

## **An Exploration into the Relationship Between Nominal Form and Temporal Semantics**

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Traditionally, nominals have been semantically associated with notions of 'time stability', considered to typically denote objects which do not belong to the temporal domain, e.g. table (Langacker 1991:298; Givon 2001:51). Nevertheless, nominals have proven the capability to express temporal meaning (Vendler 1967). For example, the nominal fire construes a dynamic event, as a fire can 'take place', and 'be observed over time' (Vendler 1967:141). Recent research into the temporal semantics of nominals has identified that particular deverbal nominalizations (Balvet et al 2011), deadjectival nominalizations (Arche and Marín 2014) and underived nominals (Huyghe et al 2017) can express temporal meaning. However, while studies have largely focused on the identification of temporal meaning in different nominal forms, significantly less work has been devoted to the examination of the specific character of these temporal meanings in relation to nominal form. Thus, the aims of this research are twofold: (1) to evaluate the extent to which different nominal forms vary in relation to temporal semantic behaviour, and (2) to determine how object, state, and event meaning come to be expressed in nominal form.

Using part-of-speech tagging, a random sample of 5000 nominal instances was extracted from the British National Corpus (BNC). To avoid ambiguity in the coding process, the nominals were first analysed for their function in use, using a Systemic Functional Linguistic 'experiential analysis' (Halliday 2014). Nominal instances which did not function in the syntactic head position of the nominal group were discarded. Repetition instances were also discarded from the sample, to circumvent potential inflation of relationships between certain nominal forms and temporal semantic distributions. The removal of the above mentioned instances left 1664 nominals instances in the sample. These nominal instances were analysed for 'Lexical Aspect' (i.e. Aktionsart, Ontological/Situation Aspect) (summarised in Smith 1991; Declerck 2006), count/mass status and abstract/concrete status. This process involved applying diagnostic syntactic tests to the nominals (Vendler 1967; Dowty 1979; Smith 1991; Declerck 2006), e.g. did NOUN take place?. Six types of lexical aspect are associated with this research: 'State', 'Activity', 'Accomplishment', 'Achievement', 'Semelfactive' and 'Object'. Through consulting the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), the nominals were then further classified into eight categories based on their etymology: 'Borrowing'; 'Compound'; 'Morphologically derived from adjective' (MDA); 'Morphologically derived from noun' (MDN); 'Morphologically derived from verb' (MDV); 'Other'; 'Transcategorization' (TC), and 'Underived'. The results from this research indicate an overall significant difference between the distribution of temporal semantics expressed by the different word formation types. Most notably, MDAs, MDVs and TCs displayed a considerably stronger association with temporal semantics than the other word formation types. Despite this significant difference however, the results from this research also suggest that abstract/concrete status is the most influential variable overall in predicting the distribution of temporal semantics expressed by the nominal instances.

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