

12. Functional Nouns

Summary

In most languages, every concept verb and attribute can be expressed by a noun, called respectively a verbal noun or attributive noun. By this means, an action or condition can be the subject or object of a sentence. The syntax of a verbal or attributive noun is the syntax of the corresponding verb or attribute. A verbal noun is general or specific according to whether the corresponding verb is general or specific, that is not relating or relating to a particular event. An attributive noun is specific if it is precisely measured or is the cause or outcome of a particular event; otherwise, it is general.

A specific dynamic verb can be expressed by a specific noun, called an event noun, and an auxiliary verb. In those constructions, the event noun varies according to the nature of the dynamic verb. If the verb expresses physical action, motion, participation, inchoation, or communication, the event noun is verbal. If the verb is an act of creation, the event noun is the object created. If the verb sets up an effect or dependency, the event noun is attributive. If the verb applies an artefact, the event noun is the artefact.

Event nouns can be used to express the reversal of an action, if that is possible.

A dynamic event noun can be used with a converse link to express a participle. A stative event noun can be used with a converse link to express an attribute.

Languages possess nouns, called a role, which describe a function performed by a person in society. Most of these nouns are agents, but a minority are recipients, patients, or objects. They are in general derived from verbs or verbal nouns, but in few cases the verb or verbal noun is derived from the role.

If a verb transfers an object (material or mental), the event noun is called a possession. The function of a possession varies according to the nature of the dative, receptive, or adoptive verb which it expresses.

A connection between an object and a definite recipient, via a possession, identifies the object and is expressed through a genitive link. A connection between a recipient and a definite object, via a possession, identifies the recipient and is expressed through a comitative link. If the recipient is general, the object is general; if the object is general, the recipient may be general or specific.

Terms Defined or Introduced

Verbal noun, attributive noun, role, event noun, participation, communication noun, possession, genitive link, comitative link.

Nouns Describing Verbs and Attributes

All languages possess nouns which describe the action of a process or the quality of a state. They are the process or state in noun form:

“their journey to London” expresses in noun form “They travelled to London”;

“the length of the day” expresses in noun form “The day was long”;

“her speech at the meeting” expresses in noun form “She spoke at the meeting”.

They can be called a *verbal noun* and *attributive noun*. However, these are general terms, and as we shall see later, different types of process and state are described by different types of noun which it is useful to distinguish. Like all other nouns, verbal and attributive nouns can be general or specific:

general: “Travelling to London takes an hour.”

specific: “They made three journeys to London last week.”

general: "The days are increasing in length."
 specific: "The length of the day was 8½ hours."

general: "She likes speaking at these meetings."
 specific: "She made a speech of welcome."

In conventional terminology, the term "abstract noun" is often used, but not in a precise sense. It may mean either a verbal or attributive noun as we have defined it, or any noun which is not "concrete", that is cannot be physically observed. Thus "length" may be classified as abstract, because it is attributive, or not abstract, because it can be measured. "Music" can be classified as abstract, because it cannot be measured, or not abstract, because it is not derived from a verb or attribute. A resolution of this confusion comes from analysis of the different types of transitive, intransitive, and transfer action, and the resultant states, as we attempt in the previous chapters, and more formally in Chapter 15. Different verbal and attributive nouns occur for each of those actions and states. An analysis based on such distinctions is more useful than that between "abstract" and "concrete". The primary distinction is between general and specific nouns, that is those which are not related to a particular event and those which describe a particular event.

Expressions which qualify a verb or attribute are called *adverbials*. For each adverbial there is an attribute of the corresponding verbal or attributive noun:

"Marry in haste and repent at leisure."
 "His marriage was in haste and his repentance was at leisure."

"Sheila was extremely happy."
 "Sheila's happiness was extreme."

General Action Noun

This is a verbal noun which describes the general action of a transitive, intransitive, or transfer verb:

"Eating people is wrong." "Driving a car is tiring."
 "Giving presents is the custom at Christmas."

Many languages can form general action nouns, although the same word is also often used for a specific action noun:

| | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Russian: | "osvobodit" "brodit" | "liberate" "ferment" | "osvobozhdenie" "brozhenie" | "liberation" "fermentation" |
| Finnish: | "tupakoida" "hankkia" | "smoke" "obtain" | "tupakointi" "hankinta" | "smoking" "acquisition" |
| Turkish: | "sormak" "dindirmek" | "ask" "cease" | "sorma" "dindirme" | "asking" "cessation" |
| Indonesian: | "membaca" "cetak" | "read" "print" | "pembacaan" "pecetakan" | "reading" "printing" |

General action nouns enable a general action to be the subject or object of a sentence. In some languages, they are also used in conjunction with auxiliary verbs such as "make" or "give" to construct general verbs. In those cases, no equivalent verb usually exists:

Welsh: "Y mae'r bws hwn yn aros yn y stryd hon bob dydd."
 "This bus stops in this street every day."
 [Is bus this in stopping in the street this every day.]

Japanese:
 "Boku wa yoku kuruma o unten shimasu." "I often drive a car."

Role

A *role* is the animate performer of a defined function. It arises when a particular activity is engaged in systematically, so that a word is required for the participant. It may refer to the agent or (less frequently) the recipient, object or patient. A role is therefore linked to a word for its activity. It generally derives from a verb, but not always; sometimes the role is defined initially and the verb or verbal noun is derived from that. Many roles relate to participation activities (the verbal noun is in brackets):

| | |
|---|--------------|
| “The doctor is treating my illness.” | (treatment) |
| “The dentist is treating my teeth.” | (dentistry) |
| “The scientists researched the problem.” | (research) |
| “The aggressors attacked without warning.” | (aggression) |
| “The rebels rose against the regime.” | (rebellion) |
| “The warriors fought the battle.” | (war) |
| “Louis XIV was king of France from 1643 to 1715.” | (reign) |
| “Franklin D. Roosevelt was President of the United States from 1933 to 1945.” | (presidency) |

The following roles relate to transitive activities:

| | |
|--|------------|
| “The villains concocted their plan.” | (villainy) |
| “The hero rescued Andromeda from the monster.” | (heroism) |
| “The nurse coaxed him back to health.” | (nursing) |
| “The haulier transported the goods to the port.” | (haulage) |

The following roles relate to transfer activities as agent or recipient:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| “The host welcomed the guests.” | (hospitality) |
| “The witness testified in Court.” | (testimony) |
| “The listeners attended to the lecture.” | (listening) |
| “The viewers watched the programme.” | (viewing) |
| “The customers selected their purchases.” | (custom) |
| “The student is learning estate management.” | (study) |

The following roles relate to objects or patients:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| “The patient was treated at the clinic.” | (treatment) |
| “The victims of the earthquake were rescued.” | (-) |

New roles continue to appear from existing verbs or in their own right: “walker” is now a recognised role when it was not a few decades ago; “astronaut” arrived with the space programme.

Russian applies a number of different suffixes to nouns and verbs to form roles; some of these have feminine versions not listed below:

| | | | |
|-----------|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| “ryba” | “fish” (noun) | “rybak” | “fisherman” |
| “pech” | “bake” | “pekar” | “baker” |
| “tkat” | “weave” | “tkach” | “weaver” |
| “pet” | “sing” | “pevets” | “singer” |
| “birzha” | “stock exchange” | “birzhevik” | “stockbroker” |
| “gitara” | “guitar” | “gitarist” | “guitarist” |
| “znat” | “know” | “znatok” | “expert” |
| “uchit” | “teach” | “uchitel” | “teacher” |
| “plyasat” | “dance” (verb) | “plyasun” | “dancer” |

Hungarian forms roles from nouns with the suffixes “-ász”/“-ész” and “-s”:

| | | | |
|----------|----------|------------|---------------|
| “erdő” | “forest” | “erdész” | “forester” |
| “szobor” | “statue” | “szobrász” | “sculptor” |
| “taxi” | “taxi” | “taxis” | “taxi-driver” |

Indonesian forms roles from verbs or verbal nouns with the prefix “pen-” or “pe-”:

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| “menonton” | “view” | “penonton” | “spectator” |
| “mendudaki” | “occupy” | “penduduk” | “inhabitant” |
| “mencetak” | “printer” | “pencetak” | “printer” |
| “berdagang” | “trade” | “pedagang” | “trader” |
| “tenis” | “tennis” | “petenis” | “tennis player” |

Alternatively, verbal nouns for a role are formed in Indonesian from the role, by the prefix “ke-” and suffix “-an”:

| | | | |
|------------|----------|----------------|--------------|
| “anggota” | “member” | “keangotaan” | “membership” |
| “ibu” | “mother” | “keibuan” | “motherhood” |
| “pemimpin” | “leader” | “kepemimpinan” | “leadership” |
| “wanita” | “woman” | “kewanitaan” | “femininity” |
| “dokter” | “doctor” | “kedokteran” | “medicine” |

Roles can be general or specific according to the definitions in Chapter 2.

Attributive Noun

An *attributive noun* is a noun which expresses an attribute in noun form. It enables an attribute to be the subject or object of a sentence:

- “The beauty of the Sussex countryside overwhelmed them.”
- “The height of our house is 8 meters.”
- “The existence of Jane’s medical records is uncertain.”
- “John’s life was full of incident.”
- “He remarked on the newness of the decoration.”

These are the noun forms of the attributes “beautiful”, “high”, “in existence”, “alive”, “new”. In each case, they are specific, since they can be distinguished from other instances of the same attributes:

- “the beauty of the Hampshire countryside”; “the height of your house”; “the existence of Sarah’s medical records”; “James’ life”; “the newness of the furniture”.

If an attribute relates to a class of entities, then the attributive noun possesses the generality of that class:

- “The beauty of the countryside is superior to that of towns.”
- “The height of houses is subject to planning rules.”
- “The existence of patients’ medical records is uncertain.”

An attributive noun can be general if it is distinguished from the absence of the same attribute:

- “Life is full of chance incidents.”
- “Honesty is the best policy.”

Languages generally form attributive nouns from attributes, both physical and non-physical:

| | | | | |
|----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Russian: | “vesělyi” | “gay” | “vesel’e” | “gaiety” |
| | “zdorovyi” | “healthy” | “zdorov’e” | “health” |
| | “grubokii” | “deep” | “grubina” | “depth” |
| Persian: | “xub” | “good” | “xubi” | “goodness” |
| | “dana” | “wise” | “danai” | “wisdom” |

| | | | | |
|-------------|----------|---------|--------------|---------------|
| | “dorošt” | “thick” | “dorošti” | “thickness” |
| Indonesian: | “baik” | “good” | “kebaikan” | “goodness” |
| | “bebas” | “free” | “kebebasan” | “freedom” |
| | “bersih” | “clean” | “kebersihan” | “cleanliness” |

In the following Japanese examples, “hiroi” is “wide” and “muzukashii” is “difficult”:

“Kono uchi no hirosa wa chōdo iidesu.” “The size of this house is just right.”
 [This house-of size _(topic) just is-good.]
 “Nihongo no muzukashisa ga yoku wakarimashita.”
 “I’m now well aware of the difficulty of Japanese.”
 [Japanese-of difficulty _(subject) well understood.]

Event Noun

An *event* is a noun which describes the specific occurrence of a transitive, intransitive, dative, receptive, adoptive, benefactive, or adversative verb. It enables the specific occurrence to be the subject or object of a sentence:

“The blow broke the vase.” “The walk made him feel better.”
 “Her look at the report was cut short.”

Indonesian forms event nouns with the circumfix “pen- -an” or “pem- -an”. In these examples, “menulis” is “write” and “menandatangani” is “sign”:

“Penulisan buku itu memerlukan dua tahun.”
 “The writing of that book took two years.” [Writing book-that need two year.]
 “Kepala negara menyaksikan penandatanganan perjanjian.”
 “The heads of state witnessed the signing of the agreement.”
 [Head state witness signing agreement.]

Many Italian verbs form an event noun with the suffix “-mento”. The corresponding verb is in brackets:

“il riferimento a questo personaggio” “the reference to that person” (“referire”)
 “la premessa di questo ragionamento” “the premise of that reasoning” (“ragionare”)
 “il cambiamento del suo aspetto” “the change in his appearance” (“cambiare”)
 “la perdita dell’orientamento” “the loss of one’s bearings” (“orientare”)
 “il combattimento per il paese” “the fight for one’s country” (“combattere”)

Hungarian verbs form an event noun with the suffix “-s”:

“Nem tetszett neki az éneklés.” “He didn’t like the singing.” (“énekel” = “sing”)
 [Not liked to-him the singing.]
 “Lenne egy pár kérésem.” “I have few requests.” (“kér” = “ask for”)
 [There-would-be a few request-my.]

Maori forms an event noun with the suffix “-tanga” or its variants:

“Ka putu te tamaiti i te mango.” “The child will kill the shark.”
 [Will kill the child _(object) the shark.]
 “te patunga o te mango e te tamaiti” “the killing of the shark by the child”

Event nouns are used by many languages in conjunction with auxiliary verbs such as “make”, “do”, “get”, “give”, or “take” to construct verbs. For example, in Welsh and Irish, they are used to construct an imperfective sentence, and in Welsh also a non-aorist perfective. For other aspects in those languages, for example aorist or conditional, a verb without an auxiliary is used:

English: “She made the journey to Cambridge in two hours.”

“The machine made a loud noise and stopped.” “We committed murder today.”
“The scientists are doing research into the problem.”

Welsh: “Y mae ef yn eistedd ar y gadair yn y gegin.”

“He is sitting on the chair in the kitchen.”

[Is he in sitting on the chair in the kitchen.]

“Yr oeddwn i yn cerdded i lawr y stryd.” “I was walking down the street.”

[Was I in walking down the street.]

“Y mae Gwenith wedi darllen y papur.” “Gwenith has read the paper.”

[Is Gwenith after reading the paper.]

Irish: “Tá sé ag gearradh adhmaid.” “He is cutting wood.” [Is he at cutting of-wood.]

“Bhíomair ag obair ar na bóithre.” “We were working on the roads.”

[Were-we at working on the roads.]

Turkish: “Köprüyü tamir ediyorlar.” “They are repairing the bridge.”

[Bridge repair they-are-making.]

“Bu iki eseri mukayese ediyor.” “He is comparing these two works.”

[These two work comparison he-is-making.]

Persian: “be ma taʔaddi kard” “He oppressed us.” [On us oppression he-made.]

“šah abbas in karvansarara bana karde ast” “Shah Abbas built this caravanserai.”

[Shah Abbas this caravanserai building did is.]

Japanese:

“Nakayama-san wa tenisu o shimasu.” “Mr Nakayama is playing tennis.”

[Nakayama-Mr_(topic) tennis_(object) is-doing.]

“Watashi wa chūgokugo o benkyō shite iru.” “I am studying Chinese.”

[I_(topic) Chinese_(object) study doing am.]

Event nouns are also used, with a preposition or converse link (Chapter 4., Links), to construct a stative or imperfective relation which is the equivalent of an attribute or participle:

“We are at liberty to go home.”

“Our area is under threat from redevelopment.”

“We are in search of a new candidate.”

“Rome was at war with Carthage.”

Arabic possesses an event noun (called a “verbal noun” in grammars) for every verb. They are used instead of a verb after many verbs and conjunctions:

“ʔaṭnāʔa julūsihi ʔalā maqhan” “whilst he was sitting in a coffee house”

[during sitting-his in coffee-house]

“fi ḥālāti wujūdi xaṭarin” “in case any danger exists” [in case of-existence of-danger]

“ʔadamu l-lujūʔi ʔilā l-ṭabībi” “not to visit the doctor” [in-absence of-the-visit to the-doctor]

“li-ʔiʔādāti l-ʔalāqāti baynahā wa baynahu” “to restore relations between her and him”

[for restoration of-the-relations between her and between him]

“yuhaddidu bi-jtiyāzi xaṭṭi waqfi l-nāri” “He threatens to cross the ceasefire line.”

[He-threatens at-crossing of-line of-stand of-the fire.]

Arabic event nouns are also used in adverbial constructions:

“yaṣifu waṣfan daqīqan” “He describes accurately.” [He-describes description accurate.]

“ibtasamat lahu btisāmatan kabīratan” “She gave him a big smile.”

[She-smiled at-him smiling big.]

“xasira xasāratan fādiḥatan” “He lost heavily.” [He-lost losing heavy.]

Event nouns derive from a transitive, intransitive, dative, receptive, or adoptive verb. However, analysis shows that the derivation differs according to the nature of the transitive, intransitive, or transfer action. For each type of action, an action sentence can be constructed in only one way from the event noun. The analysis suggests that there are six different types of action and accordingly six different types of event noun, described further in this chapter:

- The event noun expresses the action of an verb. This is the case with the majority of transitive and intransitive functions, including physical action, transport, participation, and inchoation.
- The event noun expresses the outcome of an action of creation.
- The event noun expresses the state of the patient after action of an verb. This is the case with effect and dependencies.
- The event noun is an appliance employed in the action.
- The event noun is an act of communication.
- The event noun is the possession of the recipient, transferred to him/her by a dative, receptive, or adoptive sentence.
- The event noun is the benefit or adversity experienced by a beneficiary.

Use of an event noun brings at least four advantages in sentence construction:

- (i) Use of auxiliary verbs and attributes enable the event to be expressed in a transparent manner.
- (ii) Because it is specific, a subsequent sentence can refer to the action, occurrence, or possession.
- (iii) By suitable auxiliary verbs, a sentence can be constructed which reverses the event:

“The news alleviated our worry about his health.”
 “The building design reduced the risk from earthquakes.”
 “Mary withdrew the loan from John.”
 “They undid the repair of the bridge.”
 “Bismarck lifted his oppression of Roman Catholics.”

This applies to all effects, dependencies, and possessions, but not all event nouns:

*“She undid her reading of the paper.” *“He undid his cutting of the wood.”

- (iv) The event noun can be qualified, sometimes more clearly than an adverbial can qualify a verb:

“They made a good repair to the bridge.” “She took a brisk walk.”
 “John took a quick look at the report.”

By the nature of an event noun, a verb constructed from it is specific.

Creation Noun

Chapter 6. (The Creation Function) describes a transitive sentence whose resultant is something created:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| “Philip built the house.” | → | “The house is built.” |
| “Anne wrote the letter.” | → | “The letter is written.” |
| “John painted the picture.” | → | “The picture is painted.” |
| “Eleanor carved the sculpture.” | → | “The sculpture is carved.” |

The specific noun which is generally used to express creation is the created object:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| “Philip erected this building.” | “This script is Anne’s letter.” |
| “John made this painting.” | “This carving is by Eleanor.” |

In Indonesian, a creation noun is formed from the creation verb by the suffix “-an”; the transitive prefix “men-” and suffix “-kan” are removed:

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|------------------|
| “menulis” | “write” | “tulisan” | “writing/script” |
| “membangun” | “construct” | “bangunan” | “construction” |
| “melukiskan” | “paint” | “lukisan” | “painting” |
| “mengukir” | “carve” | “ukiran” | “carving” |

Transport Noun

Any movement action, whether transitive or intransitive, can be expressed by a specific verbal noun, which can be called a *transport noun*:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| “They travelled to London.” | “They made a journey to London.” |
| “He arrived at the office on time.” | “His arrival at the office was on time.” |
| “She pushed at the door.” | “She gave a push at the door.” |
| “She turned into the drive.” | “She made a turn into the drive.” |

Russian: “On pokryl eto rasstoyanie odnim pryzhkom.”
 “He covered the distance in one leap.”

A transport noun may be used to express the resultant location:

“He was in advance/in arrears of his time.”

Effect Noun

Chapter 6. (The Effect Function) describes an effect as an involuntary mental or physical state arising from an external cause:

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| “Baggage burdened down the car.” → | “The car was heavy with baggage”. |
| “The insult angered him.” → | “He was angry at the insult”. |

The effect can generally be expressed in the form of a specific attributive noun:

“the burden on the car”; “his anger at the insult”; “our surprise at the results”;
 “the pain to my leg”; “our worry about the future”; “the excitement of the audience”;
 “her happiness at seeing you”; “our disappointment at the outcome”;
 “the pollution of the building”.

This *effect noun* can be employed whenever it is necessary to refer either to the state of the effect or the action which brings it about:

“Baggage placed a burden on the car.” “The insult caused him anger.”

The corresponding action nouns: “burdening”, “angering”, “paining”, “disappointing”, “polluting” etc are not generally used to refer to a specific event.

Dependency Noun

Chapter 6. (The Dependency Function) describes a dependency as a physical state which may arise from some cause in the future:

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|---|--|
| “The storm endangered the boat.” → | “The boat was in danger of sinking.” |
| “Subsidence places the building at risk of collapse.” | → “The building is at risk of collapse.” |
| “The window was opened to the elements.” | → “The window is open to the elements.” |

The dependency can generally be expressed in the form of a specific attributive noun:

“the danger to the boat”; “the risk to the building”; “the opening in the window”;
“the protection of the travellers”; “the defence of the town”; “the dependence of the Society”;
“the threat to health”.

This *dependency noun* can be employed whenever it is necessary to refer either to the state of the dependency or the action which brings it about:

“The storm put the boat in danger.” “Subsidence places the building at risk.”
“The shelter provided the travellers with protection.”
“The castle was the chief defence of the town.”
“The appeal refers to the dependence of the Society on donations.”
“The threat from smoking is on the increase.”

As the above examples show: “at risk”, “in danger”, “under threat”, “at liberty”, a dependency noun is often used as an attribute. However, there are exceptions; “opening” and “closure” are action rather than attributive nouns.

Appliance

Chapter 6. (The Appliance Function) describes a transitive sentence which applies an artefact for its intended purpose:

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| “He brushed the yard.” | → | “The yard was brushed clean.” |
| “She sawed the log in half.” | → | “The log was sawed in half.” |
| “We painted the fence green.” | → | “The fence is painted green.” |
| “She stored the china on the shelf.” | → | “The china was stored on the shelf.” |

The respective appliances are “brush”, “saw”, “paint”, “store”. They are by their nature specific, and can be used to construct a transitive appliance sentence:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| “He used the brush on the yard.” | “She used the saw on the log.” |
| “We applied the paint to the fence.” | “She put the china into store.” |

Similarly, in an agential intransitive sentence, an agent can apply an appliance for his/her own benefit:

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| “She bussed to work.” | → | “She was at work by bus.” |
| “He sponged himself down.” | → | “He was sponged down.” |

The corresponding action nouns: “brushing”, “sawing”, “painting”, “storage”, “bussing”, etc are not generally used to refer to a specific event.

Participation

Chapter 7. (The Participation Function) describes a sentence in which an agent engages in an action towards an object, without altering or affecting it:

“She met her friend.” “We attended the meeting.” “They attacked the enemy.”
“We resisted the proposal.” “I worked on the batch.” “We are seeking Mr Jones.”
“She visited her neighbours.” “They are playing chess.”
“They rebelled against the Government.” “He performed the ceremony.”

These participation actions can in general be expressed by a specific verbal noun, called an *participation*, which can often be used to construct an participation sentence:

“She had a meeting with her friend.” “They launched an attack on the enemy.”
“I started work on the batch.” “We are making a search for Mr Jones.”
“She paid a visit to her neighbours.” “They had a game of chess.”
“Our attendance at the meeting is compulsory.”
“Their rebellion against the Government succeeded.”

“His performance of the ceremony was dignified”.

Specific participation nouns occur frequently in languages, and usually derive from the corresponding participation verb:

Russian: “My dogovorilis’ vstretit’sya pered teatrom.”
“We arranged to meet in front of [the] theatre.”
“Vstrecha byla dlya nikh oboikh neozhidannoi.”
“The meeting was unexpected to both of them.”
[Meeting was for them both unexpected.]
“Bol’she on ne mog soprotivlyat’sya.” “He couldn’t resist any longer.”
[More he not could to-resist.]
“On ne okazal nikakogo soprotivlenie.” “He made no resistance.”
[He not made any resistance.]

Indonesian:
“Mereka menyerang musuh.” “They attacked [the] enemy.”
“serangan terhadap musuh” “[an] attack on [the] enemy”
“Mereka saling mengunjungi.” “The visit each other.” [They each-other visit.]
“kunjungan” “a visit”

Participation nouns are also often used to form participles of the participation verb:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| “The meeting is in session.” | “Britain and France are at peace.” |
| “We are at work on the project.” | “They are in attendance.” |
| “She was in charge of the hospital.” | “He was in service to the King of Prussia.” |

Inchoative Noun

Chapter 11. (The Inchoative Function) describes a sentence whose resultant sentence is that the subject or object engages in or ceases to engage in an action, whether voluntary or involuntary:

“She started to write.” “She continued to write.” “The water stopped boiling.”

Inchoative verbs can be expressed as specific verbal nouns, which can be used to form inchoative sentences:

“She made a start at the writing”; “She showed persistence in writing”;
“The boiling of the water came to an end”.

Persian: “šoru? kardand be jam? šodan” “They began to assemble.”
[Beginning they-made to assembly to-become.]

Hindi: “garmiyā~ agle mahīne me~ śurū ho~ gī”
“The hot weather will begin during next month.”
[Hot-season next month-in beginning will-become.]
“chuttī kal khatm hui” “The vacation finished yesterday.”
[Vacation yesterday end became.]

Communication Noun

Communication (Chapter 8., the Communication Function) is a function in which an agent transfers a statement, proposal, opinion, or enquiry to a recipient. We can distinguish between what is communicated and the manner or process of its communication. What is communicated – the statement, proposal, opinion, or enquiry – is a possession which is transferred to the recipient. Many communication sentences do not refer to the manner of communication, only to what is communicated:

“He described the food as tasty.” “She suggested a walk in the park.”
“We complained about the heat.” “They asked when dinner would begin.”

As we shall discuss further in Chapter 15., what is communicated can be variously analysed as a perception, supposition, opinion, or enquiry. The manner of communication can be additionally expressed:

“He wrote that the food was tasty.” “She spoke to suggest a walk in the park.”
 “We shouted our complaint about the heat.” “The rang to ask when dinner would begin.”
 “It was announced that the train was due.”

This manner of communication can be a separate event noun: “letter”; “speech”; shout”, “call”, which we can call a *communication noun*. As with other event nouns, use of an auxiliary can convert it into a verb:

“His letter said...”; “She made a speech...”; We gave a shout...”; “They made a call...”;
 “The announcement was made...”.

Possession

The majority of relations between an object and a person (called a recipient) are possessive in nature. In Chapters 8. and 9., three types of dynamic sentence (called a *transfer*) are analysed which result in a recipient having access to an object, either material or mental:

- dative sentence, in which an agent or instrument transfers or gives an object to a recipient;
- receptive sentence, in which a recipient receives an object (with or without reference to an agent);
- adoptive sentence, in which an agent takes an object for his/her use or benefit.

The resultant stative relationship between the recipient and the object is expressed by a possession sentence.

We have also noted that in English a dative sentence is often constructed with the auxiliary verb “give”, a receptive sentence with “get”, “gain”, or “receive”, an adoptive sentence with “take”, “find”, or “accept”, and a possession sentence with “have” or “feel”. These auxiliaries connect the recipient to a noun which we can call a *possession*, which in turn is linked to the possessed object, in the construction “recipient-auxiliary-possession-object”. The following examples of corresponding dative, receptive and possession sentences illustrate this point:

| | |
|--|--|
| “John gave possession of the car to Mary.” | “Mary got possession of the car.” |
| “Mary accepted the car.” | “Mary has possession of the car.” |
| “Mary gave a loan of £100 to John.” | “John received a loan of £100.” |
| “John took out a loan of £100.” | “John has a loan of £100 from Mary.” |
| “John gave the information to Mary.” | “Mary gained access to the information.” |
| “Mary took advantage of the information.” | “Mary has use of the information.” |
| “Mary gave John a look at the report.” | “John got a look at the report.” |
| “John took a look at the report.” | “John has sight of the report.” |
| “Mary’s letter gave pleasure to John.” | “John got pleasure from the letter.” |
| “John took pleasure from the letter.” | “John has pleasure in Mary’s letter.” |
| “John’s remarks gave confidence to Mary.” | “Mary got confidence from John’s remarks.” |
| “Mary took confidence from his remarks.” | “Mary has confidence in John’s remarks.” |
| “The menu gave Mary a choice of wines.” | “Mary received a choice of wines.” |
| “Mary took a choice of wines.” | “Mary has a choice of wines.” |
| “Travel gave me an interest in wildlife.” | “I gained an interest in wildlife.” |
| “I found an interest in the wildlife.” | “I have an interest in wildlife.” |

“He delivered the goods to his customer.” “The company received delivery of the goods.”
 “The company took delivery of the goods.” “The company had the goods delivered.”

“The company gave John a gold watch.” “John received a gold watch from the company.”
 “John accepted a gold watch from the company.”
 “John has a gold watch from the company.”

This construction is often possible even when there is a dedicated verb: “own”, “lend”, “use”, “see”, “hear”, etc. Some possession relationships can only be expressed by a possession noun:

“They elected Mrs Jones as our Chairman.” “We gained Mrs Jones as our Chairman.”
 “We adopted Mrs Jones as our Chairman.” “We have Mrs Jones as our Chairman.”

“They sold us a Ford Focus as our car.” “We have got a Ford Focus as our car.”
 “We bought a Ford Focus as our car.” “We have a Ford Focus as our car.”

English does not have a verb for “have as a loan”, “have confidence in” “have as a choice”, “have as a Chairman”, “have as a car” etc. Similar examples can be listed for the categories of possession in Chapter 11.:

“The course gave me facility in German.” “I obtained facility in German from the course.”
 “I tried to acquire facility in German.” “I have facility in German.”

“The bank is obliging me to pay my debts.” “I am being placed under an obligation to pay my debts.”

“I undertake an obligation to pay my debts.” “I have an obligation to pay my debts.”

“My friends gave me encouragement to play tennis”

“I received encouragement to play tennis.”

“I became keen to play tennis.”

“I am keen to play tennis.”

“My job gives me responsibility for debt collection.”

“I received responsibility for debt collection.”

“I took responsibility for debt collection.”

“I have responsibility for debt collection.”

Since a possession is established by a transfer, a part of an object or person is not a possession, but a constituent (Chapter 6., The Constituent Function):

“He has three sisters.” “My hair is white.”

The possession noun has other uses in language. If a different set of auxiliary verbs is applied to it, we can indicate an action which leads to the recipient not having access to the object. Examples are “withdraw” instead of “give”, “lose” instead of “get”, and “reject” instead of “take”. The consequent failure to possess the object is expressed by “lack” or “need”:

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| “Mary withdrew the loan | | | |
| from John”. | } | | |
| “John lost the loan.” | } | → | “John lacks the loan.” |
| “John rejected the loan.” | } | | |

The possession noun can be qualified: “Mary gave John a quick look at the report.” “John took a quick look at the report.” This qualification may be equivalent to an adverbial: “Mary quickly gave John a look at the report.” “John quickly took a look at the report.” However, in other cases it is not equivalent: “Mary sharply gave John a look at the report” is not “Mary gave John a sharp look at the report.” However, “John took a sharp look” is evidently equivalent to “John sharply took a look”. “John got a sharp look” is meaningful while * “John sharply got a look” is not.

Qualification of a possession noun in English therefore qualifies only the adoptive function, and enables a distinction to be made between it and an adverbial which qualifies the action, whether dative, receptive, or adoptive.

All languages include possession nouns in their vocabulary, often deriving verbs from them. The list of Indonesian verbs in Chapter 9. (The Adoptive Function) shows how that language adapts a possession noun to construct an adoptive verb. Indonesian also derives possession nouns from verbs:

| <u>verb</u> | | <u>noun</u> | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| “membalas” | “reply” | “balasan” | “response” |
| “mengecamkan” | “criticise” | “kecaman” | “criticism” |
| “membantu” | “help” | “bantuan” | “help” |
| “menuntut” | “demand” | “tuntutan” | “demand” |
| “mengeluh” | “complain” | “keluhan” | “complaint” |
| “melarang” | “forbid” | “larangan” | “prohibition” |
| “ingin” | “wish” | “keinginan” | “wish” |
| “harus” | “must” | “keharusan” | “necessity” |

Chinese often employs the same word for both the possession noun and the verb:

“Wǒ xīwàng rúcǐ.” “I hope so.”
 “Tā shì wǒde wéiyī xīwàng.” “She is my only hope.”
 “kàn zhàopiàn” “[to] look [at a] photograph”
 “Ràng wǒ kàn yī kàn.” “Let me have a look.” [Let me look a look.]
 “gàosu tāmen zhège xiāoxi” “to inform them of the news” [inform them this news]
 “Xièxie nǐ gàosu wǒ zhètiáo xīnxi.” “Thank you for your information.”
 [Thank you inform me this message.]

Benefit and Adversity

As discussed in Chapter 10., a sentence may express the idea that an object is available to a person, but does not state that it is in his/her possession:

“The bank account is accessible to John.”
 “The view was visible to our friends.”
 “We had the opportunity to see his paintings.”
 “We had the good luck to arrive on time.”
 “He had great success as an estate agent.”
 “She had the advantage of a good education.”
 “This calculation is an example for you.”
 “It was easy/simple for him to write the letter.”
 “It was convenient for him to write the letter.”

These sentences employ a number of different constructions which are also used in the possession sentence. They connect a person in the form of a beneficiary to a word which describes the availability of the object, and which can be expressed with a specific noun: “access”, “visibility”, “opportunity”, “luck”, “success”, “advantage”, “ease”, and “convenience”. These nouns can be called a *benefit*. In other sentences, the benefit is conveyed to the beneficiary by an agent:

“You were very kind to answer my letter so promptly.”
 “She was very generous in allowing him to borrow her car.”
 “He was very polite to his friend in allowing him to stay.”

The benefits in these sentences are: “kindness”, “generosity”, and “politeness”. A sentence in which an agent effects an action to his/her own benefit is a *benefactive adoptive*:

“She took the opportunity to see the paintings.”
 “He took advantage of the offer of a loan.”
 “He accessed his bank account.”

“We took the calculation as an example.”

The majority of sentences which express a connection between an object and a beneficiary do so with the word “for” or its equivalent. In those cases, the benefit is implied under the meaning “for the benefit of”:

“Henry cooked lunch for his family.”
“Sheila brought the accounts to good order for the Society.”
“We bought Simon a bicycle.” “We sold Mary’s car for her.”
“An email for you has just come in.”

Alternatively, the benefactive connection is expressed with a genitive link:

“Henry’s family’s lunch was cooked.”
“Sarah’s garden was warmed up for her.”
“Your email has just come in.”
“James’ back pain was eased.”

A benefit may also be the purpose of an action:

“I came to see you” means: “I came to have the opportunity to see you”;
“They fought for their freedom” means: “They fought to have the advantage of being free”;
“She took the car to be mended” means: “She took the car for the benefit that it is mended”.

A sentence may also express the idea of the disadvantage or misfortune of a person, which prevents him/her having a possession:

“She had the disadvantage of a poor education.”
“We had the misfortune to arrive late.”
“It was hard for him to write the letter.”
“It was inconvenient for him to write the letter.”

This disadvantage or misfortune can be effected by an agent:

“He was very rude in his behaviour towards his friend.”
“Hitler was very cruel in his treatment of the Jews.”

The disadvantage or misfortune can be expressed by a specific noun, called an *adversity*. The adversities in the above examples are “disadvantage”, “misfortune”, “failure”, “difficulty”, “inconvenience”, “rudeness”, and “cruelty”. The person experiencing the adversity is again called a *beneficiary*. In many cases, the adversity is implied under the meaning “to the disadvantage of”:

“Henry’s wife has run away on him.”
“Mary had smoke blown on her.”
“The knife cut him on the hand.”

An adversative adoptive is also possible:

English: “He failed as an estate agent.”
German: “Er hat sich eine Verletzung zugezogen.” “He has incurred an injury.”
[He has to-himself an injury sustained.]

A warranty or insurance is a benefit that may arise or an adversity that may be avoided in the future:

“He guaranteed that the project will be completed in six months.”
“He guaranteed that the project would last no longer than six months.”
“She insured her house against fire for £1 million.”

Genitive Link

When a connection between a recipient and an object, via a possession, has been established, it may be referred to in a subsequent sentence:

- “John’s loan of £100 has been repaid.”
- “Mary’s confidence in John was justified.”
- “Mary’s choice of wines was confirmed.”
- “John’s acquaintance with Shirley has been broken off.”
- “John’s knowledge of the details is useful.”
- “Our teacher Mr Smith is away today.”
- “Our car is being serviced.”

These entities are definite because the recipient is definite. Both the recipient and the possession are needed for the construction:

- (i) The recipient is necessary to identify the entity. “The loan of £100”, “the confidence in John”, “the teacher Mr Smith”, “the car”, while meaningful, are not referenceable without knowing the identification of the recipient “John”, “Mary”, “we”.
- (ii) The possession noun is necessary to the meaning of the entity, which is not conveyed by the recipient and the object alone: “John’s £100”, “Mary’s John”, “Mary’s wines”, “John’s Shirley”, “John’s details”, “our Mr Smith”.

The definite entity which expresses the connection between a recipient and a possession is called a *genitive link*. It has the structure “recipient-possession-object”, and its purpose is to identify the possession. The recipient is a restrictive qualifier of the possession (Chapter 2., Restrictive Qualifier). It does not necessarily imply ownership, but varies with the character of the possession. In fact, it expresses the sentence which, expressly or by implication, set the relationship up. This sentence (here indicated with “←”) may be dative, receptive, or adoptive:

- “My wife Joanna” ← “I married Joanna”.
- “Our house in Acacia Avenue” ← “We bought a house in Acacia Avenue”.
- “Your opinions on politics” ← “You adopted some opinions on politics”.
- “Our accountant” ← “We hired an accountant”.
- “Her boat’s name” ← “She named the boat”.
- “Their reward” ← “They received a reward”.
- “My liking for ice-cream” ← “I took a liking to ice-cream”.
- “His ideas on taxation.” ← “The book gave him some ideas on taxation.”

The expressions “my house”; “your book” do not include the possession noun, and are potentially ambiguous. They could mean “the house where I am living/which I rent/which I own” or “the book which you own/have borrowed/have written”. Such ambiguities may or may not be important, according to the circumstance.

A general possession may be identified by a specific recipient: “His sins were scarlet but his books were read.” However, a specific possession cannot have a general recipient: “the philosopher’s stone” is evidently general.

A genitive link is also used to express the connection between an object or person and a constituent:

“his three sisters”; “my white hair”.

Some languages reflect this distinction by employing different genitive links for a possession and a constituent, which are sometimes called an “alienable” and “inalienable” possessions, although in our terminology only an alienable possession is a possession. For example in Polynesian languages:

- Samoan: “o le solofanua a Eti” “Ted’s horse” [the horse of Ted] (possession)
- “o le ulu o le tama” “the boy’s head” [the head of the boy] (constituent)

The Inuit possession has a suffix “-ut-”. In their culture, a kayak is a constituent, not a possession:

Inuit: “piniartup niqitaa” “the hunter’s meat” [hunter-of meat-(possession)-his]
“piniartup qajaa” “the hunter’s kayak” [hunter-of kayak-his]

In Italian, a genitive link is used to express a possession, not a constituent:

“Il suo negozio è molto redditizio.” “[The] his shop is very profitable.”
*“Lo schermo del televisore era rotto.” “The TV set’s screen was broken.”
[The screen-of-the TV set was broken.]

The second sentence is not correct, and should be:

“Il televisore aveva lo schermo rotto.” [The TV-set had the screen broken.]

Similarly, the following expresses “His eyes are green”:

“Ha gli occhi verdi” [He-has the green eyes],
not *“I suoi occhi sono verdi” [The his eyes are green].

The genitive link exists in all languages, and is expressed by a link word, a case, a rule of word order, or a possessive adjective:

Hindi: “us strī kā beṭā” “that woman’s son” [that woman-of son]
Russian: “dom brata” “my brother’s house” [house of-brother]
Indonesian:
“kantor ayah saya” “my father’s office” [office father me]
Arabic: “ḥiwāru l-ṭuršāni” “dialogue of the deaf” [dialogue the-deaf]
Serbian: “očev kaput” “father’s coat [paternal coat].

The genitive link, being very concise, is also used to identify an transitive or intransitive event noun by reference to the agent:

- “Jane’s essay on linguistics” ← “Jane wrote an essay in linguistics.”
- “Robert’s trip to Cambridge” ← “Robert made a trip to Cambridge.”
- “Jane’s toothache” ← “Jane’s tooth caused her pain.”
- “Peter’s game of chess” ← “Peter played a game of chess.”

However, the majority of these constructions, unlike a possessive genitive link, are ambiguous, because the originating sentence usually contains more than one identifying noun. “Your attack” can mean “the attack on you” or “the attack by you”. “My risk of bankruptcy” can mean “my risk of falling bankrupt” or “my risk of causing someone else to fall bankrupt”.

A genitive link is also used between two inanimate objects. Where one object is part of the other, the expression may be unambiguous:

“the roof of the house”; “the drawer’s handle”.

However, these connections do not derive from a transfer but from a transitive or intransitive sentence, in this case an appliance. A possession must involve an animate recipient:

“The house was supplied with a roof.” “The drawer was supplied with a handle.”

In general, a transitive or intransitive sentence contains more than one identifying noun. For that reason, a genitive link between them is more likely to be ambiguous:

“the vote on the motion”, not *“the motion’s vote”;
“the paint on the cupboard”, not *“the cupboard’s paint”.

The first could also mean “the vote for the motion”. The second could also mean “the paint in the cupboard”.

Comitative Link

A genitive link is used to identify a possession or an event noun. Languages also need to identify a recipient from the possession that she or he has, and this is done with a *comitative link*, expressed by the link word “with” or (for the absence of a link) the word “without”, or their equivalents. “With” can be understood as meaning “having”:

“the lady with the little dog”; “the man with a ginger moustache”;
“the passenger without a ticket”.

A comitative link is only meaningful if the possession is definite. In the above phrases, this means that there is only one little dog, or ginger moustache, or only one person without a ticket. If the possession is general, it must therefore be a defined class which refers to the recipient, whether specific or general:

“a man of property”; “the three-toed sloth”.

A comitative link can also act between two inanimate nouns on the same principle, but only where the connection between them is unambiguous. Generally, this only arises when one noun is part of the other:

“the house with two garages”; “the car without a number-plate”.

Hungarian is unusual in having a concise form of the comitative link, expressed by attaching the suffixes “-s” or “-ú”/“-ű” to the possession:

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
| “családos férfi” | “man with a family” [family-having man] | (“család” = “family”) |
| “erdős terület” | “wooded area” | (“erdő” = “forest”) |
| “kertes ház” | “house with a garden” [garden-having house] | (“kert” = “garden”) |
| “jó étvágyú beteg” | “patient with a good appetite” | (“étvágy” = “appetite”) |
| | [good appetite-having patient] | |
| “kék szemű kisfiú” | “blue-eyed boy” [blue-eyes-having boy] | (“szem” = “eyes”) |

Inuit employs the suffix “-lik” (“provided with”):

“iniartuq unaalik” “a hunter with a harpoon” [hunter harpoon-with]
“illu qarmalik” “a peat-walled house” [house peatwall-with].