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# The semantics of *-ing*: eventivity, quantification, aspect

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In this paper I consider the lexical semantic contribution of the affix *-ing* (as in *the doctor's examining of the patient*) to deverbal nominalizations. I will first present data from a corpus-based study (Andreou & Lieber, 2019) showing – contrary to claims in the literature (Grimshaw 1990, Biese 1941, Langacker 1991, Brinton 1995, Alexiadou 2001, among others) – that the suffix *-ing* can convey both referential and eventive readings, can exhibit both mass and count quantification, and that when eventive, can convey both bounded and unbounded aspect. I will show that *-ing* in fact does not differ from deverbal nouns formed by conversion in the breadth of readings that it can support. Deverbal nouns formed by conversion also allow both referential and eventive, mass and count, bounded and unbounded readings. Indeed, I will show that the formal means of nominalization does not determine eventivity, quantification, or aspect, but rather than these facets of meaning are largely determined by context. The question then arises of how we can model the semantics of nominalizers like *-ing* (or conversion) in syntactic or morphological theory. My argument will be that nominalizers cannot be analyzed as “rigid designators,” as assumed in Borer’s (2013) exoskeletal framework or in most versions of Distributed Morphology that I am aware of, but rather that a theoretical treatment must allow for substantial underspecification of affixal semantics as well as for mechanisms that allow context to determine key aspects of the nominalization’s reading, as is possible within the Lexical Semantic Framework (LSF) of Lieber (2004, 2016).

## References

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