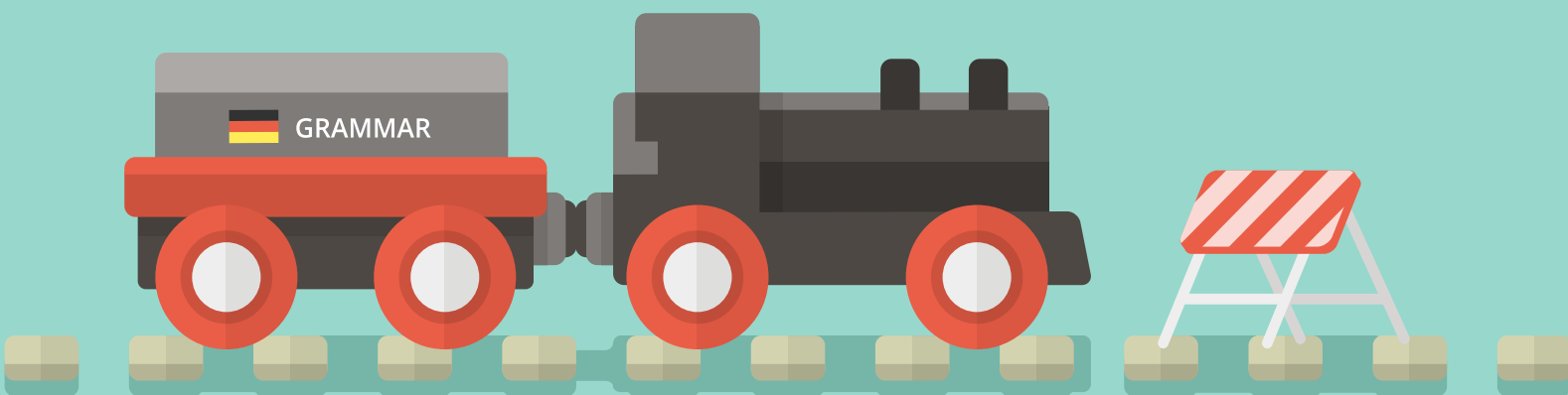


# #3: Nominalstil & Verbalstil



One of the most frustrating things about translation is re-reading a rough draft, only to find a phrase that seems somehow cumbersome or awkward in the target language—but without knowing exactly why.

While German shares many common features with English in terms of vocabulary and grammar, important differences exist around style, especially regarding Nominalstil and Verbalstil. So what are they and what does the difference mean for translators?

## Nominalstil

Meaning is conveyed mainly through nouns or noun phrases, with verbs just 'stitching' the sentences together. In German, this style is generally preferred in high-register environments such as specialist and scientific texts, as well as in the media.

- Die Arbeiterschaft wird von dem Arbeitsrecht vor Ausnutzung, Überlastung und Benachteiligung geschützt.

## Verbalstil

A more even balance between verbs and nouns, where verbs and verbal phrases play a bigger role in transmitting meaning. Verbalstil is used more frequently in descriptive texts and familiar writing, where the use of verbs to convey meaning makes texts livelier.

- Die Arbeiterschaft wird arbeitsrechtlich davor geschützt, dass sie ausgenutzt, überlastet und benachteiligt wird.

The real issue with the two types comes when translating into English, which tends to prefer verbal style. That's why it can often sound clunky and overly stuffy if the Nominalstil from the original text is preserved when a sentence is translated. Compare the following for example:

- Während dieses Praktikums konnte ich eine Vertiefung von meinen EDV-Kenntnissen sowie das Erlangen von einem Grundkenntnis der französischen Sprache erzielen.
- During this internship, I was able to achieve a **deepening** of my IT skills and the **obtainment** of a basic grasp of French.
- During this internship, I was able to **deepen** my IT skills and **obtain** a basic grasp of French.

This can quite often be the cause if a German to English translation just doesn't 'sound right' to a native speaker's ear. So if you're reading through a rough draft and can't quite put your finger on the problem with a certain passage, the Nominalstil vs. Verbalstil tool can be a good place to start.

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