

Book Review

***A Corpus-Based Study of Nominalizations Predicated by English Deverbal Nouns in –tion* by Michal Szawerna, 2007. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 275. ISBN: 978-3-631-56901-6 (pbk).**

The monograph *A Corpus-Based Study of Nominalizations Predicated by English Deverbal Nouns in –tion* by Michal Szawerna was published by Peter Lang in 2007. The book is based on the author's doctoral dissertation and was published with financial support from the Institute of English Studies at the University of Wrocław.

The main aim of the monograph is to give an account of a full range of nouns derived from verbs by means of the nominalizing morpheme *–tion* based on the British National Corpus. The book consists of an introduction, three main chapters presenting the theoretical framework and the findings of the study (Ch. 1 Theoretical orientation, Ch. 2 A schematic characterization of the processes predicated by the verbs motivating English deverbal nouns in *–tion*, and Ch. 3 A schematic characterization of nominalizations predicated by English deverbal nouns in *–tion*), and a conclusion. It contains a table of contents and a section of references, but no indexes.

Szawerna bases his treatment of nominalizations on the theoretical framework of cognitive grammar formulated by Langacker (1987) and later developed by his many followers. The cognitive theoretical and descriptive constructs used in his study are particularly suitable for the treatment of nominalizations since they enable a functional rather than purely structural approach and point out some of the weak points in the existing formal approaches to nominalization. Although at first sight the phenomenon of nominalization seems to constitute a perfect example for the formal case of autonomous syntax, it is the functional explanation based on a cognitive concept of syntactic classes of noun and verb that allows a more coherent and systematic account of what happens when nominal units are related to verbal/clausal units. Described in purely formal terms, nominalization remains an elusive structure somewhere between a clause and a nominal, eluding a systematic theoretical account. Although Szawerna's monograph is not the first book-length study to focus on English nominalizations using the cognitive approach, it is the first to use a corpus-based approach. Liesbet Heyvaert, for example, previously published her monograph entitled *A Cognitive-Functional Approach to Nominalization in English* (2003). Whereas Heyvaert's book concentrates on a general theoretical-descriptive approach to account for the properties and meanings of specific nominalization kinds, Szawerna's limits itself to English deverbal nouns in *–tion* and has a more empirical thrust with its focus on nominalizations as they appear in a corpus.

In his theoretical introduction, Szawerna gives an account of the basic tenets of cognitive grammar used in this analysis which makes the study more readable for those readers who are not familiar with the theory-specific terminology of cognitive grammar. In the chapter on theoretical orientation, he gives an account of the fundamental thesis of cognitive grammar which describes lexicon, morphology, and syntax as a continuum of a set of symbolic units. He goes on to explain the concept of symbolic units and constructional schemas. Particularly significant for the definition of nominalization is the concept of semantic representations consisting of the cognitive domain (any conceptual facets necessary for the interpretation of the meaning) and the profile (the designatum of the semantic pole of the expression). Based on these concepts, Szawerna uses the notional definitions of nouns as profiling things, (regions in cognitive domains), and verbs as profiling temporal relations. Cognitive grammar here convincingly recognizes an analogy between the verbal distinction of perfective and imperfective processes and the nominal distinction of count and mass nouns.

Nominalizations are explained as a conceptual reification which results in a shift of profile of the expression. The classification of different kinds of nominalizations is based on patterns which vary according to which particular facet of the underlying relational predication is selected for reification and profiling and on the kind of underlying relation predication. Nominalizations thus constitute extensions of their corresponding underlying relations. Szawerna identifies the character of this extension as essentially metonymic, so that the metonymies that link source concepts (the verbal expressions) to target concepts (the nominalized expressions) can be characterized as whole-for-part metonymies; for example, process stands for a participant of this process: cook [V] → cook [N]. In the case of nominalizations involving the use of suffixes, metonymies are less prototypical, depending on the prominence of phonological changes involved.

The second chapter of the book presents a discussion of empirical analysis which deals with the semantic characterization of the verbs underlying deverbal nouns in *-tion*. The processes predicated by these verbs are characterized in terms of twenty-two schemas, abstract process representations extracted from the specific semantic structures. The scope of analysis is extensive, including eleven hundred verbs and giving specific verbs instantiating each schema.

In the third chapter, Szawerna offers a detailed analysis of actual linguistic data extracted from the British National Corpus, more specifically from the subcorpus of academic texts from the realm of natural and pure sciences. The total number of occurrences of deverbal nouns in *-tion* in the selected subcorpus is nearly 75,000. Based on their schematization into tripartite constructional schemas, two component structures (a verb stem together with the nominalizing morpheme *-tion*) and a composite structure (a deverbal noun in *-tion*), the extracted nominalizations are classified into ten different categories: substance nominalizations, episodic nominalizations, landmark nominalizations, change nominalizations, secondary landmark nominalizations, trajector nominalizations, magnitude nominalizations, process nominalizations, qualitative nominalizations, and ability nominalizations. Each category is then analyzed in more detail with regard to mid-level and low-level subschemas. Each section on specific categories also contains a schematic network model of the category, which also shows the degree of entrenchment of each nominalization subcategory and contains complete sets of fully specific actual nouns instantiating the schemas. At the end of the section, the grammatical properties of each category of nominalizations are described.

Through the above analysis and categorization of nominalizations in *-tion*, Szawerna convincingly shows that a cognitive approach offers a coherent and systematic basis for a reliable classification of nominalizations in English, and enables an explanation generalizing across different nominalizing morphemes. A similar approach could also be applied in other languages. The study additionally shows how the cognitive approach based on semantic representations accounts for the grammatical properties of deverbal nouns such as countability and for the distributional facts concerning the different categories of nominalizations in academic discourse in natural and pure sciences, where substance nominalizations prevail with 41% of occurrences.

The book is well written and the empirical study is detailed and based on a profound and extensive account of nominalization. A more specific account of the discourse function of nominalization as a topicalization device is outside the scope of this book, but its findings could also be useful for such an account. The book is at times difficult to read because of the amount of materials contained in the form of figures and lists, and perhaps some of the information included in the second and the third chapters could have been presented separately in an appendix. At the same time it is clear that the book is not intended for the

novice or the general readership, but offers useful insight to the linguist who is interested in corpus-based studies based on cognitive grammar.

References

- Heyvaert, Liesbet. *A Cognitive-Functional Approach to Nominalization in English*. New York, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003.
- Langacker, Ronald W. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Theoretical Prerequisites. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.

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