Nominal categories in native English and EFL argumentative writing. A corpus-based analysis

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English academic prose is characterized by a high density of nominal categories, for example nouns, nominalizations, attributive adjectives and prepositions. These features facilitate efficient integration of information in a text. In this paper we examine to what extent these characteristics are present in academic writing by native English students and advanced Polish students of English. The two corpora used in the study are grammatically tagged versions of the IFA-PICLE corpus of essays contributed by Poznań School of English (IFA) students, and part of the LOCNESS corpus of essays written by English and American secondary school and college students.

In both sets of texts we examine the noun-to-verb ratio, the frequencies of pronouns, nominalizations, premodifying nouns and adjectives, the distribution of *-ing* nouns and *-ing* participles, and the complexity of prepositional constructions. The results indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the two corpora and that native English academic essays are more informationally-focused than those written by Polish students. This has clear pedagogical implications for teachers of English academic writing and teachers of English grammar.

References

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The corpora used in the study can be accessed from:

http://elex.amu.edu.pl/~przemka/concord2advr/search_adv_new.html