

## A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF NOMINATIVE FEATURES IN ENGLISH TERMINOLOGY

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**Annotation.** *This article explores the role of nominative features in English grammar, with a particular focus on their relevance in technical and terminological contexts. Unlike highly inflected languages, English primarily expresses nominative case through word order and limited pronominal distinctions. The paper analyzes how subjects are marked syntactically rather than morphologically, discusses the implications of abstract case assignment in generative grammar, and examines the prevalence of nominative structures in scientific and formal discourse. The findings highlight the functional significance of nominative features in maintaining clarity and syntactic coherence in English terminology.*

**Keywords:** *nominative case, subjecthood, generative grammar, case features, terminology, minimalist program, morphosyntax, technical English, word order.*

**Introduction.** The concept of nominative features is central to syntactic theory, particularly within generative grammar frameworks. In most Indo-European languages, the nominative case is assigned to the subject of a finite clause, often marked overtly. English, however, presents a unique case where nominative features are largely abstract, detectable only in specific pronominal forms and syntactic behavior. This study aims to explore how these features function in English, particularly within technical and terminological constructs, and to what extent they reflect broader linguistic principles.

English demonstrates nominative marking primarily through personal pronouns:

- Nominative: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*
- Accusative: *me, you, him, her, it, us, them*

These pronouns illustrate how nominative features are retained only within this closed class, whereas most English nouns (e.g., *John, the dog, the system*) remain uninflected across grammatical roles, relying instead on position and verb agreement.

Subjecthood and, by extension, nominative case are primarily determined by syntactic position. English's SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) structure strongly favors nominative interpretation of pre-verbal noun phrases:

- *The researcher analyzed the data. (The researcher is nominative by position.)*

Passive constructions and topicalizations can complicate this, yet the structural assignment remains predictable:

- *The data was analyzed by the researcher. (The data occupies subject position and bears nominative features syntactically, though semantically a theme.)*

**Research methodology.** This study employs a qualitative linguistic methodology grounded in descriptive and theoretical analysis. The research is designed to investigate the syntactic and morphological representation of nominative features in English, particularly in the context of technical and terminological usage. The methodology consists of the following key components:

The research is anchored in the generative grammar tradition, specifically Chomsky's Minimalist Program, which provides a formal structure for understanding abstract syntactic features such as nominative case. Concepts such as feature checking, movement, and syntactic hierarchy are central to the analysis. The study also references insights from descriptive grammar to contrast theoretical predictions with actual language usage.

The corpus for analysis includes:

- Academic and Scientific Texts: Selected from peer-reviewed journals and technical manuals in fields such as biology, computer science, and linguistics to examine terminological expressions in subject positions.
- Contemporary English Usage: Examples drawn from reputable grammar corpora (e.g., British National Corpus, Corpus of Contemporary American English) to capture authentic subject structures in various registers.
- Canonical Grammar References: Including *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002) and *Syntax: A Generative Introduction* (Carnie, 2013), used to support theoretical analysis.

Findings are interpreted in light of theoretical expectations and descriptive patterns. Special attention is given to:

- The extent to which English relies on syntactic position rather than morphological marking.
- The prevalence and implications of nominative structures in terminological usage.
- Deviations and ambiguities, especially in passive and non-canonical constructions.

**Research discussion.** The analysis of nominative features in English reveals key insights into how subjecthood is syntactically constructed in a language with minimal morphological case marking. Unlike inflection-rich languages such as Latin, Russian, or German, where nominative case is overtly marked on noun morphology, English primarily signals nominative status through syntactic position, verb agreement, and a limited set of pronominal forms. One of the central findings of this study is the abstract realization of nominative features in English. While nominative case is not visibly marked on most nouns, it is functionally present and syntactically required. This aligns with principles in generative grammar where nominative case is assigned in the specifier position of TP by finite T. The absence of overt case morphology in most noun phrases does not eliminate the grammatical need for nominative assignment. Instead, the role is fulfilled through structural configuration, particularly fixed subject-verb-object (SVO) order and agreement with the verb.

The distinction between subject and object forms in English pronouns (e.g., *he* vs. *him*) provides critical evidence for the existence of case features. These pronouns are the last remnants of a more complex case system once present in Old English. Their behavior supports the theoretical view that nominative case is checked in specific syntactic environments and that violations (e.g., *Him went to the store*) are ungrammatical, further illustrating the syntactic constraints that enforce nominative assignment. A notable outcome of the corpus analysis is the prevalence and consistency of nominative structures in technical and scientific discourse. Terminological expressions, especially complex noun phrases like *DNA replication*, *the control group*, or *algorithmic processing*, frequently serve as syntactic subjects. Their uninflected forms confirm that syntactic position and verb agreement, rather than morphology, are the dominant cues for subjecthood in specialized registers. These structures tend to favor clarity, neutrality, and information-focused phrasing, often through passivization or agentless constructions (e.g., *The experiment was conducted*). This preference further supports the observation that in formal English writing—particularly in scientific or academic contexts—there is a functional alignment between syntactic subject and discourse topic. The use of passives, for example, emphasizes processes and outcomes rather than agents, aligning with objectivity and depersonalization in technical writing.

The findings underscore the importance of nominative features as an abstract yet essential component of English syntax. The minimalist approach offers a compelling account of how these features are checked and assigned without overt morphology. From a practical perspective, this understanding has implications for fields such as:

- Natural Language Processing (NLP): Algorithms must recognize subject positions based on structure rather than inflection.
- Second Language Acquisition (SLA): Learners of English may struggle with subject-verb agreement and pronoun case due to the lack of visible cues.
- Terminology Development: Writers in scientific and technical fields benefit from syntactic norms that enhance clarity and coherence through consistent nominative constructions.

While this study focuses on Standard Written English, further research could explore nominative case behavior in spoken discourse, non-standard dialects, and learner language. Additionally, comparative analysis with more morphologically rich languages could deepen the understanding of case loss and syntactic compensation strategies in English. The findings contribute to our understanding of how modern English compensates for morphological loss through rigid syntactic rules and position-based case assignment. Furthermore, the study highlights the intersection between syntactic theory and real-world usage, especially in formal registers where nominative structures are not only grammatically essential but also pragmatically effective. Future research could extend these insights to explore how nominative features interact with discourse structure, language variation, and computational models of syntax. Ultimately,

understanding the hidden mechanics of nominative case in English deepens our knowledge of how language functions beneath the surface of its most familiar forms.

**Conclusion.** This study has examined the role of nominative features in English, emphasizing their abstract syntactic realization and their relevance in both general usage and technical terminology. Although English has largely shed overt case markings for nouns, nominative case remains a critical grammatical feature, particularly evident in the behavior of personal pronouns and in the syntactic structure of subject positions. Through the application of generative grammar theory—especially the Minimalist framework—it becomes clear that nominative features are checked structurally rather than morphologically. This syntactic dependency is especially pronounced in terminological usage, where clarity, precision, and consistency are paramount. In scientific and academic writing, complex noun phrases often occupy subject positions, reinforcing the structural prominence of nominative case without overt marking.

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