

A NEW LOOK AT PASSIVIZATION: SOME REASONS TO USE THE PASSIVE VOICE IN ENGLISH DISCOURSE

The present study aims to measure the importance of passive structures in discourse, having a brief look at their formal characteristics with a view to analysing why they are used in certain Present-Day English text-types from the International Corpus of English in its British Component (henceforward ICE-GB). We lay the groundwork to deeply examine the syntactic and discursive reasons that justify why the passive variant is employed by speakers in actual discourse within the system of voice. Our aims are directed to draw on the idea that there exists a connection between syntax and the popularly current paradigm termed discourse analysis in order to elicit new answers about the present state of affairs interwoven in the world of the discourse analysis (D. BIBER ET AL. 1999; M. CELCE-MURCIA and E. OLSHTAIN 2001; A. DOWNING and P. LOCKE 2002; T. GIVÓN 1993; A. HEWINGS 2005; R. HUDDLESTON and G. PULLUM 2002; B. JONHSTONE 2002). Our analysis consists of a two-folded task. On the one hand, we identify 4180 passive examples in spoken language and 6010 in written texts and we classify them in groups. On the other hand, we assess their discursive behaviour by presenting the principles at work in the human mind and establishing the criteria why there are more passive sentences in writing than in speech. Finally, we bring to light some remarks gathered from the previous research.

Key words: syntactic and discursive reasons, syntax, discourse analysis