

Passivization and the Cognitive Complexity Principle in WEs: The case of finite and non-finite complementation clauses

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Rohdenburg (1996:149) investigates the role played by processing complexity in the choice between grammatical alternatives in present day English. He lists passive constructions among cognitively more complex contexts where more explicit variants tend to be favored. In this respect, my present work adds to previous research by testing the effect of Rohdenburg's complexity principle (1996:151) on the envelop of variation between finite and non-finite complementation clauses (CCs) in terms of the use of passivized verbs in the CCs of verb *hope* across five varieties of English; namely British and American English (as norm-providing ENL varieties) and Singapore, Indian, and Philippine English (as nativized L2 varieties of English). Furthermore, previous research (e.g. Leech et al. 2009, Seoane and Williams 2006) has shown that there is a decreasing tendency of *be-passive* in British and American English academic writing in the second half of the 20th century. This considered, my results will show whether the tendency towards higher use of active voice can also be found in the CCs of *hope*.

The present study aims to: 1) examine the distribution of finite (*that-clause*, zero-complementizer clause) and non-finite (*to-infinitive*) CCs in the previously mentioned varieties, and 2) shed more light on the reasons that might have contributed to the infrequent use of the passive construction in the CCs of *hope* across these varieties; such as the recurrent use of first person pronouns (Hundt and Mair 1999), the colloquialization of written English (Mair and Leech 2006), etc.

The database used for this study consists of the British, American, Singapore, Indian, and Philippine English components of the ICE corpora as well as Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English. The findings show a tendency for the previously stated varieties to favor non-finite constructions with *hope*, when the subject of the CC is co-referential with the subject of the main clause. It is also shown that the passive voice in the CCs is infrequently used in all varieties and regional variation is not highly significant. Additionally, the presence of passive constructions in the CCs is likely to result in the use of grammatically more explicit variant i.e. finite CCs in the varieties under examination. The results also show that the tendency towards the use of a more subjective style is not compatible with the use of the passive constructions, given that first person pronouns (*I* and *we*) account for above 75 % of all pronouns in main clauses across these varieties. More results will be discussed in detail in the presentation.

References

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