Discourse Analysis of Verbal Nominalization in Business English Correspondence

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Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author JL managed the literature and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author XH revised the draft and gave it final shape. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Verbal nominalization is recognized as a typical discourse in business English correspondence. This study aims to analyze characteristics of verbal nominalization in the corpus of business English correspondence. The results show that the verbal nominalization is usually realized by symbolic suffixes and singular suffix and the suffixation with the significant frequencies in business English correspondence, which is positively contributed to the remarkable discourse features of business English correspondence.

Keywords: Discourse analysis; verbal nominalization; business English correspondence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nominalization is any process by which either a noun or a syntactic unit functioning as a noun phrase is derived from any other kind of units such as a verb or an adjective [1]. It is the process through which a finite verbal clause, either a complete clause or a subjectless verb phrase, is converted into a noun phrase Givon [2]. Studies on nominalization are mainly from the
perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Systemic Functional Linguistics is founded by Halliday who describes nominalization as a procedure to take the process or the property as Thing. From the perspective of SFL, nominalization can be regarded as an imperative device for the realization of ideational metaphor. Halliday’s probe in nominalization can be depicted to be a thorough and systematic discovery on account of the meaning-based analysis from the scope of syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics.

Business English correspondence is recognized to be a typical discourse in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with special and strong textual characteristics. It contributes to being a tool in business activities for communications between the sides involved in commercial conduct. To put it in another angle, business English correspondence is thought to be one of “expert languages” which originated from the “normal languages” [3], by employing considerable rhetorical devices and magnificent contextual adjustments. On the escalation of international business, global commercial conducts have been shed on lights covering a long elapse. However, verbal nominalization in business English correspondence is not frequently investigated. Therefore, it is of reasonable need to make more explorations in verbal nominalization in business English correspondence.

Nominalization is explained to be a type of Grammatical Metaphor within Systemic Functional Grammar, which is widely acknowledged to be the outcome of analyses on both meanings and usages of a language. Under the guidance of this theory, a language is “interpreted as a system of meaning, accompanied by forms through which the meaning can be realized” [3]. To be more specific, language is thought to be multiple coded systems consisting of the choices of “meaning” (on the semantics level), “form” (on the lexical-grammatical level), and “substance” (on the phonology level). The relationships between the levels are “realizations”. This viewpoint reflects that the relationship between wording and its referent is not arbitrary. The form of the grammar, to some extent, is associated with the meaning that is being encoded. To put it more plainly, one meaning can be expressed within diversified forms, and one form can attach to several significance in various contexts.

Halliday [3] classified the numerous forms of expressions into two types, with which the form reflects typical human experience labeled as “congruent form” and in contrast, the form that involves the metaphorical process on the level of lexical-grammar named to be “incongruent form”, alternatively “metaphorical form”. In detail, “Process” is usually expressed by a verbal group, “Participant” by a nominal group, and “Circumstance” by an adverbial group or a prepositional phrase, in the congruent form. Conversely, “processes” (operated by verbs in the congruent form) and “properties” (operated by adjectives in the congruent form) can metamorphose to be nouns, rather than “functioning in the clause, as Process or Attribute. They function as Thing in the nominal group” [3].

Grammatical Metaphor refers to a process of metaphor taking place on the level of lexical-grammar, which involves the changes in grammatical structures and the transferences of words [4]. According to the meta-functions of a language, Halliday [5] classifies Grammatical Metaphors to be the ideational metaphor and the interpersonal metaphor. Realization of interpersonal metaphor mainly accomplishes through those clauses which substitute the mood and modality the adverbials express, such as “I suppose…”, “It is unlikely…”, “It may be …”, and so on. Nominalization is defined to be an element or a group that can function as a noun or a nominal group in a clause, involving clauses, nominalized adjectives or verbs, and so forth, in Halliday’s An Introduction to Functional Grammar [6]. He treats nominalization as taking “the process or property as Thing” [3]. It should be highly noted that nominalization is a major means of Grammatical Metaphor, and the transferences between the part-of-speeches are superficial phenomena [3].

2. METHODOLOGY

Corpus-analysis of discourse is widely acknowledged to be a powerful and convincing method to discuss and discover the characteristics of a register thanks to plenty of information in a corpus carries. In the present study, a Self-Established Corpus (hereinafter refers to SEC) has been founded with 176 texts (18,490 tokens) of business English correspondence of all types such as inquiries, offers, counter-offers, quotations, complaints, and so forth, from the Internet, under the help of a software named AntConc which shows the frequencies and distributions of the studied
words in this corpus. The frequencies and distributions of verbal nominalizations will be investigated in the present study through SEC and AntConc, therefore, the results can be reliable and pervasive.

The symbolic suffixes of verbal nominalization -ment, -tion/-sion, -ance/ence, -ancy/ency (and their plural forms), and the singular suffix -ing are of common appearance. Moreover, Zhang [7] formulates the three characteristic structures of nominalizations realized by the suffix -ing from the perspective of syntax, namely action nominalization structure, factive nominalization structure and accusative-ing structure. In other words, a subject, an object, or a prepositional object, can be assumed by a gerund. In order to conduct an analysis of the dissimilar functions of the suffix -ing in verbal nominalization, it is necessary to divide the phenomenon into three categories: a. -ing + of; b. personal pronoun (my/me/our/us/you/your/his/him/her/their/them)+-ing; c. preposition (by/on/in/at/to/of/before/after/with/ into/within)+-ing. Based on these discoveries, this thesis will investigate the distributions and functions of verbal nominalizations and their symbolic suffixes, -ment, -tion/-sion, -ance/ence, -ancy/ency (and their plural forms), and the singular suffix -ing, under the framework of Grammatical Metaphor in Systemic Functional Grammar.

Three procedures fall into the data collection. Firstly, establish a corpus. Secondly, record the frequencies of verbal nominalizations and the symbolic suffixes (-ment, -tion/-sion, -ance/ence, -ancy/ency, -ing and their plural forms). Thirdly, manually delete the records of words hiding the same spelling of the symbolic suffixes but are not a derived word, such as mention, concession, document, agency, and so forth. The following table chart (Table 1) reflects the frequencies of those words in the SEC.

Moreover, manually exclude the records of those adjective nominalizations employing the suffixes which are parallel with those of verbal nominalizations such as confidence, disappointment, urgency, redundancy, etc. The following table chart (Table 2) displays those adjective nominalizations with their frequencies in SEC.

To put it in another angle, the manual deletes are to exclude the words that are not verbal nominalizations but present the morphological features of verbal nominalizations. The following table chart (Table 3) discloses the frequencies of the deleted suffixes’ records in the procedures of data collection. However, it seems to be of low possibility to delete all the interrupting records on account of the considerable tokens in SEC, though processing data has tried as much as the condition permits.

Finally, observe the distributions of verbal nominalizations with the aid of software AntConc. Functions and significance of them will be on illustration through exemplification from the perspective of Grammatical Metaphor in Systemic Functional Grammar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attention</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>mission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>audience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>condition</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>occasion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>competence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>comment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>consequence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mention</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>document</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>experience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>garment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>science</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reputation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>moment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>agency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specification</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>advance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>tendency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concession</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>balance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commission</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>chance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consideration</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>convenience</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>redundancy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disappointment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>difference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>urgency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>inconvenience</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is to picture the frequencies of verbal nominalization with its symbolic suffixes -ment, -tion/-sion, -ance/ence, -ancy/ency, -ing (including their plural forms) will be made. Distributions and functions of verbal nominalization will be demonstrated through exemplification in view of Grammatical Metaphor.

3.1 Analysis of Distribution of Verbal Nominalization

Investigations into the frequencies of symbolic suffixes of verbal nominalizations after a process of interrupting records' manual delete will be on the highlight in this section, with a brief introduction to their discourse functions within exemplification analyzed by the distributions of verbal nominalizations.

3.1.1 Analysis of the frequencies of verbal nominalization endings

The following table chart (Table 4) exhibits the frequencies of symbolic suffixes of verbal nominalizations: -ment, -tion/-sion, -ance/ence, -ancy/ency (involving their plural forms) in SEC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffixes</th>
<th>Freq. of the deleted records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ment</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tion/-sion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ance/-ence</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ancy/-ency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, words ending up with the suffix -ment occupied roughly 30% of all verbal nominalizations.

However, it should be noticed that although both the figure for and the percentage of the verbal nominalizations ending with -ancy/-ency turned out to be 0 (0%) in the present study, probably it cannot come to the conclusion that verbal nominalizations with suffixes of them are of no existence. It may reflect that such kinds of verbal nominalizations are of low frequent appearance in business English correspondence, although they are thought to be the symbolic suffixes of verbal nominalizations [8].

On observation of the examples in SEC, it is found that in business English correspondence, this type of verbal nominalizations is employed to be nouns or nominal groups to be or be a component of Participants (Actors, Goals, Phenomena, Carriers, etc.), and, occasionally to be Circumstances to realize the Grammatical Metaphor, from the scope of Systemic Functional Grammar. For instance (verbal nominalizations in italics):

(1a) This information is certain to help increase our future cooperation.
(1b) To tell you the truth, we have received quotations 15% lower than yours.
(1c) Our Sales Confirmation No. AB2C in two originals were airmailed to you.
(1d) On examination, we have found three discrepancies of the porcelain.

Example (1a) is to reflect that the word “information” with “this” is applied as an Actor. For example (1b), “quotation” is employed as a Goal. Instance (1c) is to prove how the word “confirmation” is utilized to be a Carrier in that sentence. (1d) is to demonstrate the verb “examine” is taken as a Circumstance. The mentioned words are derived from their corresponding verbs to be the Processes in congruent form. For instance (original verbs in bold type):

(2a) This informs us that it is certain to help increase our future cooperation.
To tell you the truth, we have received the price that other sellers quote, and it is 15% lower than yours.

We had confirmed the sales No.AB2C, and we airmailed two originals of it to you.

After we examined the porcelain, we have found three discrepancies.

Instances (2a), (2b), (2c), (2d) denote the corresponding verbs express the processes in congruent form. They are applied as Participants in the corresponding clauses (1a), (1b), (1c), and the Circumstance in (1d), in the metaphorical form. The procedures bearing a resemblance of the transferences from (2a), (2b), (2c), (2d) to (1a), (1b), (1c), (1d) are called verbal nominalizations, namely “to take the process as Thing” [3]. In other words, verbal nominalization refers to the phenomenon that a predicate verb treated to be an entity is employed as a noun or a part of a nominal group.

This process is the major instrument to form an ideational metaphor, one of the Grammatical Metaphors. In this process, suffixture can assist to form the corresponding noun or nominal group. In fact, -ment, -tion/-sion, -ance/-ence and -ancy/-ency proves diversified significance. They mirror various qualities, results, means, and processes of the corresponding verbs that express [9].

3.1.2 Analysis of the frequencies of the Suffix -ing

This module will picture the investigated outcomes of verbal nominalizations with the special suffix -ing. As mentioned before, the present study will be made in three aspects:

<1> -ing + of
<2> personal pronoun (my/me/our/us/you/your/his/him/her/their/them) + -ing
<3> preposition (by/on/in/at/to/of/before/after/with/into/within) + -ing

As mentioned before, “-ing + of” turns out to be the morphologically distinguishing feature of action nominalization structure in verbal nominalizations. Thus, it can be described to be reasonable to search for “-ing + of” to study this structure with the frequencies and distributions. The following table chart (Table 5) illustrates the frequency and percentage of “-ing + of” in the SEC.

Table 4. Symbolic suffixes with frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffixes</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Suffixes</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ment</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>-ance/-ence</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tion/-sion</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>-ancy/-ency</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Proportions of the symbolic suffixes
In accordance with the given table chart (Table 6), the action nominalization structure, morphologically “-ing + of” was found to significantly little employed in business English correspondence, taking up only 0.037% of all tokens in SEC. On observation of the examples in SEC, this type of verbal nominalization is found to transform an act into a noun or a nominal group to satisfy Grammatical Metaphor in the metaphorical form under the guidance of Systemic Functional Grammar in business English correspondence. For instance (verbal nominalization in italics and original verb in bold type):

(3a) Nowadays, we are seeking foreign investment in the field of capital construction, such as improving of the tap water system and highway construction.

(3b) Nowadays, we are seeking foreign investment in the field of capital construction. For instance, improve the water system and highway construction.

The act of “improve” for example (3b) in the congruent form has been transferred into the nominalized words “improving” to realize the Grammatical Metaphor in (3a) in metaphorical form, although the roles they play in the two clauses are both Participants.

The following table chart (Table 6) displays the frequencies and proportions of personal pronoun (my/me/our/us/you/your/his/him/her/their/them) + -ing in SEC.

To put it in another angle, the following pie chart (Fig. 2) depicts the observed personal pronouns (my/me/our/us/you/your/his/him/her/their/them) + -ing with their proportions in SEC.

**Table 5. Frequency and percentage of “-ing + of”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.037%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6. “personal pronouns + -ing” with frequencies and proportions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Pronouns</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Proportions</th>
<th>Personal Pronouns</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Proportions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>my</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>his</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>our</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>us</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>their</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 2. “personal pronouns + -ing” with their proportions**
As shown in the given pie chart (Fig. 2), it was obvious that our/us + -ing and you/your + -ing were on significantly common occurrence in SEC, while other personal pronouns (my/me/his/him/her/their/them) were on remarkably rare presence. In fact, our/us + -ing and you/your + -ing can be described as a powerful tool for clarifying the terms and conditions in the commercial conduct, owing to this sort of expression treats the process that a predicate verb expresses as Thing to play the role of Participant, Circumstance and so forth. Thus, it turns to be easier to make a detailed stipulation of a trade. In other words, verbal nominalization plays an active and imperative role in the formality of business English correspondence. For instance (verbal nominalizations in italics):

(4) If, however, you were to make us a suitable offer, there is a possibility of our supplying them.
(5) We would be glad of an early reply since we will put the offer out in the event of your not being interested.

Example (4) exemplifies that the process the original predicate verb “supply” delineates has been transferred into Thing namely “supplying”. This verbal nominalization can be depicted to be a vehicle for a clear announcement of the possible measures the buyer in that commercial conduct would take. For instance (5), “being” helps to take the process that the Attributive “be” (are) expresses to turn into Thing as the Circumstance, which stresses the status that the buyer in that business activity is not interested in the offer.

The following table chart (Table 7) reflects the frequencies of the verbal nominalizations in “preposition (by/on/in/at/to/of/before/after/with/into/within) + -ing” in SEC.
To put it in another aspect, the following table chart (Table 8) indicates the proportions of the frequencies of the items listed in the given table.

As exhibited in Table 8, “to/of/in + -ing” took the occupation at approximately 90% of the total verbal nominalizations in the forms of “preposition (by/on/in/at/to/of/before/after/with/into/within) + -ing” in SEC with their closely shares. In contrast, “on + -ing” constituted 8% of the verbal nominalizations of that category, which was 1/4 of the figure for “to + -ing”; even it could be described to an occasionally occurring verbal nominalization in the forms of “preposition + -ing”, compared with “by/before/after/with/into/within + -ing” which are in scare employment.

On observation of the examples in SEC, this type of verbal nominalization is found to be usually applied as a Participant or Circumstance to satisfy Grammatical Metaphor in the metaphorical form to illustrate or supplement a scenario or an entity or a process in a clause. For instance (verbal nominalizations in italics):

(6) You may draw on the agents for the full amount of the invoice at 60 days, and your draft should be presented with the following documents: Six copies of the bill of lading
(7) We had the case investigated immediately, and the result shows the damage was due to improper packing, for which the suppliers are definitely responsible.
(8) But before placing a firm order, we should be appreciated if you would send us your goods.
(9) We look forward to hearing your early reply.

“Lading” for example (6) is an entity transformed from the corresponding predicate verb “lade”. It is employed to be a supplement of the entity “bill” to illustrate the category of the bill. Instance (7) and (8) indicate the verbs “pack” and “place” transferred into “packing” and “placing” are applied as Circumstances to illustrate the entity (Participant) “damage” and the condition (Circumstance) “before” respectively in the metaphorical forms. Furthermore, “hearing” assumed as Participant (Goal) for example (9) is on the utilization of illustrating the objective of the process “look forward”. Objectivity can be thought to be realized in these cases owing to the process that the nominalized verb expresses is taken as Thing, ignoring the time, modality, and action giver.

3.1.3 Analysis of the frequencies of verbal nominalization
Based on the discoveries in before, the following table chart (Table 9) reflects the frequencies, proportions (of the suffixed verbal nominalizations in the SEC) and percentages (of all tokens in the SEC) of verbal nominalizations realized by symbolic suffixes, -ment, -ion/-sion, -ance/ence, -ancy/ency (including their plural forms) (short for “symbolic suffixes”) and the singular suffix -ing (short for “singular suffix”) in the SEC.
Table 7. “Preposition + -ing” with frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>after</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>into</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>within</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. “Preposition + -ing” with proportions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Proportions</th>
<th>Prepositions</th>
<th>Proportions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>after</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>into</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>within</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Symbolic and singular suffixes with proportions and percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Proportions</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>symbolic suffixes</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>83.05%</td>
<td>2.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singular suffix</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>16.95%</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>2.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As disclosed in the given Table 9, the proportion of symbolic suffixed verbal nominalizations almost equaled quintuple of that of singular suffixed verbal nominalizations in SEC, significantly outcropping 80%. Moreover, suffixed verbal nominalizations occupied approximately 2.6% of all tokens in SEC, which was subtly lower than that in the scientific literature (4.34%) [8] and manifestly exceeded the percentage of nominalizations including verbal nominalizations and others in fairy tales (0.7% in total) [10].

As for the singular suffix -ing employed in verbal nominalization, the frequencies of the three forms of it differ. The following table chart (Table 9) displays the respective frequencies and proportions of “-ing + of”, “personal pronoun (my/me/our/us/you/your/his/him/her/their/them) + -ing” and “preposition (by/ on/in/at/to/of/before/after/with/into/within) + -ing”.

Table 10. Frequencies and proportions of verbal nominalizations with “-ing”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Proportions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ing + of</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal pronoun + -ing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition + -ing</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the metaphorical forms, for the transference of an act to Thing (mainly through verbal nominalizations with the symbolic suffixes and "-ing + of"), for a better clarifying of the terms and conditions (mainly through "personal pronoun + -ing"), and for the illustration or the supplement of a scenario or an entity or a process (mainly through "preposition + -ing").

3.2 Discourse Functions of Verbal Nominalization

Halliday’s formulation of the three stylistic functions of nominalization namely conciseness, formality, and coherence [3] has been supplemented by Fan [11], which can be described to be a noteworthy exploration in nominalization from the perspective of text style above and beyond semantics. This section intends to shed highlight on the powers that verbal nominalization operates on the stylistic level in business English correspondence.

3.2.1 Conciseness

Lexical density is on the first proposal by Halliday [3] after his observation in nominalization that an instrument is able for the realization of more concise content. Frankly speaking, written English can be with more sophistication under the help of lexical dense, owing to the process of nominalization has "packed" quantities of lexical items or the original simple clause into one clause [3]. In business English correspondence, verbal nominalization can improve the level of lexical density by playing the part of Participant, Circumstance, and so forth for the satisfaction of conciseness. For instance (verbal nominalization in italics and the original predicate verb in bold type):

(10a) We also assist Walmart in the establishment of joint ventures and carry the procedures for examination and approval of joint ventures and foreign sole investment firms.

(10b) We also assist Walmart to establish a joint venture, and we assist to carry the procedures to examine and to approve joint venture and foreign firms to solely invest.

To compare with (10a) and (10b), it is explicit that in the metaphorical form (10a), employment of verbal nominalizations has elevated the degree of lexical density on account of the lexical items namely the processes “establish”, “examine”, “approve” are packed into one clause, sharing the same Theme ("we") without repeated mentions. Meanwhile, those processes have transferred into Participants (Goals) to enlighten the objectives of the processes “assist”, “carry” and “approve”.

After a procedure of Grammatical Metaphor like this, verbal nominalization can be described to be in a positive contribution in the degree of conciseness of a text with fewer clauses to convey more messages in a clear way. Thus, it is obvious that verbal nominalization is engaged in business English correspondence to enhance the degree of conciseness.

3.2.2 Formality

Separation of written English and spoken English is thought to be in a degree due to the distinctive degrees of lexical density which nominalization employment plays a positive role in [3]. In fact, Halliday [3] relates that nominalization is of wide adoption, which can be described to be a highly distinguishing feature in adult registers. It should be stressed that the scientific literature are recognized to be a typical discourse with considerable formality [3]. Furthermore, according to Wang’s study [12], nominalization which poses positive effects is thought to be an objective and measurable indicator of the degree of formality of a text. In other words, texts with a higher frequency of nominalization adoption appear to be with more formality.

In the SEC, verbal nominalization occupies an appreciable percentage of all tokens, 2.59% as mentioned before. To compare with the figures for even all forms of nominalizations in fairy tales (0.7%) [12] and for verbal nominalizations in the scientific literature (4.34%) [8] as stated before, it can be found that verbal nominalization in business English correspondence is in favor of the degree of formality of that kind of text, indicating an evidently higher degree and an appreciably lower degree of formality than that of fairy tales and scientific literature respectively. Additionally, the procedure of verbal nominalization takes the process that the original predicate verb expresses as Thing assuming the role of a nominal group to be or be a component of a Circumstance, or Participant, and so forth in business English correspondence, especially in terms and conditions, for the realization of Grammatical Metaphor.
3.2.3 Coherence

“Theme-Rheme” theory [13] defines “Theme” as “the starting point of a discourse” and “Rheme” as “the speech around the Theme”. Fan [14] points out that “Theme-Rheme” coherence can be realized by the nominalization coherence which is mainly realized by developing the one element of the preceding Rheme in the foregoing sentence into a new Theme. To put it in another angle, nominalization poses a positive impact on discourse coherence mainly through developing the former Theme into a new Rheme.

In business English correspondence, verbal nominalization is found to stand supportive for discourse coherence by the transformations between Themes and Rhemes in various sentences, playing the role of Participant, Circumstance, and so on, after the completion of Grammatical Metaphor. For instance (verbal nominalizations in italics and the corresponding verbs in bold type):

(11) We have received your goods today. On receiving, we examined them to find three discrepancies. Further examinations will be carried out tomorrow.
(12) Please don’t hesitate to contact us at 6872836397. Hesitation might be with an increase in the price of the goods.

In example (11), verbs “receive” and “examine” have nominalized to be nouns “receiving” and “examination”, with the transference from the old Rheme “receive” to the new Theme “receiving”, followed by the shift from the former Rheme “examine” to the latter Theme “examinations”. The verbal nominalized words “receiving” and “examination” are employed as Circumstance and Actor respectively after the accomplishment of Grammatical Metaphor. Similarly, instance (12) exposes the procedure of the change from the previous Rheme “hesitate” which plays the role of the process to the subsequent Theme “hesitation” which takes the part of Actor, with the verbal nominalization of the original predicate verb “hesitate” in the metaphorical form. These instances can be described to provide a powerful and reasonable demonstration of the positive effects of the verbal nominalization in discourse coherence in business English correspondence.

3.2.4 Objectivity

Jespersen [15] reveals that nominalization is more abstract, more profound, and more abstruse due to the omission of some information that the original verb indicates. For instance, to compare with “construct” and “construction”, “construction” reflects no mood, time or action giver, the general three indicators of a verb with meaningfully high appearance. In other words, nominalization takes the process as Thing in a way of impersonality and objectivity.

In business English correspondence, verbal nominalization allows that a process of a predicate verb refers to is taken as Thing to play the role of Participant, Circumstance, and so forth, on the completion of ideational metaphor (one type of Grammatical Metaphor) with the elimination of the mood and personal features of the verb, thus the language of the correspondence presents more objectivity. For instance (verbal nominalization in italics and the original predicate verb in bold type)

(13a) We hope you will reconsider our goods and let us know your acceptance as soon as possible.
(13b) We hope you will reconsider our goods and let us know that you have accepted them as soon as possible.

To compare with (13a) and (13b), it is transparent that the time of the occurrence of the verb (“accept”) indicated by present perfect and the action giver of the verb exhibited by the auxiliary verb (“have”) have been omitted and impersonalized, realizing the ideational metaphor by nominalization of the verb “accept” which transformed from a process in (13b) to a Goal in (13a). After the nominalization of “accept”, the expression “acceptance” is found to be with more objectivity.

4. CONCLUSION

Nominalization has been explored and explained for a long time. Systemic Functional Grammar is on wide acknowledgement to be the perspective with the most maturity and sophistication among the classic linguistic schools to practice an exploration of nominalization based on both the forms and significance of a language. Verbal nominalization is described to “take the process as Thing” [3], is categorized to be one of the most essential devices for the realization of ideational metaphor, one type of Grammatical Metaphor, and is found to assume the role of Participant, Circumstance and so forth, in the incongruent form (alternatively metaphorical form)
from the perspective of Systemic Functional Grammar.

In business English correspondence, according to the statistics in the results of this corpus-based study, verbal nominalization plays an imperative and active role, occupying 2.59% of all tokens in the SEC. That figure is in between of the percentage of verbal nominalizations in the expert language scientific literature (4.34%) [8] and all nominalizations in the normal language fairy tales (0.7%) [16]. The figures designate that the employment of verbal nominalization contributes positively to the degree of conciseness, formality, and objectivity. Moreover, verbal nominalization poses a positive effect on the degree of coherence in business English correspondence by the transference between Theme and Rheme.

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COMPETING INTERESTS
Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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