

A Study of the Use of Arguments in Nominalizations as Instanciations of Grammatical Metaphors Finished in -TION in Academic Texts of Native Speakers

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Abstract : The purpose of this research was to identify whether the nominalizations terminating in -TION in the academic discourse of native English speakers contain the arguments required by their input verbs. In the perspective of functional linguistics, ideational metaphors, with nominalization as their most pervasive realization, are lexically dense, and therefore frequent in formal texts. Ideational metaphors allow the academic genre to instantiate objectification, de-personalization, and the ability to construct a chain of arguments. The valence of those nouns present in nominalizations tends to maintain the same elements of the valence from its original verbs, but these arguments are not always expressed. The initial hypothesis was that these arguments would also be present alongside the nominalizations, through anaphora or cataphora. In this study, a qualitative analysis of the occurrences of the five more frequent nominalized terminations in -TION in academic texts was accomplished, and thus a verification of the occurrences of the arguments required by the original verbs. The assembling of the concordance lines was done through COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English). After identifying the five most frequent nominalizations (attention, action, participation, instruction, intervention), the concordance lines were selected at random to be analyzed, assuring the representativeness and reliability of the sample. It was possible to verify, in all the analyzed instances, the presence of arguments. In most instances, the arguments were not expressed, but recoverable, either in the context or in the shared knowledge among the interactants. It was concluded that the realizations of the arguments which were not expressed alongside the nominalizations are part of a continuum, starting from the immediate context with anaphora and cataphora; up to a knowledge shared outside the text, such as specific area knowledge. The study also has implications for the teaching of academic writing, especially with regards to the impact of nominalizations on the thematic and informational flow of the text. Grammatical metaphors are essential to academic writing, hence acknowledging the occurrence of its arguments is paramount to achieve linguistic awareness and the writing prestige required by the academy.

Keywords : corpus, functional linguistics, grammatical metaphors, nominalizations, academic English

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