

**NOMINALIZATIONS AS COHESIVE DEVICES
IN MASS MEDIA TEXTS**

**NOMINALIZĀCIJAS KĀ SAKARĪGUMA PAŅĒMIENI
PLĀSSAZŅAS LĪDZEKĻU TEKSTOS**

Keywords: nominalization, cohesion, implicit, explicit, editorials, critical discourse analysis.

Atslēgvārdi: nominalizācija, kohēzija, implicīts, eksplīcīts, ievadraksti, kritiskā diskursa analīze.

Kopsavilkums

Valoda ir elastīga sistēma. Šī īpatnība ļauj tās elementiem (vārdiem, teikumiem) vairāk pielāgoties mainīgajām valodas vajadzībām un iegūt jaunas funkcijas – semantiskas, sintaktiskas un informatīvi pragmatiskas. Iegūstot jaunas funkcijas, notiek zināma valodas elementu modifikācija resp. transpozīcija. Šī raksta mērķis ir izanalizēt verbālas un adjektīvas nominalizācijas, kas veic teksta sakarīguma līdzekļu funkciju laikrakstu ievadrakstos. Piemēri vākti no laikraksta *The Guardian* interneta varianta (pavisam izskatīti apmēram 200 raksti). Pētāmās nominalizācijas aprakstītas, izmantojot transformācijas un kritiskās diskursa analīzes metodes.

Nominalizācijas parasti tiek saistītas ar tekstiem, kuros ir svarīgs valodas ekonomiskums. Pētījuma gaitā tika noskaidrots, ka nominalizācijas rezultātā verbālās un adjektīvās konstrukcijas transformētas tādās, kuras funkcionē kā abstrakti lietvārdi. Turklāt nominalizācijas var atņemt individuālās īpatnības agensam. Citas valodas vienības vietā izvēloties nominalizāciju, daudz informācijas ir jāsatilpina vienā vārdā vai frāzē, tāpēc tādi gadījumi var tikt uztverti divdomīgi. Analizējamajos tekstos nominalizācijas funkcionē ar eksplīcītu un implicītu pamata propozīciju. Nominalizācijas ar eksplīcītu pamata propozīciju tiek lietotas retāk, salīdzinot ar nominalizācijām, kuru pamata propozīcija ir implicīta.

Kopumā jāsecina: jo objektīvāks, bezpersoniskāks, statistiskāks, kompaktāks, abstraktāks un implicītāks teksts ir jāsniedz lasītājam, jo vairāk nominalizāciju žurnālists izmanto. Nominalizācijas ir ļoti svarīgas laikraksta žanra tekstos – tās saīsina tekstu, ciešāk saista tā domas un palīdz īstenot teksta kohēziju.

Introductory observations

Nowadays people live in so-called mass media society, where processes and entities shaped by communication play a significant role in the way society is politically, economically and culturally organized. The English word ‘media’ has its origins in Latin ‘medium’, which means ‘middle’, and came into English in the late 16th century. People are surrounded by a vast number of discourse meanings produced by the media. News, rolling news, documentaries, broadcasts, radio phone-ins, advertisements, blogs, etc. help to organize the ways people understand the world surrounding them.

A great deal of research on media language, written and spoken, has been conducted during the last few decades. Various aspects of media have been extensively analysed by a number of linguists: Krippendorff (Krippendorff 1980), Kress (Kress 1983), Fowler (Fowler 1991), Aitchison (Aitchison 1988; Aitchison 2007), Jucker (Jucker 1992), Bell (Bell 1998), Westin (Westin 2002) to mention the most prominent ones. Krippendorff, for example, has focused on class-

dependent news production (Krippendorff 1980). The sociolinguistic aspects of newspaper language have been analysed in the works by Bell and Jucker, who studied audience's influence on the linguistic choices that the author of a newspaper text makes (Bell 1998; Jucker 1992), while Kress demonstrated how it is possible for an author to manipulate the audience by choosing the appropriate linguistic items (Kress 1983, 120–138). Fowler discussed gender and discrimination in British newspapers in general (Fowler 1991). Newspaper headlines have been analysed by Crystal and Davy as well as Aitchison (Crystal, Davy 1969; Aitchison 2007).

The focus of this article is on the textual functions of nominalizations. The aim of the article is to analyze verb-based and adjective-based nominalizations as cohesive devices in British newspaper editorials related to world news. As Westin observes, “the main purpose of editorials is to contribute to the moulding of public opinion on current affairs. Therefore, they ought to have an argumentative structure. The authors do not need only factual evidence to support their arguments. They also need linguistic means to serve the factual evidence in as convincing way as possible” (Westin 2002, 135). Nominalizations are usually connected with the texts that require high information density. They are used for embedding as much information into a few words as possible.

Kress shows that nominalizations can be used for ideological purposes (Kress 1983, 129–134). To manipulate readers, the pivotal actions are often expressed in nominal form therefore omitting the actor and leaving the reader in doubt. To cite Kress, “By expressing an event in nominal form it is at once taken out of time, and therefore be readily assimilated to ‘timeless’ sets of categories. The event is taken out of the world of the specific, concrete, and placed in the world of the general, abstract” (Kress 1983,77).

Newspaper editorials represent a fairly formal style. Nominalizations allow eliminating information like participants, time, or modality. Last but not least, nominalizations are often used to expand ideas and integrate information laconically and in an economical way.

Materials and methods

The analysis is based on a corpus of over 200 editorials drawn from online British newspaper *The Guardian*, to be more precise the section *world news*. The editorials were random-sampled by selecting titles of newspapers first and then selecting verb-based and adjective-based nominalizations used in the corpus under investigation. Verb-based nominalization is generally defined as a process by which the verb is transformed into the corresponding noun by adding the suffix (e. g. *to communicate* – *communication*, *to develop* – *development*, *to clear* – *clearance*, etc.), by means of zero suffixation (e. g. *to use* – *use*, *to answer* – *answer*, etc.), or by means of internal vowel change (e. g. *to speak* – *speech*, etc.). Similarly, adjective-based nominalization is defined as a process by which the adjective is transformed into the corresponding adjective (e. g. *dark* – *darkness*). Therefore, the transformational method was employed to show the relationship

between the underlying proposition (i. e. verb or adjective) and the respective nominalization. The direction of the analysis is from proposition to nominalization and from nominalization to its textual functions.

As the focus of this research is on newspaper editorials, therefore, their argumentative structures were researched within a framework of textual analysis. To quote Fairclough, “Textual analysis is a resource for social research which can enhance it provided that it is used in conjunction with other methods” (Fairclough 2003,15). The critical discourse analysis is based on the pragmatic approach proposed by Van Dijk (Van Dijk 1985; Van Dijk 1998) and Fowler (Fowler 1991). In his discourse analysis, Van Dijk argues that a purely linguistic analysis is not sufficient in describing all the aspects of meaning and reference of discourse (Van Dijk 1985, 103). The critical discourse analysis overlooks nominalizations and their transformations as having a substantial impact on the way a text is perceived by the readers. Therefore, the collected examples were analyzed by employing transformational and critical discourse analysis methods.

Results and discussion

Editorials are composed under rather strict space constraints. A nominalization allows a verbal or adjectival notion to be inserted into an idea unit as if it were an abstract noun. For example:

*On Monday, Sanders followed up **the release** with a town hall meeting hosted by Fox News, stressing **the discrepancy** between **the Democrats’ disclosures** and **the president’s stance**. (Bernie Sanders and Beto O'Rourke release decade worth of tax returns)*

The nominalizations above *the release*, *the discrepancy*, *the Democrats’ disclosures*, *the president’s stance* applying the transformational method might be derived from the respective propositions (source verbs or adjectives): *X released*, *discrepant*, *Democrats disclosed*, *president stood*.

Nominalizations depersonalize the agent. Due to the fact that information is condensed in a single word or phrase, the use of nominalizations can cause ambiguity of the meaning. Consider:

*The **approval** triggered a swift national referendum to confirm **the amendments**, which also include **the creation of a vice-presidential role** and a 25% quota for female MPs, beginning on 22 April. (Egyptian parliament vote could keep Sisi in power until 2030)*

*The **fighting** in the Arab world’s poorest country has left millions suffering from **shortages of food and medical care** and has pushed the country to the brink of famine. (Trump vetoes bill to end US military support for Saudi-led war in Yemen)*

*Week-old satellite **images** show **movement** at North Korea’s main nuclear site that could be associated with **the reprocessing of radioactive material** into bomb fuel, a US thinktank has reported. (North Korea nuclear site shows signs of activity)*

All the nominalized propositions in the above examples depersonalize the agents, therefore, the reader has to answer to a question *who* or *what* himself.

Moreover, journalists often choose the nominalizations as a starting point of a clause. Consider:

Sanders' decision to appear on Fox News on Monday had been contentious, especially after the Democratic National Committee announced last month that it would not hold any of its presidential debates on the network, saying Fox could not hold a fair and neutral event. (Bernie Sanders and Beto O'Rourke release decade worth of tax returns)

The UK government's active support for fossil fuels and airport expansion is "beyond absurd", Greta Thunberg has told MPs. (Greta Thunberg condemns UK's climate stance in speech to MPs)

Generally speaking, nominalizations participate in two types of cohesion: general and specific. In the case of general cohesion, a nominalization occurs in the title of an article. The underlying proposition (verb or adjective) is found somewhere in the text. Such kind of nominalizations does not connect one proposition to another. However, they have the effect of organizing the succeeding propositions into a paragraph. Consider:

*Extinction Rebellion set to **disrupt** London rail and tube lines*

*Climate change protesters, who police say have caused "serious **disruption**" affecting half a million people in London over the past two days, have said they are planning to escalate their protests to **disrupt** rail and tube lines.* (Extinction Rebellion set to disrupt London rail and tube lines)

Nominalization is a linguistic form and at the same time cohesive device which is heavily used in accounts or narratives about the world issues. Fairclough claims that, "instead of representing processes which are taking place in the world as processes (grammatically, in clauses or sentences with verbs), they are represented as entities (grammatically, through nominalization, i. e. transforming a clause into a nominal or noun-like entity)" (Fairclough 2003, 12–13). The cohesion of the text is generally realized by linguistic devices which help the reader to see the logico-semantic ties better. Consider the following text:

*Jeremy Corbyn has said Brexit talks with the government are stalling because of a Tory desire for post-withdrawal deregulation, including as part of a US trade deal. <...> Corbyn said Labour had been putting forward a robust case for a customs union during the **talks** over the past week but suggested he feared the two sides would not find common ground.* (Tory deregulation agenda stalling Brexit talks, says Corbyn)

The sentences of the above text are integrated, or mutually connected, the connection being effected through meaning, the process of talking, which in the text-opening sentence is realized by the finite form *talks* and in the text-developing sentence is realized by the nominalization of the verb *talks*. This text presents a clear illustration of the way a connected text is produced. The text can be

conceived of as a linear process whereby part of the meaning of the text-opening sentence is realized in the text-developing sentence: *Brexit talks – the talks*.

It is possible to state that the presence of a nominalization is generally conceived of as a text-unifying factor: the reader automatically establishes a link between the nominalization (an element of the surface structure) and the underlying proposition (the deep structure of the nominalization). Biber distinguishes between explicit and situated text types (Biber 1988, 172). Newspaper editorials could be classified as explicit – the writer has to express his/her ideas clearly and support them by means of explicit examples or arguments to persuade the reader. In other terms, we can speak of two-level cohesiveness: implicit and explicit. Therefore, both patterns are cohesive: nominalizations occurring with explicit underlying propositions and nominalizations occurring with implicit underlying propositions. For instance:

*With efforts continuing to shore up sections still at risk from **collapse**, experts faced a new challenge after several days of rain were forecast. <...> Christophe Villemain, a specialist in restoring historic buildings, told the channel the rain could potentially cause further sections of the roof **to collapse**. (Climbers brought in to help protect Notre Dame from elements) (explicit underlying proposition)*

*The Malawi pilot, aimed at gathering **evidence** to inform WHO policy on broader **use of the vaccine**, is one of three large-scale **trials**. It will also be introduced in Ghana and Kenya in coming weeks. **The trials** will look at **reductions in child deaths, safety and vaccine uptake** – including whether parents bring their children in time for the required four doses. (Wider use of rotavirus vaccine urged after 'potent' success of Malawi trial) (implicit underlying propositions)*

However it may be, the presence of a nominalization, with or without an explicit source, contributes to the general coherence of the text.

Conclusion

The text is not a simple collection of sentences. The sentences used in the text are integrated logico-semantically and informationally-pragmatically. The logico-semantic and informational-pragmatic integration constitutes the coherence of the text and the realization of the coherence by linguistic means – the cohesion of the text.

Nominalizations participate in two types of cohesion: general and specific. Nominalizations are often used in the title of an article; the source (the underlying proposition) was placed further in the article. Such a nominalization does not connect one sentence to another. Yet, it has the effect of organizing the text-sentences into a supraphrasal unit.

Nominalizations occurring with explicit or implicit underlying propositions function in the text as lexico-grammatical means of cohesion. The use of the nominalizations with explicit underlying propositions were less frequent, while the

use of the nominalizations with implicit underlying propositions were much more frequent in the corpus under investigation.

Editorials are composed under rather strict space constraints. A nominalization allows a verbal or adjectival notion to be inserted into an idea unit as if it were an abstract noun. By condensing the information of a proposition into a nominal form, the journalist can abbreviate the text, improve it stylistically.

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