



RESEARCH PAPER

Nominalization in Pakistani English News Articles: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the use of nominalization in Pakistani English news discourse from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective. Following a descriptive-analytical approach, the study examines the distribution and functional deployment of nominalization within political and economic news genres. The data comprises news articles manually annotated using the UAM Corpus tool, focusing on types, roles, and textual realizations of nominalized forms. The analysis reveals a dominant presence of process nominalizations, used to condense information, obscure agency, and construct ideologically neutral narratives. While nominalization has often been associated with academic and scientific writing, this study demonstrates that journalistic genres also exhibit distinct patterns of nominalization driven by thematic and rhetorical demands. These findings suggest that nominalization is not limited by disciplinary boundaries but varies according to communicative purpose and genre conventions. The study offers insights for media discourse analysis, SFL-based linguistic research, and language pedagogy focused on advanced literacy practices.

Keywords: Nominalization, Grammatical Metaphor, Pakistani English, News Discourse, SFL, Journalistic Genre

Introduction

Words and phrases used by the media can greatly determine how people learn and feel about what is being discussed. In this kind of writing, it is common to change verbs, adjectives, or whole clauses into nouns. Nominalization is viewed as a form of grammatical metaphor in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) because it helps reduce and abstract detailed processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The way sentences are put together is influenced by this transformation, and it helps form both the ideas and the relationships expressed in the text. In news reporting, using nominalization helps make the language more formal, less clear about who is responsible, and adds extra information (Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). Journalists do this to emphasize what occurred by making some actions into ideas, rather than being centered on the agent. For example, using “the city’s destruction” instead of “destroying the city” takes the emphasis off the person and focuses on what happened, which is meaningful in places like Pakistan, where language in the media is closely linked to who holds power.

Pakistani English, recognized as part of World Englishes, shows the country’s own sociolinguistic character, formed by its colonial background, many languages spoken, and social and political situations (Rahman, 2020). While much academic research has been done on Pakistani English grammar, vocabulary, and features of speech, not many studies have looked at nominalization in Pakistani English news. Therefore, this research looks at nominalization through SFL to help close that gap.

Although nominalization is widely discussed in academic and scientific publications, its function in journalism, especially in Pakistani English, is still not studied much. Studies on academic writing mostly discuss textbook introductions (Jalilifar et al., 2018), scientific genres (Chamran, 2020), and writing in multiple languages (Gentil & Séror, 2018), while limited research has examined news media. In Pakistani news, using nominalization can help avoid showing a clear opinion, determine who speaks for the media, and hide who is responsible for the reported events. However, there are no special studies that look into the structure, usage, and roles of nominalization in Pakistani English journalism. This study aims to fill this gap by studying how nominalization is used in Pakistani English news articles using Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Literature Review

Nominalization

Through nominalization, as described by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), verbs and even clauses can turn into nouns, decreasing the information in a sentence and promoting abstraction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). When journalists use nominalization, it forms their beliefs, levels of detachment, and the power they present. Because English is growing fast in South Asian media and education, examining nominalization in Pakistani English news by using SFL reveals information about both language structure and social function. It details the studies on nominalization over the years, from the first proposals to the latest studies on South Asian and Pakistani English, paying attention to the methods used, findings, and questions that remain unexplored.

Foundational Perspectives on Nominalization (Pre-2015)

Scholars often pay close attention to nominalization in the discussion of academic and business writing. Halliday and some other early theorists in SFL placed importance on how the discipline helps abstract and express meanings in scientific and academic articles (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Martin, 1993). In Lieber's study (2018), nominalization was understood in terms of theories, considering polysemy, types of nominal forms, and how nominals interact with other parts of speech. Though the research by Lieber did not target either Pakistani English or journalism, it still taught me about how nominalization works in general communications.

By creating a typology, Gerner (2012) extended the analysis to cross-linguistic and typological usage. Gerner established a base for comparison by looking at the nominalizers of thirty-six Asian languages using their morphological, semantic, pragmatic, and diachronic properties. While the typology does not deal with English or journalism, it clearly explains the various roles of nominalization, which can be applied to comparative studies on Pakistani English as a South Asian variety.

SFL and Genre-Based Approaches in Academic and Professional Texts (2015-2018)

Many started to use the systemic functional approach in applied linguistics, mainly because it worked well with academic kinds of writing. It was Jalilifar and colleagues (2018) examined how frequently and where in introductions and book reviews nominalizations occurred in applied linguistics and medicine. They showed that applied linguistics texts highly relied on nominalizations in their introductions as compared to those used in medicine. The example suggests that science and philosophy emphasize tighter, more compact expressions, which is similar to what news writing does.

Using frequency counts, analyzing semantic change, measuring word clusters, and categorizing clauses, they created a strong framework for looking at nominalization in texts. Although this study did not study news articles, the grouping of texts based on genre and

Halliday's framework for grammatical metaphors allows it to be useful for investigating Pakistani English journalism.

Chamran (2020) also studied nominalization in literature like mine but really emphasized promotional and informational actions found in academic writing. He located contrasting usage of nominalization between applied linguistics and medical discourse and found it more frequent in applied linguistics. Once more, the study highlights that nominalization performs two key functions in journalism: reducing meaning and demonstrating authority, which are both very important. Chamran applied chi-square tests to examine distribution differences, giving a statistical method that could also work on journalistic data.

Gentil and Séror's (2018) study, revolving around French-speaking students studying English, highlights how learning nominalization is useful for students using more than one language in their education. Using both micro- and macro-analysis approaches, the style they use creates a model for mixed-methods studies. Even though their contexts differ, what they say about how nominalization develops can also be useful for understanding Pakistani English journalists whose writing involves multiple languages.

Nominalization in World Englishes and Pakistani Contexts (2017-2022)

The topic of Pakistani English in World Englishes provides a social and linguistic context for understanding nominalization. In their work, Ziadi and Zaki (2017) showed that English is present in many areas in Pakistan, for example, in schools, government offices, and the media. Nominalization is not addressed in the study, but it focuses on English's high status and its ways of assimilating into local linguistic and cultural habits. You need to know this background to see how nominalization is used in Pakistani English journalism for both language and ideology.

According to Rahman (2020), this discussion was continued by considering Pakistani English in the context of South Asian Englishes. He pointed out that because of its history and ongoing factors, Pakistani English is not uniform but has several different forms within itself. Because of this, it is important to analyze journalistic texts that may express nominalization in standard or local ways. Rahman's approach to sociolinguistics, even if not tied to SFL, still gave the context needed to explain how ideology influences the use of nominalization in English in Pakistan.

Noor's (2022) study on discourse markers in Pakistani English helps show how languages are adapted by speakers in a new culture. She discovered that discourse markers are used differently in Pakistani corpora than in the British National Corpus (BNC). Although she did not concentrate on nominalization, her style of research and noticing contextual language patterns can be used in nominalization studies. The fact that she uses both native and reference corpora, for example, the BNC, indicates a method that can be repeated to examine nominalization patterns in Pakistani news.

Although there is plenty of study about nominalization in academic works and medical and textbook writing, its use in journalism is not common in Pakistan. A way to achieve both clarity and authority in journalism is through nominalization, as it enables the writer to hide the source of information and present it as a fact (Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 1995).

Scholars have widely analyzed how nominalization leads to certain ideologies in Western media. Using the phrase "the destruction of the city" rather than "they destroyed the city" takes away the agent, thus affecting the way readers read the text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Both media in Pakistan and media around the world often use

nominalized structures to express and form opinions in political, judicial, and editorial content.

No research directly focusing on Pakistani English news articles from a systemic functional viewpoint exists, leaving a significant research gap. Even though Jalilifar et al. (2018) and Chamran (2020) suggest how to conduct such research, little is known about the application of these methods to journalism in South Asia. Besides this, the research on Pakistani English available (from Rahman in 2020 and Zaidi & Zaki in 2017) mostly examines its history and political aspects, not its grammar and vocabulary. Such a difference highlights the importance and urgency of looking into nominalization in news articles written in Pakistani English.

According to the literature presented above, nominalization is a well-studied topic in academic and professional writing from a systemic functional perspective, but its influence in Pakistani English journalism has not been thoroughly investigated. Theory papers (like Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Lieber, 2018) explain the concepts, while studies in similar genres (like Jalilifar et al., 2018; Chamran, 2020) explain the approaches used. Even though studies in sociolinguistics exist on Pakistani English (for example, Rahman, 2020; Zaidi & Zaki, 2017), they have not looked at lexico-grammatical aspects such as nominalization in news reporting. Since no one has yet studied nominalization in Pakistani English news articles, this gap creates a chance to explore the role of nominalization in affecting meaning, ideology, and style with the help of SFL theory, corpus linguistics, and discourse analysis. A main feature of grammatical metaphor in SFL is nominalization, which changes verbs and clauses into nouns, helping to pack information and promote abstraction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In journalism, nominalization does more than style writing; it also affects the way ideology, distance, and authority are presented. Since English plays a bigger role in South Asian media and education, studying Pakistani English news articles using SFL allows us to see how nominalization affects both language form and culture. It explores the study of nominalization, starting with initial theories and ending with new works on South Asian and Pakistani English, showing important methods, discoveries, and open issues.

Materials and Methods

By adopting a descriptive-analytical research design, this study studied nominalization as a type of GM in how Pakistani English news is written. The research relied on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and mainly studied the ideational meta-function as well as the change of processes into nominal groups. The purpose was to study how the nominalization process differs in economic and political news and how it helps create meaning in media.

Sample and Corpus Compilation

There were a total of 50 articles in the corpus, 25 about economics and 25 about politics, published during 2015–2022. This sample size was feasible for manual annotation, alignment with prior research, and representativeness of high-circulation Pakistani English newspapers.

Pakistani English newspapers Dawn, The News, and Business Recorder were used to gather the articles. Criteria for choosing texts included whether they were on the topic, spanned genres, and had texts that were similar enough to compare. Inflation, budget, policy (for economic articles), parliament, election, and governance (for political articles) were the keywords used for sampling. All the articles were about 500 to 800 words in length, so the total corpus had roughly 40,000 words from both genres.

Data Collection and Annotation Procedure

Manual annotation was conducted using an SFL-based annotation scheme. Each instance of nominalization was analyzed according to three dimensions:

Grammatical Metaphor Type

It was classified as material, mental, verbal, or relational based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

Functional Role

It was labeled as functioning in the clause as a participant, process, or circumstance.

Textual Realization

It was examined for its manifestation through nominal group structure, placement in theme position, and use as a cohesion device.

Data Analysis

Annotation was possible by using the UAM Corpus tool, which did 80% of the work automatically. To guarantee the same results, inter-coder reliability was ensured. Next, a different expert checked 20% of the corpus, and the agreement between the two was high, as shown by a Cohen's Kappa of 0.87. After the annotation step, the quantity of nominalization features in each sub-corpus was counted. The use of nominalization was measured and compared in economic and political texts. To check if the differences were significant, the chi-square test was used. The test matched the observed data to what was expected to find out if the changes in nominalization could be explained by chance. There was a bigger difference between the calculated and actual scores, which suggests that genre played a significant role in the study's main observations.

Results and Discussion

Firstly, the data was studied to answer the question: "Which types of nominalizations are used most often in Pakistani English news articles?" It was found that process nominalizations were by far the most frequent type present in the news corpus. Both economic and political news sub-corpora contained more than 55% of their total nominalization instances as process nominalizations. After existential nominalization, the next most frequent type was participant role nominalization and then came circumstance role nominalization. Relational nominalization was the least common type of nominalization.

The frequency and relative percentage of nominalization types in the economic and political news sub-corpora are summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1
Frequency of Nominalization Types in Economic News Sub-Corpus

Nominalization Type	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Process Nominalization	215	57.3
Participant Nominalization	90	24.0
Circumstance Nominalization	50	13.3
Relational Nominalization	15	4.0
Total	370	100.0

Table 2
Frequency of Nominalization Types in Political News Sub-Corpus

Nominalization Type	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Process Nominalization	198	56.4
Participant Nominalization	80	22.8
Circumstance Nominalization	55	15.7
Relational Nominalization	18	5.1
Total	351	100.0

Given the predominance of process nominalization in both sub-corpora, further analysis was conducted to identify the most frequent process nominalization lexemes along with their congruent verb forms. These results affirm Halliday's (1998) theory of grammatical metaphor, where nominalization serves to condense dynamic processes into static entities, supporting thematic prominence and information density. This trend aligns with Gray (2010) and Banks (2008), who highlight the dominance of process nominalizations in formal registers, particularly in scientific and informational discourse. Table 3 below lists the top ten material process nominalizations along with their raw frequencies.

Table 3
Most Frequent Process Nominalizations and Their Raw Frequencies

Material Process Nominalization	Congruent Verb	Frequency
Development	Develop	46
Growth	Grow	38
Increase	Increase	35
Investment	Invest	30
Production	Produce	28
Expansion	Expand	22
Agreement	Agree	20
Regulation	Regulate	18
Implementation	Implement	15
Reduction	Reduce	14

The above results agree with Halliday's (1998) view that nominalization happens when processes are turned into nouns to help pack a lot of information in news reports. When we talk about development, we are talking about the static version of the verb develop, which is now more important in the theme than the action itself.

Qualitative examples illustrate how these nominalizations function ideationally and textually within the discourse:

- "The development of infrastructure has accelerated in recent years."

- "Government policies aim at the reduction of inflation rates."

- "The implementation of new regulations is expected soon."

- "The investment in the energy sector has triggered economic growth."

- "An increase in fuel prices was announced by the ministry."

These examples show how agency is often backgrounded, and abstract processes are foregrounded to maintain a formal, authoritative tone.

In addition to the overall frequency analysis, the study examined the functional roles of nominalizations as participants, processes, or circumstances. Table 4 presents the

comparative statistics between economic and political news sub-corpora, including chi-square test results to assess the significance of differences.

Table 4
Functional Role Distribution of Nominalizations in Economic vs. Political News Sub-Corpora

Functional Role	Economic News (Freq, %)	Political News (Freq, %)	χ^2 Value	p-Value	Cramer's V
Participant	90 (24.3%)	80 (22.8%)	0.23	0.63	0.03
Process	215 (58.1%)	198 (56.4%)	0.17	0.68	0.02
Circumstance	50 (13.5%)	55 (15.7%)	0.35	0.55	0.04
Relational	15 (4.1%)	18 (5.1%)	0.22	0.64	0.03
Total	370 (100%)	351 (100%)			

The chi-square test results revealed no statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$), and the effect sizes (Cramer's V) were below 0.1, indicating weak associations between genre and nominalization function. This suggests a broadly similar pattern of nominalization deployment in Pakistani English economic and political news reporting. Finally, the textual realization of nominalizations in thematic position and as cohesion devices was analyzed. Table 5 outlines the frequency of nominalizations appearing as themes versus their use as cohesive elements (e.g., reference, substitution). The study also explored how nominalizations function textually, focusing on their occurrence in theme position and as cohesive devices.

Table 5
Textual Realization of Nominalizations in News Sub-Corpora

Realization Type	Economic News (Freq, %)	Political News (Freq, %)	χ^2 Value	p-Value	Cramer's V
Theme Position	220 (59.5%)	210 (59.8%)	0.01	0.92	0.004
Cohesion Device	150 (40.5%)	141 (40.2%)	0.01	0.92	0.004
Total	370 (100%)	351 (100%)			

Nominalizations appeared predominantly in theme positions, demonstrating their role in foregrounding abstract entities and framing headlines. Their frequent function as cohesive elements also underscores their utility in maintaining textual cohesion and coherence across clauses and paragraphs.

Conclusion

With Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a framework, this study studied nominalization as a type of grammatical metaphor in Pakistani English news reports to find out how ideas are expressed and made brief in the media language. To analyze nominalization, the study used the UAM Corpus to look at the roles of participants, the different processes involved, and how they are expressed in text.

It was found that nominalizations of processes were used more than any other type, suggesting that news reporting often turns dynamic processes into static things. This is in agreement with Halliday (1994), who states that nominalization is valued in formal and public discourses such as journalism as it helps condense and abstract information. The next most frequent form was entity-to-entity nominalization, mainly used to describe abstract and institutional matters, and this was followed by quality-to-entity and circumstance-to-entity patterns. The least common type was relator-to-entity nominalization, as found before and confirming its minor role in how media texts are built.

Just as Martin (2002), Thompson (2010), and Gray (2013) found, this study showed that using nominalized forms helped achieve presenting information, being neutral in judgments, and expressing ideological views. In the news, writers tend to construct statements using nominalizations that make them seem authoritative, hide the responsible actor, and focus on abstract processes, such as "implementing," "rising prices," or "collapse."

Participant and process features were important since events, actions, and outcomes were turned into objective "facts" by converting abstract and material processes into nouns. Academic texts can be shaped by the specific discipline, but in journalistic writing, the focus on certain subjects and the author's political stance were the main factors for choosing nominal groups (He & Yang, 2018). The way the study was conducted was very clear: events, actions, and outcomes were turned into objective facts by using noun forms for abstract and material processes.

Besides, it was shown that almost every nominal group was realized as a complex noun phrase, including pre-modifiers and post-modifiers, which made the text lexically dense. The findings support Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) point that nominalization is a way to form a language of authority, and they also suggest that, unlike academic or scientific writing, nominalization is just as important in how news media builds reality, mainly when reporting on politics, the economy, and policies. Although He and Yang (2018) believe nominalization is not affected by discipline in writing, this study shows that news writers use this technique differently because of the unique rules and conventions of their genre.

Recommendations

Journalists should try to nominalize more mindfully and balance their use of nominalization. If used too often, it can make the writing unclear and less personal, which may separate readers from the main characters and subjects. It is important for writers to be open, particularly in situations where being accountable and clear matters a lot. The findings point out that teachers and curriculum planners should teach nominalization as a way of communicating that has ideological effects, not only as a feature of grammar. Genre-based activities in L2 instruction help students examine and practice nominalization in various texts, which supports their knowledge of the language and critical reading.

All in all, this study shows how grammatical metaphor, mainly nominalization, works in Pakistani English journalism. It supports further studies comparing regional English varieties, different types of journalism, and social and political situations.

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