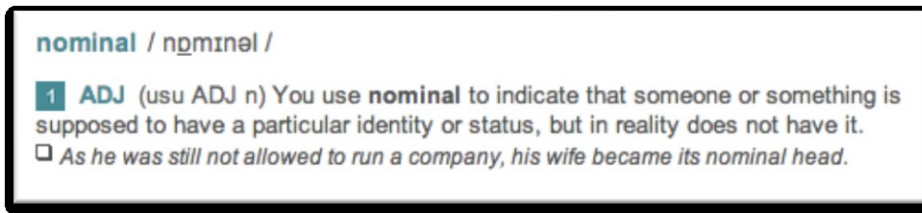


Nominalisation

The word NOMINAL is the adjectival form of *noun*. It is a linguistic term. But it is also used in general English, as can be seen in this definition from mycobuild.com.



We know from our studies of morphology that one of the functions of the suffix *-ise* is *to make into*, and that *-ation* indicates *the result of a process*. This path from adjective (*nominal*) to verb (*nominalise*) to noun (*nominalisation*) brings us to the topic of this section.

Nominalisation is a highly salient feature of academic prose. Authors repackage processes as participants (UFG 74), i.e. the noun (*nominal*) equivalent in the word family is used instead of the verb. For example, we *tend* to ... vs. there is a **tendency** to ..., something was adjusted vs. an **adjustment**, as in these corpus examples.

A similar morphological excursion leads us to Karl Popper's notion regarding hypotheses: *false* → *falsify* → *falsifiable* → *falsifiability*. He concluded that a hypothesis, proposition, or theory is "scientific" only if it is, among other things, falsifiable.
From Princeton.edu.

<http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Falsifiability.html>

Corp Ex. 1. Frequent **adjustment** of the node spacing is required ... (IRC)

This could be expressed: *It is necessary to adjust the node spacing frequently ...*

Corp Ex. 2. ... it was shown that pseudo-telepathy is a stronger **rejection** of the locality ... (IRC)

This could be expressed: *... strongly rejects the locality*

Corp Ex. 3. ... there was a **tendency** to neglect lexical considerations in favor of grammatical ones (CC)

This could be expressed: *they tended to neglect ...*

Corp Ex. 4. Choices within the noun phrase **are dependent upon** the wider context within which the noun phrase is embedded (LGSWE p.305)

This could be expressed: *depend on ...*

Corp Ex. 5. ... the underlying **assumption** being that effective language learning is a form of linguistic research, ... (CC – Tim Johns)

We could change *assumption* to *assume* but as there is no obvious subject, we use a passive construction: *It is assumed that*. This phrase is quite common in academic prose.

Task 1: What verb is used in these corpus examples?

What do we mean when we say that one thing IS another thing? e.g. *pseudo-telepathy is a rejection, language learning is linguistic research, our head researcher is a bachelor*.

Is this a S V O structure?

This use of BE is discussed in the following chapter, under the heading, Copular Verbs. When we nominalise our processes, they become entities. Thus instead of the clause revolving around a "process verb", such as *someone acquires something, someone transmits something* which in most language varieties has a person performing the verb, the clause revolves around copular verbs, BE being the most frequent.

Another aspect of nominalisation is the use of modifiers. According to LGSWE (p. 578) 60% of nouns

in academic prose have modifiers. While modifying verbs with adverbs is certainly possible, English prefers to modify nouns with adjectives. In the corpus example with *underlying assumption*, we did not manage to modify the verb *assume*. There are many attributes that adjectives express that do not convert well to adverbs.

Unlike processes, entities are fixed in time.

In the following sentence from Kral (2012), the two underlined nouns could have alternatively been verb structures.

Cultural practice results from the acquisition and transmission of the cultural tools, habits, routines, dispositions and attitudes of a cultural group, over successive generations.

Task 2: Suggest alternative wordings by nominalising the underlined verb forms below.

This is a situation in which we can apply Conversion.

In addition, tasks are prioritized so that a worker can know how to cope with competing demands.

In contrast, spoken registers, especially conversation, are believed to have the opposite characteristics. (B&G)

State-of-the-art verification techniques let researchers analyze these systems

When you write academic prose, the work is in the spotlight, not the author. Nominalisation is not a choice made because it is required style, but because it influences the rhetorical effect of your writing.

Roles of Nouns

As we saw in our work on the Hierarchy of Language, a noun phrase is a word or a group of words that functions as subject, object, complement and adverbial. This first example here has single words only as subject and object.

Corp Ex. 6. ... Columbus discovered America (BNC, ukWaC)

Corp Ex. 7. When Galileo found results that displeased the Pope, his reward was imprisonment. (BNC)

In the example below, the noun phrases contain several words, and the clause has two objects because *give* is a so-called DI-TRANSITIVE VERB as are *pass*, *send*, *lend*, *offer*, *allow*, *allocate* and many others. The noun phrase itself mostly ends with a noun which can be preceded by articles and adjectives.

Corp Ex. 8. ... the sanctity of life theory would give high priority to a person of any age who is in imminent danger of dying.

Subject	the sanctity of life theory
Verb	would give
Object (direct)	high priority
Object (indirect)	a person of any age

Here are some more examples with phrases.

Corp Ex. 9. The matrix is a yellow limestone common in the European Jurassic. (definition) (BNC)

Corp Ex. 10. The largest animal in the world is the blue whale with a weight of about 150,000kg. (example) (BNC)

Corp Ex. 11. Insects are the great masters of disguise. (BNC)

The rest of this section is devoted to the elements of the noun phrase.

A noun phrase consists of all or any of the following. Combine the tags provided to search for specific examples in your corpora.

determiner	pre-modifier	noun	post-modifier
this, that articles: a/n, the possessive pronouns	adjective noun	noun	prepositional phrase, especially with of. adjective especially -ed.
[tag = "DT"]	[tag = "JJ"]	[tag = "NN"]	[tag = "IN"][]{}{0,1}[tag = "NN"]
[tag = "PP\$"]	[tag = "NN"]	[tag = "NN"]	[word = ".*ed" & tag = "JJ"]

In earlier section, we answered this question when looking at the word sketch of *datum*: Can you see what the difference between the *modifier* and *modifies* columns is?

In the following corpus examples, noun phrases are in bold and their key nouns are underlined.

- Corp Ex. 12. *Rather, let me point out **the general lack of ability** to capitalize, spell, and punctuate. (ukWaC)*
- Corp Ex. 13. *They represent **an ample framework** for experimentation and research. (IRC)*
- Corp Ex. 14. ***The major problem** with their algorithm is that it did not deal with **the ambiguity problem** mentioned in the previous section. (IRC)*
- Corp Ex. 15. *... the sanctity of life **theory** would give high priority to **a person** of any age who is in imminent danger of dying.*

Word study: Consequence

Here are five examples from the BNC, chosen to represent its patterns of normal usage.

- Corp Ex. 16. *Most often the problem is short lived and of little consequence, but chronic constipation most often follows an inadequately managed acute problem.*
- Corp Ex. 17. *The analysts may, as a consequence, address the wrong problem by, ...*
- Corp Ex. 18. *Much of Australia's farmlands are threatened with salination, ¹caused in part by the consequences of farmers cutting down trees to clear land for wheat and other crops.*
- Corp Ex. 19. *The consequence is that merger bids aimed at improving performance will tend to fail.*
- Corp Ex. 20. *Increased world usage of motor cars is an inevitable consequence of the industrialisation of the LDCs.*

Task 3: Study those five sentences and answer these questions.

Which ones contain fixed phrases that revolve around *consequence*?

In which sentences is it the subject of a verb?

In which sentences is it the object of a verb?

What preposition typically follows it?

Circle the determiners that precede it.

Are there positive *consequences* as well negative ones? Underline the words which provide support for this polarity.

¹ use this sentence with verbs – neg of *cause*.

Word study: Proceedings

- Corp Ex. 21. *At the festivals of Dionysus, or Bacchus, wine was central to the proceedings.*
- Corp Ex. 22. *The proceedings include a description of obtaining mineral exploration permission in South-west England and the planning application system.*
- Corp Ex. 23. *Bernard in a state of disgust, left the proceedings early and went up to bed.*
- Corp Ex. 24. *Copies of the proceedings are available from Prof M H ...*
- Corp Ex. 25. *The proposal leaves open the possibility of criminal proceedings in Britain against anyone who leaks EC information.*
- Corp Ex. 26. *It is equally important that disciplinary proceedings should not become unduly protracted.*

Task 4: Study these six sentences and answer the questions.

There are three meanings of *proceedings* in these examples from the BNC. What are the three meanings and which sentences represent each one.

Are all of these examples preceded by a determiner? The same determiner?

Circle the determiners that precede *proceedings*.

Word study: Capacity

- Corp Ex. 27. *I have, **in my capacity as** Senior Anatomical Pathology Technician, been called upon to collect and look at bones discovered in various places, ..*
- Corp Ex. 28. *Within these cultures workers are assessing one another and **their capacity to** reach informally agreed levels of production.*
- Corp Ex. 29. *The King, **in his capacity as** Colonel-in-Chief of 1st Battalion The Green Howards, ...*
- Corp Ex. 30. *By the end of the academic year I instituted, **in my capacity as** Chief Inspector, a survey of the implementation of ...*
- Corp Ex. 31. *The Secretary of State's **capacity to** make grants is at present limited to £1,500 million.*

Task 5: Study these six sentences and solve the following:

Capacity is working in two structures here. As expected, different structure, different meaning. By looking at the words immediately around *capacity* and their POS, firstly determine the two structures and then tease their meanings out.

Task 6: There are two more structures of capacity: *capacity for* and *to capacity*.

What can you learn from your corpora about these two uses?

Other AWL nouns that are typically used with determiners are:

converse, inevitable, initiative, norm, outcome, pursuit, environment, establishment, issue, media, positive, proceeds, reverse

Task 7: Investigate them in a corpus to discover their usage in nominalised structures:

The _____ is/was ...