PROCESS NOUNS BASED ON -ATION IN ENGLISH, GERMAN AND SLOVAK
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In Latin, process nouns are formed by the suffix -ion-, which attaches to what Aronoff (1994) calls the third stem of a verb. For the verb laudare (‘praise_{v}’), this results in laudatio (‘praise_{N}’) with the theme vowel -a- and the stem marker -t-. The final -n- of -ion- is elided in the nominative singular, but appears in all oblique cases. This suffix is at the basis of corresponding word formation rules in many European languages. Whereas in Romance languages, the suffix belongs to the inherited word formation system, in Germanic and Slavic languages, it emerged from the reanalysis of borrowings. In each language, the processes of borrowing and reanalysis of such nouns had their own characteristics, determined by the historical context and by properties of the language system. We will compare here the cases of English, German and Slovak.

The English case has been studied quite extensively. OED (2017) gives separate entries for -ation, -ition, -tion, and -ion. This analysis is heavily influenced by the Latin data. The form variants correlate with Latin verbal conjugation classes. Marchand (1969) only discusses -ation. He distinguishes four groups, exemplified by modification, neutralization, translation, and expectation. The first three groups have corresponding verbs in -ify, -ize, and -ate. Historically, the words are borrowed from French and/or Latin. Bauer et al. (2013: 201-2) use -ation in the heading, but list a large number of variants. They note a class of nouns without a corresponding verb, e.g. dimension, which they analyse as having a bound stem, and identify stems in -ize and -ify as the main areas of productivity.

In our analysis of the English word formation process, we worked with a set of data collected from the OED. Excluding compounds (e.g. peace demonstration), prefixed words (e.g. overregulation) and cases where the base verb or the derived noun is obsolete, our database includes 2940 nouns in -ation with their corresponding verb. Apart from formations with a base in -ify or -ize, the nouns in -ation are generally borrowings. Verbs in -ate (e.g. translate) can usually be analysed as back formations. The cases which Bauer et al. (2013) analyse as involving a bound stem are rather borrowings where no back formation has taken place.

For German, we used the database provided by canoonet (2017), which gives 877 nouns in -ation, 376 in -ion, and 48 in -ition. These numbers are substantially lower than in English, although the overall set of words is of comparable size. As far as there is a corresponding verb, it is always one in -ieren, which indicates a more restricted distribution than in English. German verbs in -ieren are generally linked to French verbs in -er or -ir. As noted by Fleischer & Barz (2012: 242-3), for these verbs there is in general a competition with -ung, e.g. Isolierung and Isolation. However, Duden (2017) only gives a noun in -ung for about one third of the nouns in -ation.

For Slovak, we worked with the Slovak National Corpus (SNC), a corpus of 972 million words, and the frequency lists based on it. The Latin-based suffix is realized as -ácia and it is in competition with the native suffix -enie/-anie. We collected a set of almost 8000 nouns in -ácia, which is a surprisingly high number in comparison to German and English. However, the English set excluded cases without a corresponding verb in current use. Traditional analyses, e.g. Furdik (1978), admit that the nouns originated as borrowings but propose a process of remotivation to derive them from verbs that were originally back formations.

We investigated corpus-based frequencies of nouns and corresponding verbs in the three languages in order to find evidence for the position of the Latinate suffix in the language
system. In English, -ation is well-established. For verbs in -ize and -ify, -ation can be analysed as part of the paradigm. In German and Slovak, there are many instances of verbs where an expected noun in -ation or -icia is missing. An interesting difference can be seen when comparing the pairs of process nouns and corresponding verbs. In Slovak, the verbs are generally less frequent than the nouns in -ácia and in many cases they are missing from the corpus altogether. For nouns in -enie/-anie, the corresponding verbs are generally much more frequent. In German, corpus-based frequency bands provided by Duden (2017) indicate that for two-thirds of the pairs, the verb is similarly or more frequent. This suggests that in German, -ation is much more active as a productive suffix than in Slovak.

References