

# Nominalization in literary texts: A corpus-based study of contrastive and translational aspects

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## **Povzetek**

Študija se osredotoča na pojavljanje nominalizacije v italijanskih in slovenskih literarnih besedilih. Podatki so zbrani s pomočjo korpusa Spook, ki združuje italijanska izvirna besedila in njihove slovenske prevode, pa tudi izvirna slovenska leposlovna besedila. Na podlagi analize s korpusno metodologijo opazujemo, v kolikšni meri je pogostnost nominalizacije odvisna od jezika in v kolikšni od besedilnega tipa. Osvetliti želimo tudi vpliv prevodnega procesa na pojavljanje nominalizacije. Ker niso vsi primeri tega pojava v prevedenih besedilih neposredne ustreznice izvirnih nominalizacij, pri analizi upoštevamo tudi tiste primere, ki se pojavljajo, ko v izvirnih besedilih ni uporabljeno to izrazno sredstvo. Namen je torej preveriti, kakšna je splošna pogostnost nominalizacije v korpusu, kako pogosto se pojavlja kot prevod izvirnih nominalizacij in kolikokrat se pojavi kot ustreznica drugih izvirnih struktur. Poleg tega želimo tudi preveriti, katere strukture se nahajajo v izvirnih besedilih, ko nominalizacija v prevodu ni neposredni prevod enake strukture. Rezultati nakazujejo, da se nominalizacija dejansko v slovenskih literarnih besedilih nasploh in v prevodih specifično pojavlja redkeje kot v drugih besedilnih tipih, pa tudi redkeje kot v italijanščini. V prispevku so predstavljene tudi alternativne ubeseditve, ki se pojavljajo namesto izvirnih italijanskih nominalizacij.

**Ključne besede:** nominalizacija, literarna besedila, korpusna analiza, italijanščina, slovenščina.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Following systemic functional linguistics (e.g. Halliday 1994), when we want to express a process, we can choose to do so in a congruent way, with a verb, or we can choose to realize that process metaphorically with a noun, i.e. a nominalization. The choice involves a different rearrangement of the participants in the process and a consequent change in the information structure and lexical density of the clause (see next section). Not all languages react to such rearrangements equally well, some being seemingly more verb-oriented (e.g. Hopi, Chinese, Turkish<sup>1</sup>) and others appearing to be more prone to use nouns in comparison (e.g. English, French, German<sup>2</sup>). Indeed, nominalization is a phenomenon present in a number of languages – Koptjevskaja-Tamm's (1993) study includes as many as 70 languages – and has been the subject of a great amount of research from various points of view in recent years. Often, the analyses centre on discourse and text types where nominalization is an important characteristic of how meanings are construed, such as scientific discourse (e.g. Halliday and Martin 1993, Fang 2005, Banks 2008), legal discourse (e.g. Williams 2004, Felici 2013, Orts Llopis 2009), the language of bureaucracy (Whittaker and Martín Rojo 1999, Fortis 2005) and so on, though it has been suggested<sup>3</sup> that in several languages nominalization has spread with varying frequency to all aspects of adult language (cf. Halliday and Martin 1993: 16-17). In Italian, several studies have been devoted to nominalization on the level of morphology and syntax, notably by Thornton (1997), Gaeta (2002, 2004), Gaeta and Ricca (2003, 2006). The number of studies centring on nominalization in Slovene (in contrast with other languages) have also recently increased, although it is still a much under-researched topic (cf. for instance Klinar 1996, Žele 1996, 1997, Plemenitaš 2007, Košak 2007, Mikolič Južnič 2007, 2011, Kuster 2014, Elikan 2014). What these and other studies seem to suggest is that while Italian is believed to be a strongly noun-oriented language (cf. also Bruni et al. 1997, Cortelazzo and Pellegrino 2003, Cassese 1993), Slovene seems to be somewhat more verb-oriented (cf. for instance Klinar 1996, but also Plemenitaš 2007, who claims the opposite for the genres she studied in comparison with English). As for other languages, in the studies mentioned, nominalization is usually observed in those genres where its frequency is expected to be high and where it is known to have an important impact on the way meanings are construed.

In this article, however, the aim is to observe a genre which is not usually associated with a high frequency of nominalization, i.e. literary texts, and to verify

<sup>1</sup> Cf., for instance, Whorf (1950) for a comparison of Hopi and English, Halliday and Martin (1993) for a comparison between Chinese and English, Altinkamiş, Kern and Sofu (2014) for a comparison between French and Turkish.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., for instance, Roald and Whittaker (2010) for a contrastive study of French and Norwegian, Azpiazu Torres (2005), for a comparison of German, English and Spanish.

<sup>3</sup> Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, 1999) state that grammatical metaphor developed first in scientific texts and from there, it spread to the discourse of education, bureaucracy, law and other discourses with various degrees of frequency.

to what extent its presence impacts the texts in comparison with other genres, seeing that its lower or higher frequency may influence the lexical density and readability of the text (cf. below). Furthermore, the main objective of the contribution is to see what the relationship is between the presence of this feature in Italian source texts and in their Slovene translations, as well as to verify if there is any difference in the occurrence of nominalization in original Slovene literary texts and in translated ones. The question arises from the presupposition, confirmed in previous research (cf., for instance, Mikolič Južnič 2007, 2012a), that nominalization is more present in some languages (in this case Italian) than in others (Slovene) and that this might give rise to problems when translating from one language into the other. Such problems have been repeatedly noticed in the translations handed in by translation students, therefore the implications of the research could have a positive impact on the teaching of translation.

After a definition of nominalization, a brief introduction to the framework of systemic functional linguistics is presented, as well as some repercussions of the rearrangement of the elements of sentence structure caused by nominalization. Subsequently, an analysis of a corpus of original Slovene literary texts and a two-way analysis of a parallel Italian-Slovene corpus are presented, in which the focus is on the structures found in one language where in the other there are nominalizations. The levels of nominalization in Slovene translated literary works are compared with those of Slovene original literary works in order to assess the impact of translation constraints on the frequency of nominalizations. These results are followed by some concluding remarks on the implications from a contrastive and translational point of view.

## 2 NOMINALIZATION AS A GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR AND GENRE VARIATION

In the framework of systemic functional linguistics, the meaning potential is a key concept: among the selections of elements which can carry meaning, a speaker can choose which meaning potential to use when communicating. The realizations of a meaning potential are not random: some of them are viewed as congruent, i.e. they feel natural and characteristic of the language. As Halliday (1994: 343) says,

there are what speakers recognize as typical patterns of wording, and it is these that we are calling ‘congruent’ forms. Since construing experience in the form of language is already inherently a metaphorical process, it is no surprise to find a further dimension of metaphor, present within language itself. So as well as recognizing what is congruent, we also recognize that there are other possibilities, where the typical pattern has not been used and the speaker or writer has chosen to say things differently.

Therefore, along with the congruent realizations, other means of expression have evolved that are called grammatical metaphors. In these, the links between meaning and grammar are rearranged into new mappings. Ravelli (2003: 38) states that “(t)he verbal to nominal transfer is the most prototypical form of grammatical metaphor”. Nominalization is thus defined as a type of ideational<sup>4</sup> grammatical metaphor whereby a process, which would congruently be realized by a verb, is metaphorically realized by a noun (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 636).

For instance, instead of using a congruent mode of expression, as in a. below, we can realize the process with the nominalization *arrivo* /arrival/ and thus have a sentence as in b. In this example, a process, “to arrive”, is realized as a noun which has the role of participant in another process, i.e. “to surprise”.

- a. *Luca è arrivato improvvisamente.* /Luca has arrived suddenly/
- b. *L'improvviso arrivo di Luca mi ha sorpreso.* /Luca's sudden arrival surprised me/

As we can see, the realization of the process with a grammatical metaphor involves changes in other participants and circumstances of the original process: the actor (*Luca*) of the process in a. becomes an attribute of the actor of the process in b. (*Luca's*), while the circumstance of the first process (*suddenly*) becomes another attribute (*sudden*). Such rearrangements usually result in utterances that are lexically dense, i.e. a higher number of lexical items are included in each clause (ibid.: 654). Lexical density is defined as “a measure of the density of information in any passage of text, according to how tightly the lexical items (content words) have been packed into the grammatical structure” (Halliday and Martin 1993: 83). It seems that not all languages cope with high lexical density equally well. Žele (1996) and Klinar (1996) argue that Slovene is relatively averse to such wordings, as they tend to make comprehension more difficult and they leave more space for ambiguity, since participants such as the actor, which are obligatory when a process is construed as a verb, can be omitted (e.g. *The arrival was scheduled for 2 pm.*). Following these premises, it might be expected that translators working from a language prone to high lexical density, such as Italian (cf. Giannosa 2012), into a language that does not show the same inclination, such as Slovene, would tend to employ strategies that could help them avoid overusing a feature that heightens lexical density, as nominalization indeed does.

Furthermore, considering the genre which is the object of the present research, i.e. literary texts, where nominalization is expected to have lower frequency rates

<sup>4</sup> According to systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1994: xiv), language is a system of meanings realized by certain forms; these meanings are encompassed in an utterance on three levels and can be described with the interpersonal, textual and ideational metafunctions (cf. also Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 1999). Nominalization is primarily linked to the ideational metafunction, but its occurrence also involves changes on the other two planes (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen (1999: 239) for changes on the textual level and ibid. (241-242) for the interpersonal level).

than in other text types,<sup>5</sup> it is hypothesized that the frequency of nominalizations in the analysed target texts is lower than in the source texts and that other means of expression are also used to construe the meanings encoded by nominalizations in the source texts, such as the unpacking of the grammatical metaphor in the more explicit form of a verb. Yet since it has been shown (Mikolič Južnič 2010) that nominalizations in the target texts are not always direct translations of nominalizations in the source texts, but can be the equivalents of various non-finite verbal structures (as well as other elements) of the source language, it is also expected that a portion of the target text nominalizations analyzed will be equivalents mostly of Italian infinitives and/or gerunds.

### 3 CORPUS AND METHOD

#### 3.1 Corpus

The corpus used for the purposes of this research is the Spook corpus, the first Slovene translational corpus which was compiled between 2009 and 2011 (cf. Vintar 2013). It includes 95 modern literary works written (and translated) between 1992 and 2006, 23 of which are original Slovene novels and short stories while the rest are divided among four parallel subcorpora with English, French, German, and Italian originals and their Slovene translations. All the original Slovene works, as well as all the translations, were written by native speakers of Slovene. The corpus is lemmatized and tagged, and the parallel subcorpora are aligned at sentence level. Table 1 shows the number of tokens for those subcorpora that were used in this analysis, i.e. the subcorpus of original Slovene literary texts and the Italian-Slovene parallel subcorpus.

**Table 1: Number of tokens for three subcorpora of the Spook corpus**

| Subcorpus            | Number of tokens |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Italian originals    | 486,843          |
| Slovene translations | 478,591          |
| Slovene originals    | 1,644,067        |

The corpus is analysable through NoSketch Engine, an online concordancer and corpus analysis tool available at the Natural Language Server of the Department

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mikolič Južnič (2011) for a comparison of frequency levels of nominalizations in different genres in Slovene (cf. also section 4.1.). It should also be pointed out that in literary texts, one of the reasons for the low frequency of nominalization in general is probably linked to the inherent tendency of literature to focus on narration, on mimicking natural dialogues, etc., which in itself seems to point towards a verbal form of expression rather than a nominal one.

of Knowledge Technologies at the Jožef Stefan institute in Ljubljana.<sup>6</sup> All parts of the corpus can be searched separately and, in the case of parallel subcorpora, the results can also be viewed as aligned concordances.

### 3.2 Method

The analysis consisted of three main stages: the automatic extraction of instances of nominalization in the three subcorpora of the Spook corpus, the elimination of noise and a manual analysis of the equivalents of nominalizations in the two languages, which was also divided in three separate phases.

As nominalizations do not carry a special tag in the annotation system of the corpus, the only viable option for extracting their occurrences was to look for specific deverbal derivational morphemes for each language observed. This means that the study does not encompass all instances of nominalization present in the corpus, but focuses on the most productive derivational morphemes in the two languages. These are listed in Table 2 and they account for approximately 90%<sup>7</sup> of all the nominalizations present in two of the most authoritative dictionaries for Italian and Slovene (cf. Mikolič Južnič 2007: 132-135).<sup>8</sup> It is evident from Table 2 that while in Slovene a very small number of derivational morphemes accounts for the vast majority of nominalizations in the language, in Italian the variety of derivational patterns is much greater. It must be noted, however, that the morphemes *-mento*, *-zione*, *-ura* and *-ata* alone account for 75% of all the instances in the Italian dictionary.

After the automatic extraction of all the occurrences of the said morphemes in the three subcorpora analysed (original Slovene texts, Slovene translations and original Italian texts), the results were manually checked in order to eliminate noise, such as random nouns ending with the same characters (e.g. *momento* /moment/) and instances where the nominalization does not refer to a process but to another kind of concept, e.g. an institution, as in *Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite* /United Nations organization/.

<sup>6</sup> <http://nl.ijs.si/noske/index-en.html>.

<sup>7</sup> It should be stressed that the percentages reflect the presence of individual nominalizations in the dictionaries, i.e. all the forms accounted for in the dictionaries, and does not say anything about their frequency in the language or in any corpora. The criterion was chosen in order to catch the greatest number of nominalizations possible, although of course it is impossible to predict precisely the portion of those left out of the analysis.

<sup>8</sup> For Italian, Zingarelli (2002) was used: the dictionary comprises 135,000 words and is one of the most renowned dictionaries for this language; for Slovene, Bajec et al. (1994) was used, which is the only comprehensive dictionary of the language and which includes 93,000 words.

**Table 2: Most productive Italian and Slovene deverbal nominal derivational morphemes**

| Italian | Slovene |
|---------|---------|
| -mento  | -anje   |
| -zione  | -enje   |
| -ura    | -tev    |
| -ata    | -cija   |
| -io     | -tje    |
| -sione  |         |
| -ato    |         |
| -enza   |         |
| -ore    |         |
| -ita    |         |
| -aggio  |         |
| -ere    |         |
| -eggio  |         |
| -tà     |         |

The occurrences of nominalization in the subcorpus of original Slovene texts were extracted, cleaned up and counted, and then the frequency per 100,000 tokens was calculated in order to simplify the comparison with the other data, as the sizes of the three subcorpora vary. Starting from the Italian-Slovene parallel subcorpus, two separate analyses were performed: first, all the instances of Italian nominalizations formed with the above morphemes were extracted and analysed in terms of translation equivalents in the parallel Slovene examples. Then all the instances of Slovene nominalizations with the morphemes listed in Table 2 were extracted together with the original Italian sentences and the Italian elements corresponding to the Slovene nominalizations were analysed. In both cases, the focus was on the part of speech of the element corresponding to the nominalization in the other language (see Table 3 for the categories analysed). The results were then cross-compared and are presented in the following section. As the manual analysis was carried out in three distinct phases, the results are divided into three subsections, while some comparisons are drawn in the last section of the paper.

**Table 3: Categories of analyses for the parallel corpus**

| Categories of elements                          |  |
|---|--|
| Slovene translations of Italian nominalizations | Italian source elements of Slovene nominalizations |
| Nominalization                                  | Nominalization                                     |
| Other noun                                      | Other noun   |
| Finite verb                                     | Nominalized infinitive                             |
| Non-Finite verb                                 | Infinitive   |
| Adverb  | Gerund   |
| Adjective                                       | Finite verb  |
| Pronoun   | Adverb   |
| Preposition                                     | Adjective  |
| Nothing   | Pronoun  |
|   | Nothing  |

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Frequency of nominalization in Slovene and Italian original texts and in Slovene translations

After eliminating noise, the search for the selected morphemes in the original Slovene literary texts subcorpus produced 9,630 occurrences of nominalizations, which means that the frequency of the analysed nominalizations is 586 instances per 100,000 words. The numbers for each morpheme are given in table 4.

**Table 4: Absolute number of nominalizations in the Original Slovene Literary Texts subcorpus**

| Morpheme | Absolute number |
|----------|-----------------|
| -anje    | 5,947           |
| -enje    | 1,642           |
| -cija    | 770             |
| -tev     | 820             |
| -tje     | 451             |
| Total    | 9,630           |



Table 5 shows the number of occurrences in the subcorpus of Slovene translations from Italian, which amount to 2,186, i.e. 457 instances per 100,000 words. Considering that in original Slovene texts there were 586 instances per 100,000 words, the frequency in translations is 22% lower than in the former.

**Table 5: Absolute number of nominalizations in the Translated Slovene Literary Texts subcorpus**

| Morpheme | Absolute number |
|----------|-----------------|
| -anje    | 1,420           |
| -enje    | 438             |
| -cija    | 44              |
| -tev     | 183             |
| -tje     | 101             |
| Total    | 2,186           |

In the analysed subcorpus of Italian original texts, the overall number of occurrences of nominalization is 2,408, i.e. 495 instances per 100,000 words, as is shown in Table 6. The frequency is lower than in Slovene original texts by 15%, while the Slovene translations contain 8% less nominalizations than the originals.

**Table 6: Absolute number of nominalizations in the Original Italian Literary Texts subcorpus**

| Morpheme | Absolute number |
|----------|-----------------|
| -zione   | 666             |
| -io      | 422             |
| -mento   | 303             |
| -aggio   | 220             |
| -sione   | 179             |
| -enza    | 151             |
| -ura     | 108             |
| -ore     | 83              |
| -ere     | 77              |
| -ita     | 63              |
| -ata     | 60              |
| -ato     | 35              |
| -tà      | 32              |
| -eggio   | 9               |

Contrary to previous studies of other genres, the results of some of which are shown in table 7,<sup>9</sup> where nominalization in Slovene was found to be less frequent than in Italian (cf. Mikolič Južnič 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b) it seems that nominalization is slightly more frequent in original Slovene literary texts than in Italian ones.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Slovene translations display a lower frequency both compared to their Italian originals and to Slovene original texts. Possibly, a tendency to hypercorrectness is at the basis of the translators' behaviour, as the idea that Slovene is more verb-oriented is well established in the linguistic community. In the following sections, we will look at the relationship between nominalizations in original and translated texts in order to gain more insight in this aspect.

**Table 7: Frequency of nominalization in different genres per 100,000 words<sup>11</sup>**

|         | Text types            |                       |                     |       |                     |              |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|--------------|
|         | Literary              | General <sup>12</sup> | Popular science     | Law   | Scientific articles | Spoken texts |
| Slovene | 586/457 <sup>13</sup> | 1,890                 | 3,190 <sup>14</sup> | 3,884 | 3,085               | 532          |
| Italian | 495                   |                       | 3,715               |       |                     |              |

Comparing the frequencies given in Table 7 we notice that the relative frequency of nominalization in literary texts appears to be quite low both in Italian and in Slovene: only spoken texts have comparable frequency, while the other analysed genres tend to have a frequency at least three times higher. This is also true for the corpus of general Slovene, which includes a number of non-literary works, where the frequency of nominalization is apparently higher than in the corpus analysed here.

<sup>9</sup> The data are taken from Mikolič Južnič (2007, 2011 and 2012b). The studies mentioned employ similar methods to analyse the frequency of nominalization in several genres. The data for Italian popular science are taken from Mikolič Južnič (2007), where some additional (but very rarely used) morphemes are included, so the number is slightly higher than it would be without these.

<sup>10</sup> This is confirmed in Mikolič Južnič (2011: 325), where an analysis of a different, if smaller, literary corpus yielded very similar results for literary texts: the frequency in that corpus was 511 instances per 100,000 words.

<sup>11</sup> Data in columns 3-7 are adapted from Mikolič Južnič (2007, 2011, 2012b).

<sup>12</sup> The term is used to refer to a corpus of different genres that should reflect the general usage of everyday written Slovene. The corpus used in the study (Mikolič Južnič 2011) is the JOS100K corpus (<http://nl.ijs.si/jos/jos100k-en.html>).

<sup>13</sup> The first number refers to the frequency in the subcorpus of original Slovene literary texts, the second one to that in the subcorpus of Slovene translations from Italian.

<sup>14</sup> The number refers to the frequency of nominalizations in Slovene translations from Italian (cf. Mikolič Južnič 2007).

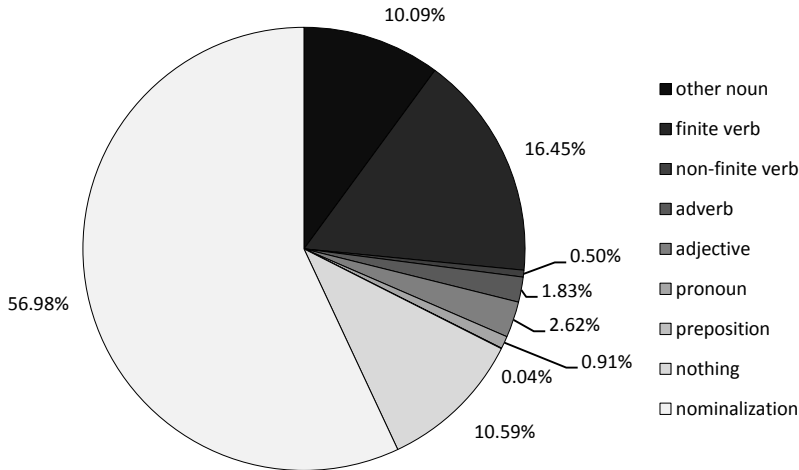
## 4.2 Nominalizations in Italian source texts and their equivalents in Slovene target texts

In the second part of the analysis, the Italian-Slovene parallel subcorpus was used to verify what translation equivalents are found for Italian nominalizations. Table 8 shows a detailed picture of the results of this analysis.

**Table 8: Absolute numbers of Slovene translation equivalents (TE) of Italian nominalizations**

|                     | Nominalization | Other noun | Finite verb | Non-finite verb | Nothing | Adverb | Adjective | Pronoun | Preposition | Total for single morpheme |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|---------|--------|-----------|---------|-------------|---------------------------|
| -mento              | 155            | 25         | 65          | 1               | 44      | 2      | 8         | 3       | 0           | 303                       |
| -zione              | 415            | 60         | 86          | 2               | 74      | 7      | 20        | 2       | 0           | 666                       |
| -ura                | 43             | 10         | 31          | 1               | 11      | 8      | 4         | 0       | 0           | 108                       |
| -ata                | 28             | 5          | 18          | 0               | 6       | 0      | 2         | 1       | 0           | 60                        |
| -io                 | 279            | 20         | 79          | 2               | 25      | 4      | 7         | 5       | 1           | 422                       |
| -sione              | 80             | 31         | 40          | 0               | 14      | 6      | 4         | 4       | 0           | 179                       |
| -ato                | 22             | 4          | 1           | 0               | 6       | 0      | 2         | 0       | 0           | 35                        |
| -enza               | 84             | 10         | 21          | 0               | 19      | 11     | 3         | 3       | 0           | 151                       |
| -ore                | 42             | 9          | 9           | 0               | 13      | 4      | 4         | 2       | 0           | 83                        |
| -ita                | 38             | 4          | 11          | 1               | 8       | 0      | 1         | 0       | 0           | 63                        |
| -aggio              | 130            | 28         | 25          | 4               | 22      | 2      | 8         | 1       | 0           | 220                       |
| -ere                | 45             | 13         | 7           | 0               | 11      | 0      | 0         | 1       | 0           | 77                        |
| -eggio              | 6              | 0          | 2           | 1               | 0       | 0      | 0         | 0       | 0           | 9                         |
| -tà                 | 5              | 24         | 1           | 0               | 2       | 0      | 0         | 0       | 0           | 32                        |
| Total for single TE | 1,372          | 243        | 396         | 12              | 255     | 44     | 63        | 22      | 1           | 2,408                     |

Figure 1 gives the proportions of the translation equivalents. The most frequent translation equivalent by far is a noun (67.07%), mostly a nominalization (56.98%; example 1) or another noun (10.09%; example 2). The second most frequent is the verb (16.95%), either in finite (16.45%; example 3) or, very rarely, in non-finite form (0.50%; example 4).



**Figure 1: Proportions of translation equivalents in the Slovene Translated Texts subcorpus**

- (1) a. *Beatrice lo aveva guardato con ammirazione* /Beatrice had looked at him with **admiration**<sup>15</sup>  
 b. *Beatrix pa ga je pogledala z občudovanjem* /Beatrix looked at him with **admiration**/
- (2) a. *come la ferita di quella mala azione* /as the wound of that bad **action**/  
 b. *spomini na tisto napako* /memories of that **mistake**/
- (3) a. *Sentì una preoccupante accelerazione del battito cardiaco* /he felt a disturbing **acceleration** of his heartbeat/  
 b. *Srce mu je začelo nemirno biti* /his heart **started beating** restlessly/
- (4) a. *egli pretendeva la distruzione di Alessandria* /he wanted the **destruction** of Alessandria/  
 b. *se je namenil razrušiti Aleksandrijo* /he intended **to destroy** Alessandria/

Surprisingly, there is quite a number of instances where the Italian nominalization is omitted in translation (10.59%). Such omissions are of two types: either there is no real loss in meaning, as the same concept is expressed by other means (example 5), or the translator for some reason failed to convey the whole meaning of the source text sentence (example 6).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The English translations of the examples are intentionally as literal as possible.

<sup>16</sup> The question of meaning loss in examples 5 and 6 is strictly limited to the underlined nominalizations; there may well be

- (5) a. *Era sola, si annoiava e traeva consolazione da quel dondolio* /she was alone, bored and she found **consolation** in that rocking/  
 b. *Bila je osamljena in je dolgčas preganjala z dolgotrajnim strmenjem* / she was lonely and she chased away the boredom by staring for a long time/
- (6) a. *Poi bastava un niente per dare il via a una sequenza di ricordi, di pacati ragionamenti.* /Then anything was enough to start a sequence of memories, of calm **reasoning**/  
 b. *Potem je zadostovala zgolj beseda in spet sta se potopila v spomine.* /Then a word was enough and they sank into memories/

Adverbs (1.83%) and adjectives (2.62%) occur as translations of nominalizations when there are special conditions in the sentence. 36 of 44 occurrences of adverbs as translation equivalents of nominalizations are instances where the original nominalization is part of a prepositional phrase with an adverbial meaning (example 7), while the rest are instances where the two languages construe meanings with different grammatical structures (example 8). Adjectives (example 9) are usually the translation equivalent of a structure in the original sentence where the nominalization is in a genitive relationship with another noun (example 9).

- (7) a. *soffiava in continuazione* /it was blowing **constantly**/  
 b. *Neprestano je pihal* /it was blowing **constantly**/
- (8) a. *hai preso la giusta decisione* /you have made the right **decision**/  
 b. *Ti pa si s svojim odhodom naredila čisto prav* /you behaved **correctly** with your leaving/
- (9) a. *Il bravo sciapode corse al suo posto di combattimento* /the good skiapod ran to his place of **combat**/  
 b. *Pogumni senconožec je stekel na svoj bojni položaj* /the brave skiapod ran to his **fighting** place/

In a few instances (0.91%), the nominalization was translated with the context-appropriate pronoun (example 10). Finally, there was one instance (0.04%) where a nominalization, part of a prepositional phrase (*in cambio*) was translated with a preposition (example 11).<sup>17</sup>

other changes in meaning and omissions/additions in these and other similar examples which influence the meaning of the whole sentence, but that is beyond the scope of this characterization.

<sup>17</sup> There were 8 instances with this Italian prepositional phrase, but in all other cases they were translated with other structures, e.g. a nominalization in the example *Perché tu in cambio gli dai il diritto di poterlo dire* /Because you in exchange give them the right to say it/, which is translated with *Ker jim boš dal ti v zameno pravico, da bodo lahko to izjavili* /Because you will give them in exchange the right to say that/.

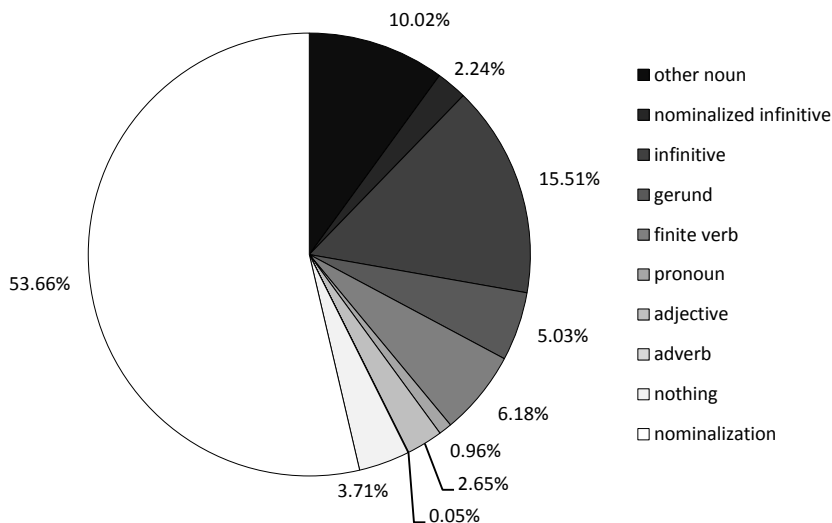
- (10) a. *Da molti anni rimandava una decisione* /For years she postponed a **decision**/  
 b. *Dolga leta je odlašala s tem* /For long years she procrastinated with **this**/
- (11) a. *non me la imposi certo in cambio di soldi*. /I didn't impose it on myself **in exchange for** money/  
 b. *se zagotovo nisem podala zaradi njega*. /I certainly didn't do that **for** it/

### 4.3 Nominalizations in Slovene target texts and their source structures

The last part of the analysis centred on the nominalizations occurring in Slovene translated texts and their source structures. This means that the perspective is the opposite to the previous section. As Table 9 and Figure 2 clearly show, not all Slovene nominalizations are direct translations of Italian ones.

**Table 9: Absolute numbers of Italian source elements (SE) translated as Slovene nominalizations**

|                     | Nominalization | Other noun | Nominalized infinitive | Infinitive | Gerund | Finite verb | Pronoun | Adjective | Adverb | Nothing | Total for single morpheme |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|------------------------|------------|--------|-------------|---------|-----------|--------|---------|---------------------------|
| -anje               | 741            | 113        | 34                     | 236        | 90     | 88          | 10      | 40        | 1      | 67      | 1,420                     |
| -enje               | 219            | 84         | 13                     | 57         | 10     | 29          | 9       | 7         | 0      | 10      | 438                       |
| -cija               | 31             | 4          | 0                      | 4          | 0      | 3           | 0       | 2         | 0      | 0       | 44                        |
| -tev                | 134            | 6          | 0                      | 24         | 2      | 9           | 1       | 3         | 0      | 4       | 183                       |
| -tje                | 48             | 12         | 2                      | 18         | 8      | 6           | 1       | 6         | 0      | 0       | 101                       |
| Total for single SE | 1,173          | 219        | 49                     | 339        | 110    | 135         | 21      | 58        | 1      | 81      | 2,186                     |



**Figure 2: Proportions of source elements in the Italian Original Texts subcorpus**

The greatest number (63.68%) are in fact translations of either nominalizations (example 12) or other nouns (example 13); if we add to those the nominalized infinitives (example 14), which are a kind of nominalization in themselves,<sup>18</sup> we get 65.92% of nominal elements that were the source structures of Slovene nominalizations.

- (12) a. *globoke glasove, ki so bili podobni levjemu rjuvenju* /deep noises that were similar to a lion's **roar**/  
 b. *dei versi bassi e profondi che assomigliavano al ruggito di un leone* /deep noises that resembled the **roar** of a lion/
- (13) a. *kadar se v nekaj zapičimo, odločitve ne spreminjamo* /when we make up our mind, we don't change our **decision**/  
 b. *quando ci mettiamo qualcosa dentro non c'è verso di farci cambiare idea* /when we make up our mind, there is no way to make us change our **idea**/
- (14) a. *dobička neke korporacije, specializirane za rušenje* /the revenue of a corporation specialized in **demolitions**/  
 b. *dai guadagni d'una Corporation specializzata nel demolire* /by the revenues of a Corporation specialized in **the demolishing**/

<sup>18</sup> Nominalized infinitives have been singled out because they often display a more 'verbal' nature than derived nominalizations and are therefore a middle step between non-finite verb forms and derived nominalizations (cf. example 14b). They also do not have a structural counterpart in Slovene and thus have to be translated using some alternative realization (cf. Mikolič Južnič 2013).

This implies that in more than one third of the instances, there was not a nominalization, but rather some other kind of original element that resulted in a nominalization. In the great majority of these, the original elements are verbs, most frequently infinitives (15.51%; example 15), but also gerunds (5.03%; example 16) and finite verb forms (6.18%; example 17). What apparently happened in the translations of finite verb forms is that congruent expressions of the original text were packed into grammatical metaphors: the processes were expressed as nouns and the roles of the participants were rearranged. With non-finite forms translated as nominalizations, we still have a similar situation where a process is being realized by a verb in one language and by a noun in the other, although there are probably other factors involved in the choice of translation equivalent. Slovene is not very fond of non-finite verbal forms (cf., for instance, Kocijančič Pokorn and Šuštaršič 2001) and such structures from other languages often do not have a standard acceptable counterpart in Slovene, so the translators are obliged to find other means of expression. Nominalizations, being in fact metaphorical expressions of processes, seem to be a frequent solution.<sup>19</sup>

- (15) a. *vendar pa mi včasih pomaga pri petju* /but it sometimes helps me with the **singing**/  
 b. *ma talora mi serve per cantare* /but sometimes it helps me **to sing**/
- (16) a. *za njimi pa so med zvončkljanjem stopala bitja* /after them beings walked while **ringing**/  
 b. *mentre precedevano scampanellando una brigata di esseri* /while a brigade of beings walked **ringing**/
- (17) a. *Med zlaganjem stvari v kovček* /while putting the stuff in the suitcase/  
 b. *mentre riempivo il baule* /while I was filling up the suitcase/

Pronouns are quite rare as source elements for nominalizations (0.96%); it appears that they are translated with a nominalization when the translator feels a need to use repetition or employ a synonym of the term to which the pronoun in the original text refers to for clarity's sake (example 18).

- (18) a. *pisanja tako pri dnevmi svetlobi kot pri brljenju sveče* /write both in the daylight and in the **glimmering** of a candle/  
 b. *scrivere che faceva sia alla luce del sole che a quella di una candela* /writing he did both in the light of the sun and in **that** of a candle/

Adjectives are also infrequent as source elements for Slovene nominalizations (2.65%) and are usually found only when certain conditions are met, such as the lack of a suitable adjective in Slovene (example 19) or when the Slovene

<sup>19</sup> Another usual way of translating non-finite forms is of course by using finite forms in dependent clauses, but this is beyond the scope of the present article.



nominalization is part of a phrase with the structure “adjective + noun” that is the translation of an Italian adjective (example 20, where the order in Slovene is inverted: *občudovanja vredna*).

- (19) a. *a tako v nasprotju s pravili umetnosti vojskovanja, da* /but so contrary to the rules of the art of **warfare**/  
 b. *e in modo così disordinatamente contrario alle regole dell'arte bellica, che* /and in a way so inordinately against the rules of the **warfare** art/
- (20) a. *Tolikšna je tvoja milina, tako občudovanja vredna tvoja stanovitnost* /So great is your grace, so worthy of **admiration** your perseverance/  
 b. *Tanta è la tua dolcezza, così mirabile la tua costanza* /So great is your kindness, so **admirable** your constancy/

There is only one example of an adverb being translated with a nominalization (example 21), in which the nominalization is part of a prepositional phrase (*brez obotavljanja*) with an adverbial meaning (without hesitation), which is a fairly close translation of *subito* (immediately), used to avoid repetition.

- (21) a. *je takoj prihitel na kraj nesreče in brez obotavljanja vstopil v drugi nebotačnik* /immediately rushed to the scene of the accident and entered the second skyscraper **without hesitation**/  
 b. *Essendo corso subito e subito entrato nel secondo grattacielo* /Running immediately and **immediately** entering the second skyscraper/

Finally, in 3.71% of the instances analysed, the Slovene nominalization was added in the translation to render more explicit a meaning that in the original text was not expressed with any single element but was present in the context (example 22).

- (22) a. *Rahewin je izjemen učitelj v pogledu učenja branja, pisanja* /Rahewinus is an outstanding teacher from the perspective of **teaching** how to read, write/  
 b. *Rahewino è un bravo maestro per quanto riguarda leggere, scrivere* /Rahewinus is a good teacher with regard to reading, writing/

To sum up, the most important finding of this analysis seems to be that although the majority of Slovene nominalizations (65.92%) are indeed translations of Italian nominalizations or other nominal elements, there is a considerable proportion that translate Italian verbal elements, such as infinitives, gerunds and finite verb forms (26.72%). In these instances, translators apparently reword processes as grammatical metaphors, either to avoid overcomplicating a sentence with too many dependent clauses or to realize meanings that are expressed with elements that do not have parallel structures in Slovene (such as the nominalized infinitive), or the structures exist but their use is limited or stylistically marked (e.g.

the infinitive). Other instances, where we find adjectives, adverbs or pronouns as original counterparts to Slovene nominalizations, are quite rare (3.66% in total) and depend on special circumstances in the sentences. The same seems to apply to those cases where nominalizations are added in translations: they are difficult to predict and the decision whether to explicitly state a meaning present implicitly in the original is basically left to the discretion of the translator.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the collected data in the previous sections. One of the most surprising, considering previous research, is that nominalizations are more frequent in Slovene original literary texts than in Italian ones. The difference is not very pronounced (especially if we compare the frequencies with other genres, as seen in section 4.1.) and may partly depend on the writing styles of the authors included in both subcorpora. Furthermore, the data confirm previous research, in that the frequency of nominalization in literary texts is considerably lower than in other genres, such as scientific texts, legal documents etc. It seems that the main reasons for the extensive use of nominalization in scientific and similar texts do not apply to literary texts. In scientific discourse the aim is to construe “reality as a balanced tension between things and processes” (Halliday and Martin 1993: 17) so that it can be “kept under observation and experimented with; and in so doing, [it can be interpreted] not as changing with time (as the grammar of clauses interprets it) but as persisting – or rather, persistence – through time, which is the mode of being a noun” (ibid.). This is not so in literary genres, where the very narrative nature of the text requires a mode of expression that highlights changes in time more directly and facilitates the progression of the narration. In light of this, it is not surprising that literary texts are the one genre that resists the invasion of nominalization most strongly.

As far as translated Slovene texts are concerned, it is confirmed that they contain fewer nominalizations than their original Italian counterparts, although again, the difference is not overwhelming. Nominalization is apparently not frequent enough in literary texts to influence the lexical density of the texts in any substantial way and so the translators might not feel compelled to avoid it in order to keep their text understandable to the target readers. However, nominalizations are still less frequent in translated Slovene texts than in original Slovene texts and this confirms findings in other genres. Taking into account that over 30% of the Italian nominalizations were not translated with Slovene ones, and that in more than half of these, verbal structures were used instead, it seems likely that the translators resorted to explicitation (cf. Klaudy and Karoly 2005) and unpacked

the grammatical metaphor, thus making the participants and circumstances of the processes more clear.

But since the number of nominalizations in Slovene translated texts is still relatively high, and considering that only 65% of the Italian ones are translated directly, it is evident that other elements are also translated with nominalizations. Indeed, in section 4.3, we saw that among such elements, verbal forms prevail: Italian non-finite verb forms usually do not have grammatically and/or stylistically acceptable counterparts in Slovene and nominalizations, as metaphorical realizations of processes, seem to be the preferred option (apart from explicitation into a dependent clause with a finite verb form).

To account for the presence of nominalizations in Slovene translated literary texts, another factor that often plays a role in translation should be taken into account, and that is interference (Toury 1995: 275): structures used in the source text are likely to influence the choice in the target text and so some of the Slovene nominalizations might simply be the result of a direct transfer of meaning and structure to the closest counterpart. But since translators themselves are likely to be aware of this tendency, they might subconsciously resort to hypercorrectness in avoiding too many nominalizations and end up with texts that display a lower frequency of nominalization than original Slovene literary texts, as we have seen above. The tension between these opposing tendencies is perhaps the reason for the relatively small difference in frequency between all three subcorpora.

As we have seen, the relationship between Italian and Slovene nominalizations is complex and asymmetrical: not all Italian nominalizations are translated with Slovene ones and, vice versa, not all Slovene nominalizations are the translations of Italian ones. Translators have the possibility of packing and unpacking grammatical metaphors, and thus realizing processes either with verbs or with nominalizations. Other, contextually bound options are also available, such as pronouns, adjectives and adverbs. Sometimes the nominalizations may even be omitted in translation without any substantial loss of meaning. In the opposite direction, nominalizations can be added in translations to render more explicit a meaning of the original that remains implicit. They are often used as an equivalent of non-finite Italian structures such as infinitives and gerunds, as these structures do not have ready counterparts in the Slovene verbal system.

Some of the implications discussed might be useful in translation training, as nominalizations have proven to be a tough nut to crack for some students, especially in that they tend to overuse them in registers and genres where they are stylistically less acceptable, such as literary texts. By discussing the problem and showing them other translation options, it is possible to raise their awareness of

the problem and thus guide them towards more natural sounding translations (cf. also Mikolič Južnič 2012c).

The findings of the last part of the study (cf. section 4.3.) suggest that there might be similar problems when translating from Slovene into Italian, as Slovene nominalizations are not always the result of Italian ones. Naturally, this should be further explored in future research with a corpus of Slovene-to-Italian translations, but it would seem that the possibility of substituting a congruent wording with a grammatical metaphor and vice versa is quite readily available to translators, although they seem to tend to preserve the original author's choice more often than not.

In order to confirm the higher frequency of nominalization in original Slovene literary texts in comparison with Italian ones, an analysis of a bigger corpus would be needed, where the influence of single authors' idiosyncrasies would be reduced. Another aspect worth exploring is the diachronic development of nominalization in Italian and Slovene literary texts. Classics of both literatures are often translated from one language to the other, and the study of such translations might give some insight both into the prevailing norms and conventions,<sup>20</sup> either self-imposed or imposed by the community, and into the diffusion of nominalization in this genre through time.

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<sup>20</sup> Nominalization was viewed as a foreignizing feature in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and frowned upon by some, while supported by others (cf. Vodušek 1933).

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