# APPLYING GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR TO ACADEMIC WRITING

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**Abstract -** The term Grammatical Metaphor (GM) was first launched by Halliday (1985) in "*An Introduction to Functional Grammar*". GM has been studied and commonly used in various types of discourse. The more GM is employed in writing, the more formal and academic the writing is. Language learners often face long and complex nominal phrases. To comprehend them is not easy, and to use them in writing is more difficult. This paper is to present some basic constructions of GM based on the theory of Systemic Functional Grammar. Thus, firstly, the paper gives a brief account of GM so that we can have an overview of the term GM. Secondly, types of GM are provided to establish the theoretical frame for the paper. Lastly, some common constructions of GM are suggested to help writers or language learners master them and use them in writing most efficiently.

**Key words -** grammatical metaphor; Functional Grammar; Halliday; clause; metaphorical.

## 1. Rationale

Written language displays a much higher frequency of lexical items or content words to the total amount of words used than grammatical items. The two following sentences have the 'same' meaning but the frequency of lexical items and grammatical ones is employed differently.

1.a: Investment in a rail facility implies a long-term commitment. And

1.b: If you invest in a rail facility, this implies that you are going to be committed for a long term.     [5, p.61]

The sentence 1.a displays seven lexical items, covering 70% the total words and three grammatical ones, accounting for 30%, while the sentence 1.b displays seven lexical items (35%) and thirteen grammatical one (65%).

The two sentences above show that language in a written text is more condensed than that in a spoken one. In other words, the difference between written and spoken language is density. What makes a written text so dense is GM in which nominalization is 'the most powerful device in creating grammatical metaphor' [6]. The more grammatical metaphor a discourse has, the more formal and academic it is. Halliday [5, p. 94-95] claims that written language is associated with the use of GM and is more characteristic of written language than spoken language. He points out that GM includes two types: Metaphor of mood (including Modality), and Metaphor of Transitivity. Semantically, these are respectively Interpersonal Metaphor and Ideational Metaphor. However, in this article we just focus on metaphor of transitivity where nominalization is the key for creating grammatical metaphor.

GM occurs popularly in documents for language learners such as in IELT, CAE documents, etc. in rewriting the sentence without changing the original one, in many other academic documents. How do English learners apply GM to their academic writing? This paper is to suggest some common constructions to write an academic paper most effectively.

## 2. Grammatical Metaphor

The notion of grammatical metaphor is described by Halliday in "*Introduction to Functional Grammar*" in *Chapter 10 - Beyond the Clause: Metaphorical Modes Of Expression*. He places his introduction of the term GM in a more general framework outlining traditionally recognized types of 'rhetorical transference' or 'figure of speech'; metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche.

Halliday [6, p.342] defines grammatical metaphor as 'variation in the expression of a given meaning.' The term 'metaphor' in 'grammatical metaphor' is different from metaphor in traditional view that is used for something resembling that which it usually refers to. Metaphor in the traditional view is usually described as variation in the use of words: a word is said to be used with a transferred meaning. However, we are looking at it from the other end, asking not "how is this word used?" but "how is this meaning expressed?" [6, p.341].

A meaning may be realized by a selection of words that is different from that which is in some sense typical or unmarked.

Ravelli [1, p.40], when exploring the role of GM in written discourse, claims "[…] one choice in the semantics may have two (or more) lexicogrammatical realizations" and GM is "an alternative lexicogrammatical realization of a semantic choice".

Moreover, Thomson [15, p.165] defines GM as "the expression of a meaning through a lexico-grammatical form which originally evolved to express a different kind of meaning. The expression of the meaning is metaphorical in relation to a different way of expressing the 'same' meaning which would be more congruent." Thomson further points out that there is no basic difference between lexical and grammatical metaphor. Lexical grammar then can be considered to be a sub-category of GM. He assumes that the metaphorical way of expressing the meaning is intuitively closer to the events in the external world: instead of representing the process of 'comparing' as a thing from which something else can 'emerge' of its own volition, it represents it as an event involving human participants which results in those participants understanding a phenomenon. The essential distinction between congruent and incongruent is that the former is 'closer to the state of affairs in the external world' than the latter.

Martin (2004) places GM into analyzing discourse of text and considers GM 'as a tool for packing meaning' [11, p. 401]. GM is the real 'gatekeeper' in which meanings

are packed for grammatical realization. Martin's most noteworthy contribution to GM is adding textual metaphor as the third type of GM to Halliday's original types of ideational and interpersonal metaphor.

## 3. Types of Grammatical Metaphor

In ideational GM, the shift does not only fall into any isolated elements but it always occurs in clusters. For example, when the type 2.i occurs (from verb to noun: from Event to Thing), it entails other changes such as from noun to possessive deictic, from adverb to adjective, etc. In this article we summarize these 13 types of GM in grammatical shift as follows:

| Type | Grammatical shift from | to | Type | Grammatical shift from | to |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Adjective | Noun | 8 | Preposition (al phrase) | Verb (i.Minor process → Process; ii.Location, Extent &c → Process) |
| 2 | Verb | Noun (i.Event→ Thing, ii.Auxiliary → Thing, iii.Catenative → Thing) | 9 | Conjunction | Verb |
| 3 | Preposition (al) | Noun (i.Minor process →Thing ii.Location, Extent & c → Classsifier) | 10 | Conjunction | Preposition(al phrase) (i.Conjunctive→ Minor process, ii.Conjunctive→ Location, Extent & c) |
| 4 | Conjunction | noun | 11 | + Noun | ([x] the fact/ Phenomenon |
| 5 | Verb | Adjective (i.Event → Epithet/Classifier; ii.Auxiliary → Epithet/Classifier, iii.Catenative → Epithet/Classifier) | 12 | + Verb | (i.+verb; ii. +(causative & c)verb iii.+ (phasal & c) verb2) |
| 6 | Preposition (alphrase) | Adjective (i.Minor → Epithet/Classifier, ii..Auxiliary → Epithet/Classifier, iii.Catenative → Epithet/Classifier) | 13 | i. Noun ii. Adverb <br><br> Prepositional phrase Adverb Preposition al phrase | (various) (a) Qualifier, (b) Possessive Deictic, (c) Classifier, adjective, adjective, (various) (various) |
| 7 | Conjunction | Adjective | | | |

However, we also recognize that the major shift takes place at two types: Positive GM and Negative GM. Halliday [7, p.250] states that the pervasive of the types of GM listed in the table above are type 1 and 2: «quality => thing » and « process => thing ». Some of the shifts can occur independently while others occur only under the driving force of the shift of type 1 and 2.

### 3.1. Positive GM

Positive GM means the original form of process/quality isnominalized (NML) through using derivation of the process/quality. We here give five basic structures.

1) Pattern 1:

| Congruent | S | V | | (O) | (Adv) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Function | Part. | Pro. | | Part. | Cir. |
| Metaphorical | S | V-lex | (Adj) | NML | (Prep. + O) |
| Function | Part. | Pro. | Epithet | Thing | Cir. |
| | | Range | | | |
| Type: I&III | | 12i | 13ii | 2i | |

Notes: S: Subject; V: verb; O: Object; Adv: Adverb; Adj: Adjective; Part.: Participant; Pro.: Process; Cir.: Circumstance; NML: Nominalization

(1)We are **no longer interested** in unidirectional importation of goods and machinery from Europe. [13, p. 336]

| Congruent | S | V | | (Adv) | Adj |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Function | Part. | Pro.: relational | | Cir. | Epithet |
| Metaphorical | (Prep.) | Possessive | (Adj.) | NML | |
| Function | | Possessive | Epithet | Thing | |
| Type: I&II | | 13i(b) | 13ii | 1 | |

=> We no longer take any interest in unidirectional importation of goods and machinery from Europe.

(2)The regular annual meeting of the middle regatta Association will be **arranged** at the New York Athletic Club Ma.

=>***The arrangement*** *of* the regular annual meeting of the middle regatta Association will be **made** at the New York Athletic Club Ma.

(3) Roentgen was awarded the first Nobel Prize in physics in 1901, but The Times **further** *didn't mention* it until his obituary was publicized in 1923.

=> Roentgen was awarded the first Nobel Prize in physics in 1901, but The Times **made no further** *mention* of it until the publication of his obituary in 1923.

In this structure, the lexical verb is a verb has no meaning but serves as a grammatical word in the sentence. Each noun has its lexical verb, so learners must learn them by heart.

2) Pattern 2:

| Congruent | S | V | | (O) | (Adv) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Function | Part. | Pro. | | Part. | Cir. |
| Metaphorical | There | be | (Adj) | NML | Prep. + O | Prep. + O |
| Function | | Pro. | Epithet | Thing | Cir. | Cir. |
| Type: I&III | | 12i | 13ii | 2i | 13i(a) | |

(4) The cost of living has **increased considerably** in the last few years.

=>There has been a **considerable increase** in the cost of living in the last few years.

(5) The value of Sterling has **fallen considerably** in the past week.

=>There has been **a considerable fall** in the value of Sterling.

(6) Next month the ticket will **undoubtedly** be not as cheap as they are now.

=>There is no **doubt** that tickets will be more expensive next month.

In the structure "There be + NML…", not only are verbs nominalized but both adjectives and adverbs are nominalized as well. Subject now is turned into Object after a preposition. Thus, learners must choose an appropriate preposition after the Object.

 3) Pattern 3:

(7) I was **amazed** when Eva got into university, given the fact that she hadn't worked hard at school. [1, p.277]

=>To my **amusement** Eva got into university despite the fact that she hadn't worked hard at school.

(8) On a recent visit to Kew Gardens (Sept) **I was surprised** to see four parrots flying free in the gardens.

=>On a recent visit to Kew Gardens (Sept), **to my surprise**, four parrots were flying free in the gardens.

(9) By **being absent so often**, Paul failed the examination.

=>**Paul's frequent absence** cost him his chance of passing the examination.

The subject in the structure 3 now is transformed into a possessive adjective to modify the NML from a verb or an adjective.

 4)  Pattern 4:

| Congruent | Conjunctive | S | V | | (O) | (Adv) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Function | | Part. | Pro. | | Part. | Cir. |
| Metaphorical | Prep. phase | Possesive | Adj. | NML | (Prep. + O) | |
| Function | Relator | Possesive | Epithet | Thing | Cir. | |
| Type: I&III | 10i | 13i(b) | 2i | | | |

10) Naturally, his farther agrees, **though he feels rather doubtful** about the limits of the form.

=>Naturally, his farther agrees, **despite his doubts** about the limits of the form.

(11) *As soon as we receive your check*, we will send the goods to you.

=>*On receipt of your check*, we will send the goods to you.

(12) *Although Jimmy was the stronger of the two*, his attacker soon overpowered him. [24, p.161]

=>*Despite his superior strength*, Jimmy's attacker soon overpowered him.

5) Pattern5:

| Congruent | S1 | V1 | S2 | V2 | O2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Function | Part. | Pro. | Part. | Pro. | Part. |
| Metaphorical | S1 | V(1) | Possesive | NML | (Prep. + O2) |
| Function | Part. | Pro. | Possesive | Thing | |
| Type: I&II | | | 13i | 1/2i | |

This pattern often occurs in case of the first clause with a reporting verb or with projection sequences. However, it also occurs in any types of verbs, transforming two or more clauses into one clause.

(13) Judge Richard Leon declared that the mass collection of metadata probably **violates** the fourth amendment, which prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures, and was "almost Orwellian" in its scope.

=>) Judge Richard Leon declared the **violation** of the mass collection of metadata probably **against** the fourth amendment, which prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures, and was "almost Orwellian" in its scope.

(14) **It's possible** that the burglars **got into** the building by forcing open a fire exit.

=> *The burglars **may have gained access to** the building* by forcing open a fire exit.

(15) They shredded the documents before they **departed f**or the airport.

=>They shredded the documents before their **departure** for the airport. (10i + 13i(b) + 2i + 13ii)

It can be seen that the structure 5 allows learners to shorten two or more clauses into one sentence. The shift is rather more complex. It requires learners to understand the meaning of the clauses clearly to make the sentence have the same meaning as the original one.

### 3.2. Negative GM

Negative GM means the metaphoric shift from different elements (an adverb, a conjunction, modal adverbs, a preposition, etc.). In negative GM form, another noun as a Thing that is somehow synonymous with the different elements is used to replace them to express the same meaning as that of the original form.

1) Adverb NML   ⟶   (13ii)

(16) They also needto keep the money rolling in. Understandably, perhaps, they **sometimes** overstate their arguments.

=>They also need to keep the money rolling in. Understandably, perhaps, **there are some occasions** they overstate their arguments

The adverb *sometimes* is synonymous with *occasionally* that is derived from the noun *occasion.* Here the use of the determiner *some* and the noun *occasion*to is made to express the meaning of the adverb *sometimes.*

2)  A Verb   ⟶   NML(*borrowed*) (2i)

(17)   You could be arrested for **not giving** a breath

sample to the police.

=>**Refusal** to give a breath sample to the police could led to your arrest

The verb phrase *not giving* does not have a noun form from which the noun ***Refusal*** is borrowed to be nominalized to express the meaning of **not giving**. We consider some more examples below.

(18)    Our plane **takes off** at 10:00 a.m.

=>Our plane's **departure** time is 10:00 a.m.

(19) The committee said they **liked** the first proposal best.

=>The committee expressed a **preference** for the first proposal best.

3)  A Phrase ⟶ NML (x)

(20) **Something must be done quickly** to solve the problem of homelessness.

=>**Urgent action** must be taken to solve the problem of homelessness.

(21) Australia's free trade pact with China won't **feel like** freedom for workers.

=> Australia's free trade pact with China won't **be in the right mood** for freedom for workers.

In this structure, NML is not derived from a verb, an adjective or an adverb but from the whole meaning of the phrase or a clause. A nominal phrase that has the same meaning as the phrase or the clause is 'borrowed' to fulfill the meaning.

4)  A Preposition ⟶ NML (10i)

(22) By the 1920s architects throughout Europe were **against** the conditions created by industrialization.

=>By the 1920s architects throughout Europe **raised objection over** theconditions created byindustrialization

(23) **Apart from** Philip, everyone else in the meeting was a party member.

=>**With the exception of** Philip, everyone else in the meeting was a party member.

Besides the structures given above, we also find out that GM occurs in various structures in sentence transformation**.**

(24) The more **proficient** he is, the more he **likes** the games.

=>His **fondness** for the game increases with his **proficiency**.

(25) English spellings don't match the sounds **they are supposed** to represent. It's time to change.

=> English spellings don't match the sounds **their duty** is to represent. It's time to change.

(26) John was **shocked** to hear that he had failed his driving test.

=>It came as **shock** to John to hear that he had failed hisdriving test.

(27) The reasonswere varied; some of the women alluded to demanding work schedules that made having a child undesirable, others to the fact that they simply **don't feel like** having a child.

=>The reasons were varied; some of the women alluded to demanding work schedules that made having a child undesirable, others to the fact that they simply **have no desire** for having a child.

## 4. Conclusion

Briefly, owing to the extensive change of the structures and the big operation of nominalization as a grammatical metaphor device, we can generate various constructions with nominalization to make different expressions that have the same meaning as the meaning of the original form. English learners enjoy benefit of the power of nominalization to make an effective use of GM in their writing.

Besides positive GM, negative GM takes an important role in transforming a word, a phrase and a clause into another structure without changing the basic meaning of the original form. Thanks to negative GM, English learners can use another noun to replace other elements to do their writing more academically and metaphorically.

Apparently, the list of GM types listed in the above table, to some extent, does not exactly fit the variation of expression of a given meaning in reality. And the patterns that we have suggested above do not cover all the variations and all the metaphorical shifts of language. Language learners and users can consider those constructions to be a way of applying GM in their writing conveniently and effectively.

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