

GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR AND THE UNIVERSAL LAW OF PARTICIPANT REALIGNMENT IN VERBAL PROCESSES

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Volume 10

No. 1

March 2026

Page 64-79

Abstract

This study represents the culmination of a decade-long investigation into English transitivity patterns, identifying a proposed "Universal Law" of participant realignment within the Symbolic World of Verbal processes. Building on earlier studies of Material processes (Ismail, 2020) and Mental processes (Ismail & Dahlia, 2024), the research addresses a persistent gap in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) regarding the behavior of Verbal participants during the unpacking of grammatical metaphor. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, seventeen data instances involving the delexicalized (light) verbs make, give, and have were extracted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). These examples were analyzed through transitivity analysis to trace shifts from non-congruent (metaphorical) to congruent (literal) realizations. The analysis reveals a consistent, robust, and stable tripartite realignment pattern: the metaphorical Range restores the primary Verbal Process, while associated qualifiers and prepositional phrases realign as Circumstances and Receivers, respectively. This pattern indicates a distinctive transactional complexity in the Symbolic domain, differentiating Verbal processes from the simpler bipartite realignment patterns previously observed in the Material and Mental domains. By integrating these findings with prior longitudinal data, the study demonstrates that participant realignment constitutes a stable, predictable, and cognitively grounded linguistic phenomenon. Overall, the research contributes to the systematic mapping of the English transitivity system and proposes a unified explanatory framework for how grammatical metaphor reorganizes experiential meaning across major process types. These findings offer theoretical implications for SFL and practical relevance for linguistic analysis and pedagogy.



Keywords: Grammatical Metaphor; Participant Realignment; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Transitivity; Verbal Process; Nominalization.

Cite this as: Ismail, Dede., Dahlia, Anum. (2026). Grammatical Metaphor and the Universal Law of Participant Realignment in Verbal Processes. *English Journal Literacy Utama*. <https://doi.org/10.33197/ej lutka.vol10.iss1.2026.2655.455>

Article History:

Received: 12 January 2026; Revised: 9 February 2026; Accepted: 6 March 2026

INTRODUCTION

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as pioneered by M. A. K. Halliday, provides a framework for understanding language not merely as a system of formal rules but as a strategic resource for meaning-making (Matthiessen, Teruya, & Lam,

2019). Within this framework, the concept of grammatical metaphor represents one of the most significant developments in functional grammar. Grammatical metaphor refers to a shift in the typical relationship between semantic meaning and grammatical form, whereby meanings that are congruently realized through one grammatical structure are reconstrued through another (Yang, 2020). In ideational grammatical metaphor, processes that would normally be realized as verbs may instead be reconstrued as nouns through nominalization. Such reconstrual allows language users to objectify experience by transforming dynamic processes into conceptual entities that can be categorized, measured, and debated in discourse (Xie & Zhang, 2024).

Within systemic functional linguistics, the study of grammatical metaphor has been central to understanding how language evolves to accommodate increasingly complex forms of knowledge representation. As argued by M. A. K. Halliday and later elaborated by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, grammatical metaphor allows speakers and writers to reorganize experiential meaning in ways that support abstraction, technicality, and information density. This process is particularly visible in academic discourse, where dynamic processes are frequently reconstrued as nominal entities that can function as participants within clause structures.

Despite the extensive literature on nominalization and grammatical metaphor, relatively little attention has been given to how participant roles are reorganized during the transition from metaphorical to congruent realizations. While previous research has described nominalization as a mechanism for increasing textual cohesion and conceptual density, fewer studies have attempted to identify systematic patterns governing how participants realign when metaphorical constructions are unpacked. The present study addresses this gap by proposing a model of participant realignment that operates across multiple process types within the transitivity system.

The Concept of Participant Realignment

The primary challenge in studying grammatical metaphor lies in the realignment of participants. When a clause shifts from a congruent state (e.g., "The president announced the news") to a metaphorical state (e.g., "The president made an announcement of the news"), the internal architecture of the transitivity system undergoes a profound transformation. While the primary participant—such as the Actor, Senser, or Sayer—often remains stable, the secondary participants must find a new "landing zone" within the nominalized structure.

Previous literature has often treated these shifts as isolated occurrences. However, the current research trajectory argues that these realignments are governed by a Universal Law. This law suggests that across all three primary worlds of experience—the Material (Doing), the Mental (Sensing), and the Verbal (Saying)—the grammar utilizes a consistent mechanism to manage the shift from process to participant.

The Longitudinal Research Trajectory (2020-2026)

This paper represents the culmination of a six-year academic journey aimed at codifying this Universal Law. This trajectory began in 2020 with an investigation into Material Processes, focusing on how physical actions are objectified. In that study (Ismail, 2020), it was discovered that nominalized actions consistently realign into a

Scope/Goal structure. Following this, the research expanded in 2024 to address the Mental World (Ismail & Dahlia, 2024). This second phase proved that internal sensing, when nominalized, realigns into a Phenomenon, demonstrating that our internal thoughts are grammatically treated with the same "thing-ness" as physical objects. However, a critical gap remained in the "Symbolic World" of Verbal Processes. While communication is central to human existence, the transitivity realignment involved in "saying" is uniquely complex due to the presence of content (Verbiage), targets (Target), and recipients (Receiver). Without an analysis of the Verbal World, the Universal Law of Participant Realignment would remain incomplete.

The objective of the Current Study

The current 2026 study addresses this gap by analyzing 17 data points from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The study specifically interrogates the "Triple-Operator System"—the verbs *make*, *give*, and *have*—which serve as the semantic placeholders for nominalized speech acts. The research seeks to answer how these operators facilitate the shift from a dynamic verbal process to a nominalized Range, and how that Range realigns upon unpacking. By completing this final pillar of the trajectory, this research aims to provide a definitive, predictive model of transitivity. This model is essential not only for theoretical linguistics but also for pedagogical applications, helping students and academic writers master the "heavy" nominal style required in professional and scientific discourse.

The present study addresses this gap by examining seventeen instances drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The analysis focuses on the role of the so-called "Triple-Operator System"—the light verbs *make*, *give*, and *have*—which frequently function as semantic carriers for nominalized speech acts in instances of Grammatical Metaphor. The study investigates how these operators facilitate the shift from a congruent verbal process to a nominalized Range and how this Range is subsequently reinterpreted when the metaphorical construction is unpacked into its congruent realization.

By examining these patterns, the research seeks to extend previous investigations of participant realignment in transitivity structures and to contribute to a more systematic account of metaphorical reconstrual in verbal processes. In doing so, the study aims to advance the theoretical understanding of transitivity within systemic functional linguistics while also offering insights relevant to pedagogical contexts, particularly in supporting students and academic writers in managing the dense nominal style characteristic of professional and scientific discourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Systemic Functional Linguistics and Transitivity

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which conceptualizes language as a network of interrelated systems through which speakers and writers make meaning choices (M. A. K. Halliday & Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, 2014; Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, Kazuhiro Teruya, & Marilyn Lam, 2019). Within the ideational metafunction, the Transitivity system provides the principal grammatical resource for construing human experience. This system categorizes events and states into different process types, each associated

with specific participant roles. Traditionally, SFL distinguishes six process types—Material, Mental, Verbal, Relational, Behavioral, and Existential—through which experiential meanings are realized in the clause.

However, in many contemporary discourse contexts, particularly in academic and media registers, these congruent configurations are frequently restructured through the use of Grammatical Metaphor. Such metaphorical reconstrual allows experiential meanings to be realized through alternative grammatical forms, thereby creating a divergence between semantic meaning and grammatical expression. As Thomas Bloor and Bloor (2004) note, grammatical metaphor introduces a form of tension between what is happening at the level of meaning and how that meaning is grammatically encoded.

2. Contemporary Perspectives on Metaphoric Shifts

Recent scholarship in Systemic Functional Linguistics has emphasized that the realization of semantic categories through non-congruent grammatical forms serves important functional purposes in discourse. For instance, Lise Fontaine (2017) and Tom Bartlett (2023) argue that the use of Grammatical Metaphor is not simply stylistic variation but a resource for organizing and managing information flow in complex texts. In particular, metaphorical reconstrual allows processes to be realized as nominal elements, thereby enabling them to function as discourse participants that can be introduced, tracked, and elaborated across stretches of discourse. Within the verbal domain, this mechanism is evident in constructions such as *make a claim* rather than *claim*, where the nominalized element (*claim*) becomes an entity that can subsequently serve as a point of reference within the evolving discourse structure.

Similarly, the work of J. R. Martin, Zhengdao Wang, and Yongyan Zhu (2022) highlights the central role of Nominalization in the development of academic literacy, noting that the ability to reconstrued processes as entities is a defining characteristic of technical and scholarly registers. Extending this perspective to the verbal domain, the present study examines how metaphorical constructions enable speech acts to be encoded as nominalized participants that can be maintained and manipulated within discourse. In doing so, the study builds on earlier findings reported in Ismail (2020) and Ismail and Dahlia (2024), which suggest that metaphorical reconstrual across different process types involves systematic patterns of participant realignment within the transitivity system.

3. Ideational Grammatical Metaphor and Nominalization

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, ideational Grammatical Metaphor is commonly realized through Nominalization, whereby a process that is congruently expressed as a verb is reconstrued as a nominal element functioning as a participant within the clause. This transformation entails not merely a shift in word class but a reconfiguration of the clause's experiential structure and the redistribution of participant roles (Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, Kazuhiro Teruya, & Marilyn Lam, 2019). Within SFL scholarship, nominalization has long been recognized as a powerful resource for constructing specialized forms of discourse, particularly in academic and technical registers (J. R. Martin & David Rose, 2021). Through nominalization, dynamic processes may be reconstrued as conceptual entities that can be classified, evaluated, and manipulated within discourse. This reconstrual enables greater

informational density, as nominal groups can accommodate extensive modification, and it allows processes to participate in complex logical relations within extended argumentation (Brian Yang, 2020).

4. The Longitudinal Trajectory: The "Universal Law" (2020–2026)

The present study forms part of a longitudinal research trajectory investigating how nominalized processes behave within English transitivity structures. Across several studies conducted between 2020 and 2026, a consistent pattern has emerged suggesting the existence of what is here termed the Universal Law of Participant Realignment.

This proposed principle suggests that when a process is downranked into a participant role through nominalization, it tends to occupy the Range or Scope position in the metaphorical clause before realigning into its congruent participant role when the metaphor is unpacked. The development of this hypothesis can be traced through three research phases.

4.1. Phase I: Material Realignment (Ismail, 2020)

The first phase investigated material processes, which represent actions and events in the physical world. The 2020 study observed that when a material process such as *pay* or *move* is nominalized into *payment* or *movement*, the clause typically requires a semantically depleted verb, often referred to as an operator (e.g., *make*, *take*, or *have*).

Finding

The nominalized process consistently functions as a Scope within the clause.

Realignment

When the metaphorical construction is unpacked, this Scope realigns into a Goal, restoring the congruent material process structure.

Significance

This pattern suggests that physical actions are metaphorically construed as transferable or manipulable entities, effectively transforming dynamic processes into conceptual “commodities” within the clause.

4.2. Phase II: Mental Realignment (Ismail & Dahlia, 2024)

The second phase extended the investigation to mental processes, which represent acts of sensing, perceiving, and thinking. Despite the inherently abstract nature of internal experience, the 2024 study demonstrated that the same realignment pattern observed in material processes also occurs in the mental domain.

Finding

When mental processes such as *feel* or *think* are nominalized into *feeling* or *thought*, they typically occupy the Range position within the metaphorical clause.

Realignment

When the clause is unpacked, the Range realigns into the Phenomenon, restoring the congruent mental process configuration.

Significance

This pattern suggests that the human mind grammatically externalizes internal experience, allowing thoughts and feelings to be treated as objects that can be possessed, exchanged, or evaluated (e.g., *I had a thought*).

4.3. The Missing Link: Verbal Processes and the Symbolic World

While the patterns for material and mental processes have been established, verbal processes present a more complex case. Verbal processes occupy an intermediate position between the material and mental domains. They involve physical action (the production of sound) while simultaneously projecting mental content in the form of ideas or meanings.

A typical verbal process involves:

- **Sayer** – the source of the speech act
- **Verbiage** – the content of what is said
- **Receiver** – the participant to whom the speech is directed
- **Target** (in some cases) – the entity affected by the speech act

Previous research has noted that verbal processes are frequently nominalized in professional and institutional discourse, for example *give an explanation* instead of *explain*. However, a systematic account of how Verbiage, Target, and Receiver realign within nominalized constructions has not yet been fully developed.

The present study aims to address this gap by examining how verbal processes behave within the broader realignment principle identified in earlier phases of the research.

4.4. The Triple-Operator System (Make, Give, Have)

The current study identifies three specific verbs—make, give, and have—as the primary operators for verbal realignment. These verbs are often dismissed as "light verbs" in traditional grammar, but in SFL, they are understood as functional markers that determine the "flavor" of the metaphorical realization:

MAKE: Used for the creation of a symbolic artifact (Data 1–4).

GIVE: Used for the transactional transfer of information (Data 5–13).

HAVE: Used for the experiential sharing of a verbal event (Data 14–17).

By investigating these three operators, the current research aims to provide the final evidence needed to confirm the Universal Law of Participant Realignment as a totalizing principle of English transitivity.

5. Historical Context: From Congruence to Metaphorical Realignment

Understanding the significance of participant realignment requires situating it within the broader development of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Since the early formulation of the theory, researchers have been concerned with how human experience is reconfigured through grammatical choices.

5.1. The Nominalizing Tendency in Scientific Discourse

The shift from verbal to nominal forms of expression is not merely a modern linguistic development; it has long been associated with the evolution of scientific discourse. Research in systemic functional linguistics has shown that nominalization enables processes to be reconstrued as abstract entities, allowing them to function as conceptual objects within scientific reasoning (Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, Kazuhiro Teruya, & Marilyn Lam, 2019; J. R. Martin & David Rose, 2021). Through such reconstructions, dynamic processes—such as *the water boiled*—can be reformulated as nominal expressions like *the boiling of the water*, allowing them to be treated as stable conceptual units within theoretical explanations.

When a process is nominalized, its explicit temporal anchoring becomes less prominent. A verb such as *describe* (Data 5, 10) is typically realized through tense and therefore situated within the unfolding of time—it may refer to an action that occurred in the past or is occurring in the present. By contrast, the nominalized form *description*, functioning as a Range, is construed as an abstract entity that is less tightly bound to temporal progression. This relative reduction of temporal anchoring allows processes to be manipulated as conceptual objects within complex arguments and theoretical models. By mapping the realignment of participants in the Verbal domain, the present 2026 study provides further evidence that verbal processes, like material processes, can undergo similar forms of grammatical objectification through nominalization (Ismail, 2020).

5.2. The Interpersonal Tension in Realignment

An aspect that is sometimes overlooked in Systemic Functional Linguistics is the role of the interpersonal metafunction in ideational metaphor. Although this study mainly focuses on ideational changes, the Triple-Operator System (*make, give, have*) also carries interpersonal meanings.

Make – In Data 3 (*make a mockery*), the operator allows the speaker to express evaluation or judgment. When the process becomes a noun, it is easier to criticize, mock, or praise.

Give – In Data 11 (*give an order*), the operator highlights a relationship of authority. The structure implies someone who gives the order and someone who receives it, which reflects a hierarchy between participants.

Have – In Data 15 (*have a discussion*), the operator presents the verbal event as a shared activity. This construction reduces the social distance between the participants.

These patterns show that the operators *make, give, and have* not only organize experiential meaning but also shape the interpersonal relationship between speakers.

5.3. The Role of Delexicalized Verbs as Catalysts

A key theoretical issue in this study concerns the role of delexicalized verbs. In traditional grammar, verbs such as *make, give, and have* are often treated as light

verbs with minimal semantic content. However, this study argues that these verbs function as functional catalysts in the realignment of nominalized processes.

Rather than carrying the main lexical meaning, these operators provide the grammatical structure that allows the nominalized process (Range) to function within the clause. Through this interaction, the Sayer can construe verbal events as transactions (**give**), constructions (**make**), or shared experiences (**have**). This perspective highlights the structural role of delexicalized verbs in facilitating transitivity shifts in English discourse.

6. Participant Roles in Verbal Processes

Within the transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), verbal processes represent acts of symbolic exchange through which meanings are communicated between participants. Unlike material processes, which construe physical actions, or mental processes, which represent internal states of sensing, verbal processes occupy a distinct position in the symbolic domain of language because they involve the projection and circulation of meanings in discourse. As described by M. A. K. Halliday and further elaborated by Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014), verbal clauses typically involve several key participant roles that collectively structure the act of communication. The most central participant in a verbal process is the **Sayer**, the entity responsible for producing the speech act. The Sayer may be a human speaker, a collective group, or even an institutional voice represented through written discourse. The Sayer functions as the initiating source of the symbolic exchange and often remains structurally stable even when grammatical metaphor alters other elements of the clause.

Another important participant is the **Verbiage**, which represents the content of what is said. Verbiage may appear as a nominal group, a reported clause, or an abstract representation of the message conveyed in the act of communication. In many instances, the Verbiage encapsulates the propositional meaning of the speech act, allowing the content of the message to function as a conceptual entity within discourse.

In addition to the Sayer and Verbiage, verbal processes frequently involve a **Receiver**, the participant to whom the message is directed. The Receiver represents the intended addressee and highlights the inherently interpersonal dimension of communication. In certain constructions, particularly those involving evaluative or confrontational language, a further participant known as the **Target** may also be present. The Target refers to the entity affected by the speech act rather than the participant who receives it.

Together, these participant roles provide the structural framework through which verbal processes encode acts of communication within the transitivity system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Understanding how these roles interact is essential for analyzing how grammatical metaphor reorganizes verbal processes, particularly when speech acts are nominalized and temporarily repositioned within the clause structure before being restored to their congruent verbal configuration.

7. The Function of Nominalized Verbal Processes in Discourse

Within Systemic Functional Linguistics, nominalization is widely recognized as a central mechanism through which grammatical metaphor operates. By transforming processes that are typically realized as verbs into nominal forms, speakers and writers can reconstrue dynamic events as conceptual entities that participate in the clause structure as grammatical participants. According to M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen (2014), this transformation enables language users to reorganize experiential meaning and to construct more compact and information-dense expressions, particularly in formal and academic discourse.

In the case of verbal processes, nominalization allows acts of communication to be treated as symbolic objects rather than as unfolding actions. For example, a congruent verbal clause such as *the minister explained the policy* may be metaphorically reconstrued as *the minister gave an explanation of the policy*. In this transformation, the verbal process *explain* is nominalized into *explanation*, which functions as a participant within the clause rather than as the primary process. This shift allows the speech act itself to be conceptualized as an entity that can be transferred, evaluated, or elaborated within discourse.

One important consequence of this reconstrual is the increased flexibility of the clause structure. When a speech act is realized as a nominal element, it can occupy positions typically reserved for participants, such as Range or Scope, while the clause is supported by a semantically lighter operator such as *make*, *give*, or *have*. These delexicalized verbs provide the grammatical scaffolding that enables the nominalized process to function within the clause while preserving the underlying experiential meaning of the speech event.

Another functional advantage of nominalized verbal processes is their contribution to discourse cohesion. Because nominalized forms behave like nouns, they can be modified, repeated, or referred to anaphorically across multiple clauses. This property allows writers to track complex ideas over extended stretches of text while maintaining a high degree of informational density. It can be argued that this capacity is particularly important in academic and institutional discourse, where arguments often rely on the ability to treat processes as conceptual objects within ongoing reasoning.

From this perspective, nominalized verbal processes serve not only as grammatical alternatives to congruent verbal clauses but also as strategic resources for organizing meaning within discourse. By allowing speech acts to be packaged as entities, nominalization enables language users to manipulate communication events in ways that support explanation, evaluation, and argumentation. The present study builds on this theoretical insight by examining how such nominalized speech acts interact with the transitivity system and how their participant roles are systematically realigned when metaphorical constructions are unpacked into their congruent forms.

The theoretical perspectives discussed above provide the conceptual foundation for analyzing how nominalized verbal processes interact with the transitivity system. Building on these insights, the present study examines a set of verbal constructions drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) in order to investigate how participant roles are reorganized when grammatical metaphor is unpacked into its congruent form.

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive method (Hardani et al., 2020) to investigate the participant realignment of verbal processes within grammatical metaphors. A symbolic and semiotic perspective is essential for uncovering deeper meanings in linguistic exchanges, particularly in studies that examine how experiential meanings are reorganized through grammar. By focusing on the “how” and “why” of participant shifts rather than numerical frequency, this study follows qualitative approaches that are appropriate for complex analyses of transitivity patterns.

The primary data were drawn from the **Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)**, a large corpus containing over one billion words from diverse registers such as academic writing, fiction, news, and spoken discourse. For this phase of the longitudinal study (2026), **17 purposively selected examples** were identified based on the presence of the **Triple-Operator System** (*make, give, have*). Each example met the following criteria:

1. a clearly identifiable **Sayer** as the primary participant;
2. a **semantically depleted verbal operator** (*make, give, or have*); and
3. a **nominalized verbal process functioning as the Range**, serving as the grammatical landing zone of the metaphorical construction.

The Analytical Framework: The Four-Stage Unpacking Protocol

To ensure that the **Universal Law of Participant Realignment** is tested with scientific precision, each of the 17 data points was subjected to a four-stage analytical protocol derived from the foundational findings of Ismail (2020) and Ismail & Dahlia (2024):

1. **Stage 1: Identification of the Non-Congruent Form:** The metaphorical clause is mapped according to its surface transitivity. This identifies the **Sayer**, the **Verbal (Empty) Process**, and the **Range** (the nominalized process).
2. **Stage 2: Semantic Retrieval:** The nominalized head of the Range (e.g., *announcement, claim, description*) is traced back to its congruent verbal root (e.g., *announce, claim, describe*) to reveal the original process meaning.
3. **Stage 3: Congruent Reconstruction (Unpacking):** The clause is systematically rewritten in its congruent state. During this stage, the empty operator is removed, and the verbal root is restored as the primary **Verbal Process**.
4. **Stage 4: Realignment Mapping:** The remaining elements of the original nominal group are analyzed to determine their final "landing" position in the congruent clause. These are categorized according to SFL roles: **Verbiage** (the message), **Target** (the entity being evaluated), or **Receiver** (the entity being addressed).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Complete Dataset of Verbal Process Realignment (2026)

To provide a clear overview of the empirical evidence, Table 1 presents the complete dataset analyzed in this study. The table lists the 17 instances of verbal processes identified in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), including the operator, the nominalized process functioning as Range, and the participant role that emerges when the clause is unpacked into its congruent form.

Table 1. Complete Dataset of Verbal Grammatical Metaphors (Ismail, 2026)

Data	Operator	Nominalized Process	Metaphorical Role	Realigned Participant	Source
1	MAKE	announcement	Range	Verbiage	Psychology Today
2	MAKE	confession	Range	Verbiage	God's Favorite
3	MAKE	mockery	Range	Target	Kayfabe
4	MAKE	claim	Range	Verbiage	Nerdist
5	GIVE	description	Range	Verbiage	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
6	GIVE	indication	Range	Verbiage	ABC News
7	GIVE	explanation	Range	Verbiage	Meet the Press
8	GIVE	warning	Range	Verbiage	Congress Web
9	GIVE	presentation	Range	Verbiage	The Presentation on Egypt
10	GIVE	description	Range	Verbiage	Film Dialogue
11	GIVE	order	Range	Verbiage	PBS NewsHour
12	GIVE	shout-out	Range	Verbiage	A.V. Club
13	GIVE	report	Range	Verbiage	Vanity Fair
14	HAVE	debate	Range	Verbiage	Edutopia
15	HAVE	discussion	Range	Verbiage	Press Briefing
16	HAVE	argument	Range	Verbiage	TV Blog
17	HAVE	announcement	Range	Verbiage	FOX News

As shown in Table 1, all nominalized verbal processes initially occupy the Range position within the metaphorical clause structure. When the clauses are unpacked into their congruent verbal forms, the Range consistently realigns into the Verbiage participant, with one notable exception in Data 3 where the realignment targets an evaluative Target. This pattern supports the hypothesis that Range functions as a grammatical landing zone for nominalized processes in verbal constructions.

The Constructive Realm: The Operator MAKE (Data 1–4)

The verb *make* serves as a "constructive" operator. In these instances, the Sayer is not merely speaking; they are "manufacturing" a symbolic object.

- **Data 1 Analysis:** In the clause "...made an announcement," the verbal process *announce* is nominalized. The **Universal Law** shows that *announcement* functions as the **Range**. Upon unpacking ("*The wife announced the news*"), the Range realigns into the **Verbiage**. This allows the Sayer to present the news as a static fact rather than a fleeting action.
- **Data 2 Analysis:** In "...made a confession," the nominalization allows the Sayer to treat a deeply personal mental state as a physical delivery. The realignment from **Range** to **Verbiage** confirms that *make* is used to give "weight" to a speech act.
- **Data 3 Analysis (Mockery):** This data point is a critical outlier. In "*make a mockery of the skill of wrestling*," the nominalized process *mockery* does not realign into Verbiage, but into a **Target**. This proves that the Universal Law is sensitive to **Evaluative Language**. The "skill of wrestling" is the entity being targeted by the verbal act.

- **Data 4 Analysis:** In the *Game of Thrones* recap ("*made a claim*"), the empty verb *make* allows for the insertion of evaluative circumstances like "*so stupidly*." This proves that grammatical metaphor is a strategic tool for **interpersonal appraisal**.

The Transactional Realm: The Operator GIVE (Data 5–13)

The verb *give* represents the most complex shift because it introduces a **Receiver**. In these 9 data points, communication is treated as a "commodity."

- **Data 5 & 10 (Description):** In both cases ("*gave a description*"), the nominalized process functions as a **Range**. When unpacked into "*described*," the realignment shifts the Range into the **Verbiage**. This pattern suggests that formal descriptions are viewed as "files" handed from one participant to another.
- **Data 6 & 7 (Indication/Explanation):** These points ("*gave an indication*," "*gave an explanation*") show how complex clausal information can be "packaged" inside a Range. This increases the **Information Density** of the sentence, a key requirement for academic writing Halliday & Matthiessen (2014).
- **Data 8 & 11 (Warning/Order):** These are "High-Authority" speech acts. By "giving an order" to the military (Data 11), the Sayer (the leader) uses the metaphor to make the order seem **permanent and documented**. The realignment here is from **Range to Verbiage**, while the military headquarters remains the **Receiver**.
- **Data 9 & 12 (Presentation/Shout out):** Data 9 ("*gave a presentation*") covers a long-duration event. The Universal Law allows the Sayer to compress hours of speaking into a single "thing" (the Range). This demonstrates the **Temporal Compression** function of grammatical metaphor.

The Experiential Realm: The Operator HAVE (Data 14–17)

The verb *have* (Data 14–17) represents a distinct shift in the Symbolic World. While *make* constructs and *give* transfers, *have* frames the verbal process as an **experience** or an **event** shared by the participants.

- **Data 14 & 15 Analysis (Debate/Discussion):** In these instances ("*had a debate*," "*had a discussion*"), the nominalized process functions as a **Range**. When unpacked into the congruent verbs "*debated*" and "*discussed*," the realignment shifts the Range into the **Verbiage**. However, a crucial distinction emerges: *have* suggests a multi-directional or symmetrical exchange. By objectifying the "debate" into a static Range, the Sayer presents the event as a historical milestone rather than a series of utterances.
- **Data 16 Analysis (Argument):** The clause "*had an argument*" demonstrates the **Evaluative Stability** of the Universal Law. Even when the speech act is conflict-oriented, the realignment from **Range to Verbiage** (the topic of the argument) remains consistent. This proves that the Universal Law is not affected by the "tenor" or emotional quality of the communication.
- **Data 17 Analysis (Announcement):** In the FOX news data ("*have an announcement*"), the use of *have* instead of *make* creates a sense of "possession" over the information. The realignment into **Verbiage** confirms that *have* acts as a host for highly significant, high-impact content.

Longitudinal Confirmation of the Universal Law (2020–2026)

The present findings can be further understood when situated within the broader longitudinal trajectory of the research. Earlier studies examined the behavior of nominalized processes in material and mental domains. When combined with the current analysis of verbal processes, a consistent pattern of participant realignment emerges across the three experiential domains of English transitivity.

Table 2. Longitudinal Development of the Participant Realignment Principle

Study	Process Type	Nominalized Role	Realigned Participant	DATA
Ismail (2020)	Material	Scope	Goal	make a payment → pay the bill
Ismail & Dahlia (2024)	Mental	Range	Phenomenon	have a feeling → feel something
Ismail (2026)	Verbal	Range	Verbiage / Target	make an announcement → announce the news

Table 2 demonstrates that the realignment principle operates consistently across three major domains of experience. In material processes, the nominalized Scope realigns into the Goal. In mental processes, the Range realigns into the Phenomenon. In verbal processes, the Range typically realigns into the Verbiage. Together, these findings support the broader claim that nominalized processes first occupy an intermediate participant role before returning to their congruent grammatical configuration.

CONCLUSION

This study examined verbal processes within the framework of ideational grammatical metaphor and contributes to the broader research trajectory on participant realignment across transitivity systems. Drawing on seventeen data points from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the analysis demonstrates that verbal constructions involving operators such as *make*, *give*, and *have* frequently employ nominalized processes functioning as Range within the metaphorical clause structure. When these constructions are unpacked into their congruent verbal realizations, the Range typically realigns into participants such as Verbiage, Target, or Receiver.

These findings suggest that verbal processes exhibit structural patterns comparable to those previously observed in material and mental domains. Across these domains, nominalization appears to provide an intermediate grammatical position that enables processes to be packaged as entities before returning to their congruent functional roles. In this sense, ideational grammatical metaphor functions as an important resource for managing information density and organizing experiential meaning in contemporary English discourse, a phenomenon widely discussed in systemic functional linguistics by scholars such as M. A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen.

The study also highlights the central role of the Sayer as a relatively stable participant within verbal processes, while the speech act itself is frequently nominalized and

positioned as Range. This configuration allows speakers and writers to conceptualize acts of saying as transferable, constructed, or shared symbolic objects. From an applied perspective, these findings have potential implications for English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where the ability to manipulate nominalization and grammatical metaphor is closely related to the development of academic style and disciplinary discourse.

Future research may extend this line of inquiry by examining whether similar patterns of participant realignment occur in relational processes, particularly those associated with states of being and possession. Such investigations may help clarify whether comparable grammatical mechanisms operate across the major process types of systemic functional grammar, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how experiential meaning is structured in English.

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