

Nominalisation

= a type of word formation in which a verb or an adjective (or other part of speech) is used as (and transformed into) a noun.

It is possible to write:

1. The *emergence* of English as the international language of scientific communication has been widely documented.

As opposed to:

2. English has emerged as the international language of scientific communication.

This phenomenon has been widely documented.

Questions

The first example contains a very long noun phrase, a nominalisation.

Which of the two sentences do you prefer? Why?

What, do you think, is gained/lost by nominalising?

Academic English in its tendency to nominalise (or create abstract nouns from concrete ones) offers many suffixes to choose from:

-*acy* (democracy), -*age* (patronage), -*al* (refusal), -*ant* (deodorant), -*dom* (freedom), -*edge* (knowledge), -*eer* (engineer), -*er* (painter), -*ery* (slavery), -*hood* (motherhood), -*ion* (operation, implication etc.), -*ism* (progressivism), -*ist* (idealist), -*ity* (stupidity), -*ment* (government), -*ness* (happiness), -*ship* (professorship), -*th* (length), -*tude* (gratitude), -*ence* (difference). -*ance* (annoyance). -*ure* (pleasure) and many others.

Examples of nominal transformations

He failed, which angered his parents. → His *failure* caused his parents' *anger*.

The police investigated but uncovered no evidence. → The police *investigation* uncovered no evidence.

He loves unhealthy food, which causes him to be obese. → His *love of* unhealthy food is the *cause of* his obesity.

The course was difficult, so many students performed badly. → The course's *difficulty* resulted in poor student *performance*

Turn the following verbs and adjectives into nouns.

to propose - to be cruel - to be brave - to move - to be tense - to be strong - to differ –

to inform - to be lazy - to store sth. - to be pure - to be decadent - to fail - to extend.

Find the nominalised phrases. Retell the content of this paragraph in your own words (e.g. trying to avoid the nominalised constructions). Describe the difference.*The Value of College Degree*

The escalating cost of higher education is causing many to question the value of continuing education beyond high school. There is a raising wonder whether the high cost of tuition, the opportunity cost of choosing college over full-time employment, and the accumulation of thousands of dollars of debt is, in the long run, worth the investment. The risk is especially large for low-income families, since there is the additional burden of college tuition and fees.

The purpose of Nominalisation

- prevents the author from repeating the same verb/adjective (or other part of speech)
- conveys an objective, impersonal tone as well
- It can also make the text more concise. How? By packing a large amount of information into a few words.
- As a consequence of using nominalisation, the writing is more abstract and thus more formal.