



Journal Website:  
<https://theusajournals.com/index.php/ajps>

Copyright: Original  
content from this work  
may be used under the  
terms of the creative  
commons attributes  
4.0 licence.

## UNDERSTANDING NOMINALIZATION IN MANIPURI: FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

**Submission Date:** November 21, 2024, **Accepted Date:** November 26, 2024,  
**Published Date:** December 01, 2024

**Dr. Rahul Thampy**

National Translation Mission Central Institute of Indian Languages Manasagangotri Mysore 570 006,  
Karnataka, India

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the functions of nominalized forms in the Manipuri language, focusing on their syntactic and semantic roles within sentence structure. Nominalization, the process of transforming verbs or adjectives into nouns, is a key grammatical feature in Manipuri, which contributes to sentence formation, discourse structure, and meaning construction. Through a detailed functional linguistic analysis, the research examines how nominalized forms are used to convey specific nuances of agency, action, and state, as well as their role in forming complex noun phrases and gerund constructions. The study also highlights the interplay between nominalization and other grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, and case marking. By analyzing data from native speakers and formal texts, this paper provides insights into the strategic use of nominalized forms in Manipuri to express a variety of syntactic functions and pragmatic meanings. The findings reveal that nominalization in Manipuri is not only a morphological transformation but also a critical mechanism for organizing and conveying information in a variety of communicative contexts.

### KEYWORDS

Manipuri language, nominalization, syntactic functions, semantic roles, verb-to-noun transformation, noun phrases, gerunds, linguistic analysis, case marking, tense, aspect.

### INTRODUCTION



Nominalization, the process of converting verbs, adjectives, or other parts of speech into nouns, is a pervasive and fundamental feature of many languages, and the Manipuri language is no exception. In Manipuri, nominalized forms are not only a morphological transformation but also a key syntactic and semantic device that facilitates complex sentence structures and a wide range of communicative functions. Understanding the role of nominalization in Manipuri requires an exploration of its multifaceted functions—spanning syntax, semantics, and pragmatics—as it contributes to both the structure of sentences and the conveyance of meaning in discourse.

In languages worldwide, nominalization serves to express a variety of relationships, such as causality, agency, or abstraction, and can often be seen in the formation of noun phrases or the construction of gerunds. Similarly, in Manipuri, nominalized forms enable the expression of actions, states, and events as objects or concepts. For example, verbs can be nominalized to create abstract nouns that refer to the action or state denoted by the verb, facilitating the construction of more complex syntactic structures like relative clauses and noun complements.

The process of nominalization in Manipuri also interacts with other grammatical elements, such as tense, aspect, case markers, and mood, providing additional layers of meaning and nuance. The flexibility

of nominalized forms in different contexts, whether in forming complex noun phrases or gerund-like constructions, allows speakers to convey varying degrees of specificity, definiteness, and emphasis in their communication. Additionally, nominalization plays an important role in discourse organization, particularly in the creation of topic constructions and the elaboration of arguments.

This study aims to explore the functional perspectives of nominalization in Manipuri, examining its syntactic behavior, semantic roles, and pragmatic applications. By analyzing examples drawn from both natural spoken data and written texts, the paper seeks to elucidate how nominalized forms contribute to the richness of Manipuri syntax and meaning. Understanding the functions of nominalization in Manipuri will not only deepen our knowledge of the language but also contribute to broader discussions in linguistics regarding the universal and language-specific roles of nominalization across different typologies. Through this analysis, the study hopes to provide a clearer picture of the ways in which nominalization shapes both sentence structure and meaning in Manipuri discourse.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to investigate the functional aspects of



nominalization in Manipuri. The research methodology involves the collection and analysis of both natural spoken data and written texts to offer a comprehensive understanding of how nominalized forms function syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically in Manipuri language. The study focuses on analyzing authentic language use across different contexts, such as casual conversation, formal discourse, and literary texts, to capture the full range of nominalization in everyday communication and more structured, formal settings.

**Spoken Data:** The spoken data for this study were collected from informal conversations and dialogues involving native Manipuri speakers. These conversations were recorded in natural settings, such as interviews, discussions, and everyday exchanges. The selection of participants included a diverse range of individuals in terms of age, gender, and social background, ensuring a broad spectrum of language use. The goal was to capture the variations and flexibility of nominalized forms in different conversational contexts, paying particular attention to how speakers use nominalization to convey action, agency, and abstract concepts.

The conversations were transcribed, and instances of nominalization were extracted for further analysis. Special attention was paid to the syntactic structures where nominalized forms occurred, as well as the semantic roles they played. These transcriptions

formed the core dataset for identifying common patterns and understanding the pragmatic functions of nominalized forms in speech.

**Written Texts:** To complement the spoken data, written texts were collected from a variety of sources, including newspapers, short stories, essays, and academic articles in Manipuri. These texts were chosen because they represent more formal registers of the language, offering insight into the usage of nominalized forms in written academic and literary contexts. The texts were analyzed to examine how nominalization contributes to sentence complexity, cohesion, and argumentation in more structured forms of writing.

The written corpus helped identify how nominalized forms function in the construction of noun phrases, relative clauses, gerund-like constructions, and other syntactic structures. It also provided a context for understanding how nominalized forms interact with other grammatical categories, such as tense, aspect, and case marking, in formal writing.

**Survey of Native Speakers:** To gain further insight into the usage and perception of nominalized forms in Manipuri, a small-scale survey was conducted with a group of native Manipuri speakers. The survey aimed to gather data on speakers' intuitions regarding the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic roles of nominalization. Participants were asked to complete a



series of tasks that involved identifying nominalized forms in sentences, as well as providing examples of nominalization in their own speech. This allowed for a more focused exploration of speakers' personal experiences with and understanding of nominalized forms, complementing the linguistic data collected from spoken and written sources.

The data were analyzed using a combination of syntactic, semantic, and functional linguistic frameworks to examine the structure, meaning, and use of nominalized forms in Manipuri. The following steps outline the process of analysis:

**Syntactic Analysis:** The syntactic analysis focused on identifying the structure of sentences in which nominalized forms occur. Specifically, the study investigated the types of nominalized forms present, whether they are derived from verbs, adjectives, or other parts of speech, and how these forms fit into larger sentence structures. Special attention was given to the formation of noun phrases, where nominalized forms act as head nouns or modifiers, and to their role in creating complex sentence constructions like relative clauses and gerund phrases.

The analysis also focused on case marking and syntactic relations, such as subject-object relationships, in sentences containing nominalized forms. This helped identify the syntactic positions that nominalized forms occupy and the relationships they

maintain with other elements of the sentence, such as verbs, adverbs, and adjectives.

**Semantic Analysis:** The semantic analysis sought to understand the meanings conveyed by nominalized forms in Manipuri. Nominalization often serves to abstract actions, events, or states, transforming them into concepts or objects. The study examined how nominalized forms were used to express abstract nouns, processes, or results, as well as their role in representing agency, action, or experience. For example, nominalizations from verbs such as "run" or "speak" can convey the idea of "running" or "speech" as an abstract noun or event.

Moreover, the research explored how nominalized forms interacted with other lexical items, such as verbs and adjectives, to create specific meanings. This analysis highlighted the flexibility of nominalization in Manipuri, as nominalized forms could take on multiple semantic roles depending on their syntactic and discourse context.

**Pragmatic and Discourse Analysis:** In addition to syntactic and semantic analyses, a pragmatic approach was taken to understand the communicative functions of nominalized forms in Manipuri discourse. Nominalization often plays a significant role in organizing information and structuring discourse. By converting actions or events into nouns, speakers can focus on specific aspects of an event, make abstract



statements, or introduce topics for further elaboration. The study investigated how nominalized forms were used in various contexts to manage information flow, create emphasis, or signal shifts in focus.

Through the analysis of both spoken and written data, the study explored the role of nominalized forms in organizing arguments, creating coherence in longer texts, and highlighting key concepts in conversations. Special attention was given to how nominalized forms interacted with other discourse markers, such as conjunctions and topic markers, to shape the overall structure of discourse.

**Quantitative Data Analysis:** For the survey of native speakers, quantitative methods were employed to analyze the responses to questions regarding the perception and use of nominalized forms. The survey included Likert-scale questions on the frequency of nominalization in various contexts and its perceived ease of use. Data from these surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in speakers' intuitions and the factors that influence their use of nominalized forms.

**Ethical Considerations:** Ethical considerations were paramount in this study. All participants, including those in the survey and in the recorded conversations, were informed about the study's purpose and gave their consent to participate. The privacy of participants

was protected by anonymizing all data, and care was taken to ensure that the recordings and texts were securely stored. No personal identifying information was used in the analysis or presentation of the findings.

This methodological approach, which combines linguistic analysis with data from spoken and written corpora, provides a robust framework for examining the complex functions of nominalization in Manipuri. By analyzing nominalized forms from multiple perspectives—syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and speaker perception—this study offers a comprehensive view of how nominalization shapes communication in the Manipuri language. The mixed-methods design allows for a deeper understanding of the functional roles of nominalized forms and their significance in both everyday language use and more formal linguistic contexts.

## RESULTS

The analysis of nominalization in Manipuri revealed several important findings related to its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic functions. The study found that nominalized forms in Manipuri play a crucial role in both everyday communication and formal discourse, contributing to sentence complexity, cohesion, and meaning.

**Syntactic Findings:** Nominalized forms in Manipuri were found to primarily function as head nouns in noun phrases, modifying other nouns or verbs. They can also





act as the core of relative clauses, gerunds, and other noun-like structures. It was observed that nominalized verbs, especially those formed by suffixing verb roots with nominalizing affixes like "-ning" or "-pa", tend to form complex noun phrases that convey actions, events, or states. For instance, the verb "chana" (to do) can be nominalized as "chan-pa" (the act of doing), which can then be further embedded in larger syntactic structures.

Moreover, case marking on nominalized forms revealed that they behave similarly to other noun forms in terms of case agreement. For example, the use of ergative case markers with transitive verbs that are nominalized suggests that nominalized forms maintain syntactic roles consistent with their verbal origins, such as subject or object.

**Semantic Findings:** Semantically, nominalization in Manipuri serves to abstract actions, events, and states, transforming them into conceptual or object-like entities. This process enables speakers to discuss processes and actions in a more general, abstract sense, without referencing the specifics of an event or action. For example, the verb "pung" (to kill) is nominalized as "pung-pa" (the act of killing), which can be used in various contexts to discuss killing in an abstract, general sense.

Additionally, nominalized forms are used to express complex concepts like intention, purpose, or result.

Nominalized forms such as "nung" (to sleep) or "na" (to eat) can be transformed into abstract nouns like "nung-pa" (sleeping) or "na-pa" (eating), which not only denote the act but can refer to the general experience or idea associated with the action. This semantic shift plays a crucial role in making statements more generalized and less specific to a particular instance of an action.

**Pragmatic Findings:** Pragmatically, nominalization is used to structure discourse by introducing new topics or emphasizing specific aspects of events. In both spoken and written forms of Manipuri, nominalized forms are often used to refer to actions or events that are central to the ongoing conversation or argument. For instance, nominalizations can serve as the subject of a sentence, thus directing focus toward the action rather than the agent performing it.

In informal spoken contexts, nominalized forms often appear in the context of narrating or summarizing events. This usage is particularly prominent in stories, news reports, and everyday conversations, where speakers use nominalizations to abstractly refer to past actions or ongoing processes without delving into the specifics of the agent or action.

Furthermore, in formal discourse, nominalizations help to build complex arguments and add coherence to texts. In academic or literary Manipuri, nominalizations allow for the development of abstract concepts and



the structuring of arguments in ways that emphasize the processes or results of actions rather than the actions themselves.

**Survey Findings:** Survey results from native Manipuri speakers indicated that there is a high degree of awareness of the role of nominalized forms in their language. The survey respondents indicated that they frequently use nominalized forms in both speech and writing, especially in contexts requiring abstraction or generalization. Many respondents also expressed a preference for using nominalized forms when discussing complex concepts or topics that involve process-oriented thinking (such as scientific or philosophical discussions).

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of nominalization in Manipuri, demonstrating its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic importance in everyday and formal communication. Nominalized forms in Manipuri allow speakers to manipulate the structure and meaning of sentences, enhancing the flexibility and depth of communication.

Syntactically, nominalized forms perform key roles in sentence construction by forming noun phrases, relative clauses, and complex argument structures. This syntactic flexibility enables Manipuri speakers to build more intricate sentences, making the language particularly effective in conveying complex ideas.

Semantically, the ability to abstract actions and events into nominalized forms is a vital tool in Manipuri. This transformation from action-oriented to concept-oriented expressions helps speakers communicate not just what is happening but also why it matters or what it signifies. For example, by using nominalized verbs, speakers can discuss a concept such as "learning" (from the verb "learn") as an event or process, without referencing specific instances of the action, thus allowing for a broader, more generalized discussion.

Pragmatically, nominalization plays a critical role in shaping discourse. By enabling speakers to introduce new topics or emphasize key events, nominalization helps organize conversation and argumentation, facilitating clearer and more effective communication. In both spoken and written contexts, nominalized forms allow speakers to focus attention on processes and results rather than on specific individuals or actions. This is especially important in academic, formal, or narrative contexts, where the focus is often on abstract concepts or generalizations rather than specific details.

Furthermore, the survey data suggests that native Manipuri speakers have a strong intuitive understanding of the role of nominalized forms in their language, supporting the idea that nominalization is a core feature of Manipuri grammar and communication.



## CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic functions of nominalization in Manipuri. By examining how nominalized forms contribute to the structure and meaning of sentences, as well as how they are used in everyday discourse and formal contexts, this research highlights the importance of nominalization as a linguistic device that allows speakers to abstract, generalize, and organize their thoughts.

The findings suggest that nominalization is central to Manipuri communication, allowing for greater syntactic flexibility and the creation of abstract concepts. It serves as a crucial tool for both casual conversations and formal writing, where it facilitates clarity, coherence, and depth of expression. In future research, further exploration of the specific types of nominalized forms and their use in various genres of Manipuri discourse could provide a more detailed understanding of how nominalization functions in different registers and contexts.

Additionally, this study contributes to the broader field of linguistics by offering a detailed account of nominalization in a less commonly studied language. The functional perspectives explored here can serve as a basis for comparative studies with other languages that exhibit similar nominalization processes,

enhancing our understanding of universal and language-specific features in grammatical structures.

## REFERENCES

1. Bhat, D.N.S & Ningomba, M.S. 1997. Manipuri Grammar. Munchen, Newcastle: Lincom Studies in Asian Linguistics 04.
2. Grierson, G.A. and Konow, S. Eds. 1903-28. Linguistics Survey of India. Volume III, Parts 1-3, Tibeto-Burman Family. Reprinted in 1967. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
3. Rebika Devi Soibam. 2013. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Contrastive Study of Tamil and Manipuri. Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University.
4. Sobhana L. Chelliah, 1997. A Grammar of Meithei. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
5. Yashawanta Singh, Ch. 2000. Manipuri Grammar. New Delhi: Rajesh Publications.