaatithio* *kĩā* *Victoria* functioning as the subjects of the two clauses. The nominal in Structure 8 (a) is not post modified by a genitive phrase. It refers to an outcome, the

result of an event. Furthermore, the nominal can be pluralized to *igerio* (exams). In structure (b), the nominal is post modified by a genitive phrase, *kia Victoria*. Structure (a) would be analysed as a DP with the noun as the only elements. Structure (b) may be analysed as shown in Structure 8:



Structure 9 is a DP with two NPs. NP<sub>1</sub>, *kibaatithio* is the complement of the determiner phrase with a null head  $\emptyset$ , while NP<sub>2</sub> functions as a complement of the genitive phrase *kwa Victoria*. The genitive phrase in the structure is an adjunct.

### 3. Distinguishing between Event and Result Nominals: the Grimshaw Test

In section one, we noted that Grimshaw (1990) proposed a test to differentiate between the English event and result nominals. We shall apply these tests on Kîtharaka DP with a view to establish parametric comparison with the English language.

The first test stipulates that English event nominals denote events while result nominals denote the outcome or result of an event. This also applies in Kîtharaka as exemplified in the following structures:

- (10) a) Kû-ger-ua                      kw-a      Njoana  
           c15.inf- examine            c15--of    c1-John  
           ‘Examination of John’
- b) Kî-gerio      kî-a      Njoana  
           c7-exam    c7-of    c1-John  
           ‘the exam/examination of John’

In Structure 10(a), the nominal *kûgerua* denotes a process of doing an exam or, rather, an event. This is caused by the presence of *kû-* inflection, which is equivalent to *-ing* form in English. This makes the nominal an infinitive construction. In (b), *kîgerio* is the outcome or the result of the process of examination in (a). This should be the understanding, although, the two seem to have similar translation in English.

The second test is that event nominal license event-related prepositional phrases while result nominals do not. This test has also been found to apply to the Kîtharaka nominals. The Kîtharaka event nominals readily allow modification by prepositional phrases that relate to the process in question. However, if such prepositional phrases would be used with result nominals, ungrammatical structures would be achieved, as shown in the following structures:

- (11) a) Kû-gerua                      kw-a      Njoana      kw-a      mathaa      ma-na  
           c15- inf-Examination    c15-of    c1-John    c15--for    c6-hours    c6-four  
           ‘the examination of John for four hours’
- b) Kî-gerio      kî-a      Njoana \*(kî-a      mathaa      mana)  
           c7-exam    c7-of    c1-John c7-for    c6-hours    c6-fours  
           ‘the exam of John \*(for four hours)’

Structure 11(a), an event nominal is post-modified a prepositional *kwa mathaa mana*, denoting the period of time that the process of examining John took. Since the nominal in (b) does not denote a process, the presence of a PP denoting a period of time affects meaning, making the structure ill-formed.

Additionally, since the event nominals denote a process, they cannot be quantified, either by use of definite or indefinite quantifiers. They also do not allow modification by indefinite articles. On the other hand,

result nominals allow modification by indefinite determiners. This is the third test used to disambiguate the nominals. In Kĩtharaka, however, there is a slight parametric variation in event nominals. The event nominals disallow modification by any form of determiner. The variation arises from the fact that while English allows definite articles as determiners, Kĩtharaka is an article-less language. The result nominals only lack articles but can be modified by other determiners. This is illustrated in the following structures:

(12) a) Kũ-gerua                      kwingĩ/kũmwe      kwa      Njoana  
           c15.inf-examination      c15--many/one      c15-- of      c1-John  
           \* ('one/many examinations) of John'

b) Kũ-gerua                      rĩonthe/rĩmwe      kw-a      Njoana  
           c15.inf-examination      always/once      c15--of      c1-John  
           'Examination of John always/once'

c) Kĩ-gerio              kĩ-mwe              kĩ-a      Njoana  
           c7-exam              c7-one              c7-of      c7-John  
           'one examinations of John'

d) i-gerio              bi-ikai      bi-a      Njoana  
           c8-exams      c7-few      c7-of      c8-John  
           'a few exams of John'

Notably, the structure in 12(a) is ungrammatical because of being pre-modified by quantifiers. If the sentence is interpreted as *examination of John once*, or *many times*, it could be grammatical. In this case, however, *once* is an adverb and *many* quantifies *times* and not the event nominal. The same sense is illustrated in (b). This is an event nominal. Structures (c) and (d) are result nominals and have successfully been quantified.

The fifth test that Grimshaw uses to differentiate between the two nominals is argument structure. He notes that event nominals have argument structure while result nominals lack it. Argument structure is the interface between semantic roles and syntactic function of predicators, which are generally taken to be verbs (Bresnan, 2001). It is, therefore, the relationship between the lexical information of a verb and the syntax of the clause in which it occurs. For instance, in English, some verbs take direct objects (transitive) which serve as a thematic argument in the clause but others do not (intransitive). A transitive verb will have two obligatory arguments in its argument structure; that of the agent (subject) and the theme (object), while the intransitive counterpart will only have the agentive argument.

Kĩtharaka event nominals also have an argument structure, simply because, although they serve as nominals, they have verbal characteristics (are in form of infinitive constructions). Seemingly, this is the reason Bisetto and Melloni (2005) terms event nominals as deverbal nominals. Let us study the following examples:

(13) a) **Gũ-tembũrĩrwa**      *nguo*              kw-a              *Makena*  
           c15.inf-tear              c9-cloth      c15--of              c1-Makena  
           'Tearing of Makena's cloth'

b) **Gũ-tembũriwa**      *nguo*              kw-a              *Makena*      I      *Kĩjogi*  
           c15.inf-Tear              c9-cloth      c15--of              c1-Makena      by      Kĩjogi  
           'Tearing of Makena's cloth by Kĩjogi'

c) **Gũ-tembũrĩrwa**      *nguo*      na      *kajiũ*              kw-a              *Makena*      I      *Kĩjogi*  
           c15.inf-Tear              c9-cloth      with      c12-knife      c15--of              c1-Makena      by      Kĩjogi  
           'Tearing of Makena's cloth by Kijogi using a knife'

In example 13, the event nominal *gũtemburĩrwa* has various argument structures. The structures are (a) <theme, beneficially>; (b) <theme, beneficially, agent> and (c), <theme, instrument, beneficially, agent>. The result nominals in Kĩtharaka lack such an argument structure because, as noted earlier, they are themselves arguments and not infinitive constructions.

Kĩtharaka event nominals can also be differentiated from result nominals on the basis of modification by adverbs. Event nominals can be modified by agent-oriented adverbs while result nominals cannot. This is the fifth test used by Grimshaw to disambiguate the two. This is illustrated in the following examples:

(14) a) Kũbũrĩrwa              rĩonthe              kw-a              mwekũrũ      ũyũ  
           c15.inf-beat              always              c15--of              c1-woman      c1- this  
           'the *beating* of this woman *always*'

b) Kû-rîra kw-a mw-ana rîmwe na rîmwe  
 c15.inf-cry c15--of c1-baby occasionally  
 ‘the occasional crying of the baby’

c) Kîrîro kî-a mw-ana (rîmwe na rîmwe)  
 c7- Cry c7-of c1-baby occasionally  
 ‘the \*(occasional) cry of the baby’

In structures 14(a) and (b), the nominals *kûbûûrwa* and *kûrîra* have successfully been modified by adverbs *rîmwe na rîmwe*. They are, thus, event nominals. However, in (c), introduction of the same adverb results to ungrammaticality. Structure (c), therefore, is a result nominal.

The last test used to distinguish between event and result nominals is ability to pluralize. Grimshaw (1990) argues that event nominals are always singular, while result nominals can pluralize. This is even more explicit in Kîîtharaka where result nominals are nouns. Provided that the result nominal is made of a countable noun, it readily accepts pluralization. Let us examine the following structures:

(15) a) Kî-rîro kî-a mw-ana  
 c7- Cry c7-of c1-baby  
 ‘the Cry of the baby’

b) I-rîro bi-a a-ana  
 c8-Cries c8-of c2-babies  
 ‘the cries of the babies’

Structure 15(b) is a pluralized version of 15(a). Both are result nominals. Apart from the Grimshaw tests, as noted earlier, there exists a lexical and structural difference between Kîîtharaka event and result nominals. While the former exists in form of an infinitive construction, the latter is structured as a noun. It is, therefore, easy to differentiate the two on the basis of surface structure.

#### 4. Summary

In this paper, we have argued that Kîîtharaka event and result nominals can easily be distinguished lexically and structurally. On lexical basis, event nominals are in form of infinitive constructions while result nominals are ordinary nouns. Structurally, the Kîîtharaka event nominals allow modification by event related prepositional phrases while in result nominals such phrases result to ungrammaticality. Additionally, we have found that unlike in English where event nominals disallow modification by indefinite determiners but allow definite determiners, Kîîtharaka counterparts disallow modification by any form of determiners. However, result nominals can be modified by indefinite determiners, just like in English, with exception of articles which are absent in Kîîtharaka. Pluralization is possible only in result nominals.

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