

Non-finite Subordinate Verbs in Australian Aboriginal Languages: Are Nominalised Verbs Really Nominalised?

RACHEL NORDLINGER

University of Melbourne

racheln@unimelb.edu.au

1. Introduction¹

A large number of predominantly Pama-Nyungan Australian languages have a non-finite subordinate clause construction headed by what is usually described as a ‘nominalised’ verb. Examples include:²

- (1) *yarra* *yanya* *nhä-ma* [*djatthu-nar* *gäyu*].
1SG.NOM 3SG.ACC see-UNM chop-NMLSR+ABS tree+ABS
‘I’m watching him chopping down a tree.’ (Djapu, Morphy 1983: 133, ex. 268)
- (2) *Junu-ya* *yanu* [*mitu-rri-ngu-nja*³].
left-3PL.S went dead-INCH-PAST-NMLSR
‘When he had died, they left him.’ (Manjiljarra, Clendon 1988: 195, ex. 4)
- (3) *Yarnka-mi-rni* *ka-rnalu* [*paka-rninja-ku+lku*].
set.out-NPST-HITHER PRES-1PL.EXC.S hit-NMLSR-PURP+NOW
‘We set out to hit (them – donkeys, cows).’ (Warlpiri, Simpson 1988: 215, ex. 28)

While it appears generally well-accepted in the Australianist literature that such verbs are nominalised (e.g. Blake 1987: 141, Austin 1998), there has as yet been no cross-linguistic study into the nature of these ‘nominalised’ clause-types, and their relationship to

¹ I would like to thank Nick Evans, Ian Green, Patrick McConvell and participants of the 2001 ALS conference in Canberra for comments and suggestions regarding various aspects of this paper. I regret that I have not always been able to do justice to their comments in this version. They may, of course, not agree with my interpretation of the data nor with the analysis presented.

² Unless otherwise noted, examples in this paper are presented using the orthography of the original; glosses have been altered slightly in some places for consistency. Square brackets are used to delineate subordinate clauses. Abbreviations used include: A ‘transitive subject’, ABL ‘ablative’, ABS ‘absolutive’, ACC ‘accusative’, ACT ‘activity’, ALL ‘allative’, ANAPH ‘anaphoric demonstrative’, AOBL ‘associating oblique’, CM ‘conjugation marker’ CONCDSS ‘simultaneous action, dative subject’, CONCSS ‘simultaneous action, subject-controlled complementiser’, DAT ‘dative’, EMPH ‘emphatic’, ERG ‘ergative’, EXC ‘exclusive’, F ‘feminine’, FUT ‘future’, GER ‘gerund’, IMP ‘imperative’, IMPF ‘imperfective’, IMPLDS ‘implicated, different subject’, INCH ‘inchoative’, INTENT ‘intensive’, LOC ‘locative’, M ‘masculine’, NF ‘non-feminine’, NFUT ‘nonfuture’, NMLSR ‘nominaliser’, NOM ‘nominative’, NPST ‘non-past’, O ‘object’, PRES ‘present’, PROG ‘progressive’, PURP ‘purposive’, RDP ‘reduplicated’, REL ‘relative clause’, S ‘subject’, SERIAL ‘serialising verb suffix’, UNM ‘unmarked’, VBLSR ‘verbaliser’, XS ‘excessive’.

³ This is essentially the same suffix that is spelt *-nytya* in the Luritja example (9), and *-nytja* in the Yankunytjatjara example (19). In all cases I have retained the spelling of the original. It is not clear to me whether the difference between an apical nasal in Manjiljarra and a palatal nasal in the other languages reflects phonetic and/or phonological differences between the languages, or merely different orthographic choices.

nominalised constructions more generally.⁴ For example, in what sense are these verb-forms nominalised? What are the ‘nominal’ features that they share? And how are they similar to or different from nominalised constructions in other languages as discussed in the typological literature (e.g. Noonan 1985, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, Haspelmath 1995)?

In this paper I present early research into these non-finite subordinate clauses in Australian languages in light of typological work on nominalisations cross-linguistically. I discuss the properties common to these clause-types in Australian languages and show that they exhibit features of both nominalised and non-nominalised (infinitival) constructions presented in the literature.⁵ I conclude by arguing that they are not nominalised in the usual sense of the word, but in an Australian-specific sense, where ‘nominalisation’ refers not to the process of deriving a *noun*, but rather that of deriving a member of the superclass of *nominals*, which may include words with adjectival and adverbial functions also (e.g. Dixon 1980:272, Blake 1987:3).

This paper is organised as follows. In §2 I briefly introduce some theoretical background, discussing the properties that have been attributed to nominalisations in the cross-linguistic literature. In sections §3 and §4 I turn to the Australian languages, examining the characteristics common to these non-finite subordinate verbs. I begin with those properties that have been associated with nominalisations (the ‘nominalised’ properties, see §3) and then discuss those that have been associated with infinitival (i.e. non-nominalised) constructions (the ‘non-nominalised’ properties, see §4). In §5 I present an analysis of these Australian subordinate verbs that can capture the various features discussed in §3 and §4 before, in §6, concluding and discussing directions for future research.

2. Theoretical Background

The term ‘nominalisation’ essentially means ‘turning something into a noun’, and can result in nouns of a number of different semantic categories (Comrie and Thompson 1985). The type of nominalisation relevant to the present discussion is that which results in ‘action’ nominals– “nouns derived from verbs with the general meaning of an action or process” (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993:5)– which are exemplified for English in the following.⁶

- (4) The *collapse* of the Germans is unlikely.
- (5) John’s *singing* the Marseillaise caused the riot.
- (6) I heard the *singing* of the Marseillaise.

These action nominalisations can be distinguished cross-linguistically from non-nominalised verb forms such as infinitives by the following proto-typical characteristics (Noonan 1985, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993):

⁴ Throughout this paper I use ‘nominalised clause’ and ‘nominalised clause-type’ to refer to those clauses which are headed by a nominalised verb. I do not necessarily wish to imply an analysis in which the clause as a whole has been ‘nominalised’, although that’s certainly a possibility for some languages cross-linguistically (see, for example, Comrie and Thompson’s (1985) discussion of ‘clausal nominalisation’ (pp. 391-393)).

⁵ Of course, these ‘nominalised’ clause-types will not share all of the same properties in all Australian languages. For the purposes of this paper, I try to restrict discussion to those features which are most common, noting where possible languages which fall outside the generalisation being made. Determining the parameters of such variation across Australian languages however, is the subject of a larger investigation still underway, and so further research is needed before its true extent can be accurately determined.

⁶ These examples are originally from Vendler (1967:132, 135, 138), but are here taken from Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1993: 5).

- (7) (i) they are capable of declining or taking prepositions or postpositions in the same way as non-derived nouns;
 (ii) they can form a constituent with their subject, which (along with the object) is usually marked with an associative relation (e.g. genitive case, dative case, etc.);
 (iii) they primarily function as the head of NPs, thus they may occur with articles and be modified by adjectives;
 (iv) their typical function is as arguments of the matrix predicate or as sentential complements.

Infinitives, on the other hand, although also non-finite verb forms with the general meaning of an action or process, are not nominalised. The properties generally associated with infinitives cross-linguistically are given in (8) (Noonan 1985, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993):

- (8) (i) they can be used in some contexts in which ordinary NPs are used, but do not have the same range of inflectional and derivational possibilities as non-derived nouns;
 (ii) they cannot form a constituent with their subject, which is usually omitted;
 (iii) they have the same range of adverbial modification as regular main verbs;
 (iv) they combine with their objects in the same way as the corresponding finite verbs;
 (v) they are fully productive and regularly formed from any verb.

3. 'Nominalised' Properties

Having identified the properties common to action nominalisations cross-linguistically, we can now compare those of the non-finite subordinate verbs in Australian languages. Frequently, one of the major pieces of evidence in favour of analysing these non-finite subordinate verbs as nominalisations is the presence of case marking.⁷ In many Australian languages, case morphology is used with dependent non-finite verbs to encode tense relative to that of the main clause (Dench and Evans (1988) refer to this as 't-complementizing' case). Consider the following examples:

- (9) *Wati-ngku waru kalarnu, [kuka pawu-nytya-ku].*
 man-ERG fire lit meat cook-NMLSR-DAT
 'The men lit the fire to cook the meat.' (Martutjarra Luritja, Blake 1987: 141, ex. 8.18)
- (10) *Gumarra g-u nyagaj-ba [yarru-nnga].*
 calf 3SG.S-FUT be.tired-FUT go-ABL
 'His calves will be tired from walking.' (Wambaya, Nordlinger 1998: 214, ex. 8-8)
- (11) *Ngarrka-ngku marlu pantu-rnu [marna nga-rninja-kurra].*
 man-ERG kangaroo spear-PAST grass eat-NMLSR-ALL
 'The man speared the kangaroo while it was eating grass.' (Warlpiri, Simpson 1988: 205, ex. 2)

The use of the dative case in (9) indicates that the event of the subordinate clause follows, and is the purpose of, that of the main clause. The ablative case in the Wambaya example

⁷ Some authors make explicit this assumption that the presence of case morphology necessarily shows the verb form to be nominalised (e.g. Clendon 1988, Eades 1979).

in (10) marks the subordinate clause event as having preceded the main clause event. And in Warlpiri (11), the allative case is used to mark the subordinate event as being concurrent with that of the main clause. In some cases these t-complementizing case markers also encode switch-reference (Austin 1981). This is true for the Warlpiri example in (11), where the allative case additionally identifies the subject of the subordinate clause as being identical with the direct object of the main clause. Were it the subject of the main clause that was 'eating grass', a different relative tense marker would need to be used on the subordinate verb (Simpson 1988).

To assume that the presence of this case morphology is evidence for the nominalisation of the subordinate verb is not unreasonable. We have already seen that declension with regular nominal morphology is a characteristic of nominalisations cross-linguistically (7(i) above). However, there are a couple of reasons why this fact *alone* is not conclusive evidence of the nominalisation of these verbs.

Firstly, in most languages only a subset of case markers (which varies from language to language) are used in this t-complementising function with non-finite subordinate verbs.⁸ In Wambaya, for example, only the dative, ablative and ergative/locative cases can appear in this function (Nordlinger 1998). Thus, these non-finite subordinate verbs do not decline with the full range of case morphology available for non-derived nominals.

Secondly, there are many languages in which case suffixes can appear in this function on fully finite verbs. This is reported in the literature for Laz (Kartvelian) (Harris and Campbell 1995) and Newari (Tibeto-Burman) (Genetti 1991), and is found in many non-Pama-Nyungan Australian languages also:⁹

- (12) *Yarrabbah-rongi-yumanj* [djenj *birri-djad-minj-dja*].
 we.two-go-PAST.PROG fish it+they+REL-poison-PAST-LOC
 'We were going along where they poisoned the fish.' (Rembarrnga, McKay 1988: 33, ex. 80)
- (13) *Ni:-'la:='la:di[nima=n^su-ni-yala yi:-midi-wala]*.
 it.was.bad it.ate.it-ABL paperbark-ABL
 'It was feeling bad after eating [nectar of] a paperbark tree.' (Nunggubuyu, Heath 1980:369, ex. 98.2:3-4)
- (14) *Ingirrar [ingiland-uk jungk-uk ijin]*.
 they.speared he.sat-LOC fire-LOC his
 'They speared him while/as he sat by his fire.' (Nyunyul, McGregor 1994: 45, ex. 33)

Thus, there is clearly no implicational relationship between the presence of t-complementising case suffixes and the nominalisation of the non-finite verb.¹⁰ While this

⁸ In a few languages, however, such as the Eastern Ngumbin languages, all case markers are possible with these non-finite verb forms (Patrick McConvell, p.c.). It is worth noting further that such non-finite verb forms in the Eastern Ngumbin languages can also function as arguments (see below for further discussion of this issue), making them appear more convincingly noun-like (and, therefore more truly 'nominalised') than in the majority of languages discussed here.

⁹ Of course the presence of case marking on the finite verbs forms in these examples may suggest that they are actually nominalised also. This would not necessarily contradict the point being made here, which is simply that we must look further than just case marking possibilities before concluding that a particular verb form is nominalised.

¹⁰ Indeed, even amongst those languages with synchronically non-finite (and 'nominalised') verbs in these subordinate constructions, there is some evidence that the construction may originally have involved the

does not mean that these verbs are not nominalised, it suggests that we need to look further in order to find solid evidence for this nominalised status.

A common (and often definitional) feature of nominalisation cross-linguistically is the associative (genitival) relationship a nominalised predicate has with its arguments (Noonan 1985, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993), as in the English example in (15) (from Noonan 1985: 60, ex. 87):

- (15) *Algernon's shooting of the aardvark* drew international attention.

This is one crucial respect in which nominalised predicates can be distinguished from infinitival verb forms, which generally do not have overtly expressed subjects, and mark their objects in the same way that finite verb forms do (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993).

This is one area where Australian languages show a fairly large degree of diversity as Austin (1998) has demonstrated. While a few languages code the arguments of non-finite subordinate clauses exactly as they would those of main clauses (16); others use a variety of alternative case frames, most commonly involving the dative case (17, 18). In the Diyari example in (16) the subordinate subject is marked with the nominative case, just as it would be in a main clause. In contrast, the subordinate subject in (18) from Warlpiri is inflected with the dative case, rather than the ergative case it would have in a main clause. In (17), from Jiwarli, the subordinate object (*jiriparri-yi*) is likewise inflected with the dative case, rather than its regular main clause case (the absolutive).

- (16) *Yundrru nhinha nganka-mayi [nhawu warli-ndrru*
 2SG.ERG 3SG.NF.ACC make.IMP-EMPH 3SG.NF.NOM house-ABL
ngari-rnanthu].
 go.down-IMPLDS
 'You make him come down from the house!' (Diyari, Austin 1998: 6, ex. 1)

- (17) *Kuwarti kurriya purra-rninyja [patha-rrkarringu-ru jiriparri-yi]*.
 now boomerang.ACC toss-PAST pelt-INTENT-ERG echidna-DAT
 'Next he threw a boomerang to hit echidna.' (Jiwarli, Austin 1998: 12, ex. 28)

- (18) *Kurdukurdu ka-lu manyu-karri-mi [ngati-nyanu-ku*
 children pres-3PL.S play-stand-NPST mother-DAT
wirlinyi-rlarni].
 hunting-CONCDSS
 'The children are playing while their mothers are hunting.' (Warlpiri, Simpson 1988: 215, ex. 30)

addition of a case marker to a finite verb form. Blake (1993: 44), for example, discusses the systematic relationship found in many Pama-Nyungan languages between so-called 'nominalising' affixes and tense markers, as in Table 1:

Table 1. Tense to 'nominaliser' (taken from Blake 1993: 44, Table 6 – only partial)

Language	Tense marker	'nominaliser'
Thargarri	-nya, -dja (past)	-nya-du, -dya-du
Badimaya	-ya (present)	-ya-nha
Kalkatungu	-mi (future)	-mi-thi ('when ...')
Pitta Pitta	-ka (past)	-ka-
Lhanima	-nya (past)	-nya-minya (NM-ABL) 'after'
Kungkari	-la (future)	-la-ku (NM-PURP)
Yidiny	-nyu (past)	-nyu-nda (NM-DAT) 'while'

Non-finite subordinate verbs in (many) Australian languages, then, exhibit some prototypical nominalised properties: they can bear some case marking morphology (albeit restricted) (7i) and (often) show associative relations with their arguments (7ii). They also, however, show features of non-nominalised verbs, as we shall now see.

4. ‘Non-nominalised’ Properties

The list of properties commonly associated with ‘non-nominalised’ (e.g. infinitival) verbs cross-linguistically was given in (8). In this section we will consider the extent to which the so-called ‘nominalised’ verbs in Australian languages share these properties.

Firstly, like infinitival verbs these non-finite verb-forms generally do not have independent subjects (8ii). Instead, their subject is often controlled by an NP of the main clause (there are, however, a few examples of overtly expressed subjects, such as (18) from Warlpiri). The constraints on this control relationship differ depending on the language. In some languages the subordinating morpheme encodes switch-reference information identifying the argument of the main clause that controls the subordinate subject (see e.g. (11) above). In others the subordinate verb is marked with c-complementizing case (Dench and Evans 1988) in agreement with the controlling NP, as in (19).

- (19) *Pulitjumanu-ngku witi-ra kati-ngu, wati [panya mani*
 policeman-ERG grab-SERIAL take-PAST man ANAPH money.ACC
kutitjunku-nytja-nya].
 steal-NMLSR-ACC
 ‘The police arrested and took away the man that stole the money.’
 (Yankunytjatjara,
 Goddard 1988: 188, ex. 31)

In other languages, and in other constructions, the subject of the subordinate clause is simply determined through contextual and/or other pragmatic factors. This is shown in the Wambaya examples in (20) and (21) in which the subject of a dative-inflected subordinate verb form is controlled by the main clause subject in (20), and the main clause object in (21).

- (20) *Yabu ngiy-a gijilulu [jiyaji-nka marndangi-nka].*
 have 3SG.F.A-PST money(ACC) give-DAT white.man-DAT
 She had money to give to the white man.’ (Nordlinger 1998: 214, ex. 8-10)
- (21) *Garnarnda gini-ng-a [lingba-lingbaji-nka].*
 send 3.SG.M.A-1.O-NFUT RDP-swim-DAT
 ‘He sent me to swim.’ (Nordlinger 1998: 216, ex. 8-23)

Secondly, these ‘nominalised’ verb-forms are generally not possible in the most typically nominal functions, such as subject and object argument functions, and as attributive nominal modifiers:¹¹

¹¹ Although, again, this is not the case for all languages. The attributive function in (22) appears to be marginally possible in Gumbaynggir:

- (i) *dju:gawaygam ni:gar yayingiy bigu:da*
 tired-VBLSR-PRES-NMLSR-NOM man-NOM sit-PAST tree-LOC
 ‘The tired man was sitting near the tree.’ (Gumbaynggir, Eades 1979:287, ex. 51)

And non-finite verb forms can function as arguments in Gurindji, as in the following near-equivalent to (23):

- (ii) *jayi-ng-an-u-warra punyu.*
 give-CM-IMPV-GER-ACT good
 ‘Giving is good.’ (Patrick McConvell, p.c.)

(22) **parnka-nja* *ngarrka-ngku*
 run-NMLSR man-ERG
 ‘the running man’ (Warlpiri, Simpson 1991: 109, ex. 73a)

(23) **Parnka-nja-karra* *ngurruju*.
 run-NMLSR-CONCSS good
 ‘Running is good.’ (ibid. p. 110, ex. (74))

Nor, as discussed in §3, can they take the full range of morphological possibilities available for non-derived nouns (8i).

Thirdly, if these were true nominalisations, we would expect them to be modified with adjectives or other nominal modifiers, rather than with adverbs (8iii). While I have as yet been unable to find *any* examples of these clauses being modified at all, I suspect that such modification would be by adverbs (e.g. ‘I saw the man running quickly’) rather than by adjectives (e.g. ‘I saw the man’s quick running’), making them look more like infinitival verb forms than nominalisations. Further research is needed however before this point can be verified.

Finally, they are inflectional rather than derivational in nature, being fully productive and regularly formed with any verb stem (8v). This is generally considered to be a property of infinitival verb forms, rather than (derivational) nominalisations which are more likely to be idiosyncratic in form relative to the verbal paradigm (Noonan 1985: 62).

In sum, the properties of these non-finite subordinate verbs in Australian languages mix those associated cross-linguistically with action nominalisations (see (7) above) and non-finite verbal forms (listed in (8)). Like nominalisations, they can occur with some case marking, and often require associative marking of their arguments. Unlike nominalisations, however, they can’t function as arguments; they (presumably) aren’t modified by adjectives; they usually can’t have independent subjects; and they appear to be formed by regular inflectional morphology.¹²

The ambiguous nature of these non-finite subordinate clauses in Australian languages is even clearer when contrasted with true lexical nominalisations. These derived nouns are found in many Australian languages, we will examine here the data from Kayardild. Non-finite (so-called ‘nominalised’) clauses in Kayardild are quite typical for Australian languages: they are like infinitives in that they are regularly formed with any verb stem, do not have independent subjects, and may co-occur with only a restricted set of nominal case inflections. However, like nominalisations, they require special associative marking of their objects:

(24) *Kurri-ja* *dathin-a* *maku-walad-a* [*dalwani-n-da*
 look-IMP that-NOM woman-LOT-NOM dig.up-NMLSR-NOM
thawal-inj]!
 yam-AOBL
 ‘Look at those women digging up yams!’ (Kayardild, Evans 1995: 472, ex. 11-28)

Kayardild also has another nominalised verb type, formed with the same nominalising suffix, that is more clearly an action nominal (this is the type that Evans (1995) calls ‘lexical nominalisation’). These nominalised verbs, unlike those found in the subordinate

¹² Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1993: 40) briefly mentions these constructions in Warlpiri and comes to the same conclusion as to their hybrid nature. She describes them as being much like Russian infinitives, although atypical in that they take case marking morphology (she does not mention the fact that they also usually have associative marking of their arguments unlike infinitives).

construction in (24), may take a fuller range of nominal inflections, including relational case suffixes, number suffixes (25) and nominal derivational suffixes (26):

(25) *rajurri-n-kiyarrngka*
 walk.around-NMLSR-DUAL
 ‘two toddlers’ (Kayardild, Evans 1995: 454)

(26) *ngayamaa-n-muthan-da*
 quarrel-NMLSR-XS-NOM
 ‘quarrelsome person’ (ibid.)

These latter forms clearly are true nominalisations and can function exactly as regular non-derived nouns. The existence of such true nominalisations serves to further highlight the fact that the non-finite verbs in subordinate clauses are something rather different.

5. Nominalisation vs. ‘Nominal’-isation

In fact, I would like to argue that these ‘nominalised’ verbs in many Australian languages are not nominalised at all, at least not in the usual sense of the word. ‘Nominalisation’ is usually defined as the process of turning something into a noun (Comrie and Thompson 1985). However, these non-finite verbs are, in many Australian languages, not nouns. As we have already seen, they cannot occur in syntactic positions typical for nouns: they do not appear as arguments nor as heads of NPs modified by other nominals. Rather, they more commonly function as modifiers, either as (heads of) relative clauses modifying a head noun (Hale’s 1976 NP-relative function) or as adverbial modifiers for the main clause modifiers (Hale’s 1976 T-relative function). In the general literature, these are the functions of ‘participles’ and ‘converbs’ respectively (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, Haspelmath 1995, 1996).

Table 2. Inflectionally-derived verb forms (modified from Haspelmath 1995: 4)

Derived verb form	Syntactic function
masdar (= verbal noun)	argument
participle (= verbal adjective)	adnominal modifier
converb (= verbal adverb)	adverbial modifier

Non-finite subordinate verbs in Australian languages are ‘nominalisations’ only in an Australian-specific sense of ‘derived nominal’, rather than ‘derived noun’. Australian languages are generally considered to have a large open class of ‘nominals’ (e.g. Dixon 1980:272, Blake 1987:3, although see below for further discussion) which includes words covering the functions of adjectives and certain adverbs in other languages (e.g. in Wambaya, for example, spatial and temporal adverbs form a subtype of the nominal word class (Nordlinger 1998)). These verb forms are derived modifiers – both adnominal modifiers and adverbial– and share some morphological features of these modifier types in Australian languages, including co-occurrence with a restricted set of case markers. They are generally not, however, derived nouns and thus do not share many of the characteristics of action nominalisations cross-linguistically.

This analysis reveals the explanation for the apparently contradictory properties discussed for these derived verb forms in sections §3 and §4. That they may take (a restricted set of) case markers is accounted for by the fact that they belong to a subtype of the nominal word

class.¹³ The fact that they frequently require alternative case frames for their arguments (i.e. case frames different from those required by their finite counterparts) is also accounted for by this analysis since, while this is more usually a property of deverbal *nouns*, it is often found with participles and converbs also (Haspelmath 1995: 5). Their non-nominalised properties (§4) follow largely from the fact that they are not actually *nouns*. This explains, for example, why they can't function as arguments; why they can't be modified like non-derived nominals, and why they don't allow the full range of morphological possibilities of non-derived nouns.

6. Conclusions and Further Directions

In sum, the common non-finite subordinate verb type is an inflectionally derived verb form (Haspelmath 1996) which combines the functions of both participles (deverbal adjectives) and converbs (deverbal adverbs) (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, Haspelmath 1995). The term 'nominalisation' for this verb form, while perhaps appropriate within Australia (given the large range of functions covered by the 'nominal' class in Australian languages) is problematic more cross-linguistically as it suggests a relationship with deverbal *nouns* which doesn't hold: these forms are not nouns, as evidenced by the fact that they function only as modifiers and not as arguments.

The discussion in this paper, however, raises many other important issues that further research should address. Firstly, what implications does this analysis of non-finite verb forms in Australian languages have for the general claim that there is a single superclass of nominals in these languages? I have argued that deverbal nominals highlight a distinction between argument 'nominals' (i.e. nouns) on the one hand, and modifier 'nominals' (i.e. adjectives/adverbs) on the other, with these non-finite subordinate verbs having only the latter functions and not the former. If this is indeed the correct analysis, then it may suggest that the existence of a single nominal superclass in these languages has been overstated.¹⁴

Secondly, throughout this discussion I have treated these non-finite subordinate constructions across different Australian languages as a single clause type that can be given a single analysis. In fact, there is no reason why this should be assumed. Further research needs to look at the characteristics of these constructions in each language and consider the extent to which these constructions are similar or different both within a single language and across different languages. We will undoubtedly find that there is a wide range of variation, with some appearing more like true lexical nominalisations and still others more like non-derived verb forms.

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¹³ Or alternatively, as noted in §3, this property may have nothing to do with the word class of the item at all, since such case markers are found in some languages on purely finite verb forms.

¹⁴ This discrepancy is highlighted by the fact that it is not found in other languages which have a single word class combining adjectives and nouns. In Quechua, for example, the lack of distinction between adjectives and nouns is mirrored among deverbal forms which, unlike Australian languages, don't distinguish participles from true nominalisations either (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993: 43).

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