

Some notes about premodification, nominalization, stative verbs (in specialized languages)

Premodification is characterized by nominal adjectivation, typical of English right-to-left construction. Often compounds of two short nouns, after a period of use and after being hyphenated for a while, become one word – e.g. flowchart. This feature is more frequent and produces longer compounds than general English (Salager, 1984). Nouns in an adjectival position are preferred to adjectives (Hughes, 1988), but mostly not in a number of items higher than six, due to the human mind's limited capacity for short-term memorization (Miller, 1967). Moreover, in these cases more interpretative effort is required on the addressee who will have to employ both his linguistic competence and specialist knowledge to avoid ambiguity, as well as context and co-text. Sometimes a hyphen is used as a disambiguator, signalling semantic links between words. Sometimes, ambiguity is caused by a polysemous premodifier or by the presence of adjectives and past participles which make the premodification hybrid – e.g. an L-shaped computer room. Therefore, the use of premodification, while offering textual conciseness, loses in conceptual clarity. Several are the advantages anyway: the specialist knowledge helps rule out inappropriate meanings, premodification allows the construction of more complex sentences and often gives rise to a new concept that alters the nature of existing concepts, adding new meaning and uses.

Nominalization consists in using a noun instead of a verb to express concepts relating to actions or processes. Halliday (1994) calls it 'grammatical metaphor' within Systemic Functional Linguistics. Verb-derived nouns seem to reflect the parallel process whereby results are inferred from experiments and objects from their construction process (Halliday/Martin, 1993). It is often accompanied by pre/postmodification – e.g. 'a station in which people observe the weather both by day and by night' becomes 'a day and night weather observation station'. Conciseness cannot be the only reason for nominalization, especially because sometimes it is not the shortest way to express concepts – e.g. 'the provisions for the recovery of possession' vs. 'the provisions for recovering possession'. Other motives are to be found in textual construction – i.e. by favouring the reintroduction of concepts in thematic position, it allows an easier flow of information from new to given, facilitating text development and increasing textual cohesion -, in the opportunity to confer greater objectivity in the author's views (Halliday, 1990) and to increase precision and all-inclusiveness (in legal language, Bhatia 1994). The pervasiveness of nominalization results in a weakness of the verbal value, used merely as a copula to link nouns in complex noun phrases. Herbert (1970) identifies an analogy between this type of structure and mathematical equations, allowing for inversion useful especially when the subject is longer than the complement.

One of the consequences of nominalization and premodification is increased lexical density, i.e. a high percent of content words within the total number of words in a text, especially in written texts, where the discourse is more planned, without hesitation markers and with less redundancy. A more natural style, closer to spoken language, is instead that with more explicit concepts and more noun phrases for paraphrase, rendering the text less compact.

Stative verbs describe a state or a situation unlike dynamic verbs which describe an action. While stative verbs are static or unchanging throughout their entire duration, dynamic verbs describe a process that changes over time. They usually relate to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, states of being and measurements. These verbs are not usually used with *-ing* in progressive (continuous) tenses even though they may take on time expressions such as now and at the moment.

- Examples:
- adore
- agree
- appear (seem)

- appreciate
- be (exist)
- believe
- belong to
- concern
- consist of
- contain
- cost
- deny
- depend on
- deserve
- detest
- disagree
- dislike
- doubt
- equal
- feel
- hate
- have (possession)
- hear
- imagine
- include
- involve
- know
- lack
- like
- loathe
- look (seem)
- love
- matter
- mean
- measure
- mind
- need
- owe
- own
- possess
- promise
- realize
- recognize
- remember
- resemble
- satisfy
- see
- seem
- smell
- sound
- suppose
- surprise
- taste
- think (opinion)

- understand
- want
- weigh
- wish