

# **The Function of the Passive Voice in Poe's Short Stories**



Michael Andreas Swanson Falkenberg

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Department of Foreign Languages

University of Bergen

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## **ABSTRACT**

Did Poe use the passive voice to create suspense in his horror fiction? This question was the starting point of the thesis. To explore this question, I chose to use Poe's short stories. I drew on literature focusing on the passive voice and the passive as a style choice.

Three research questions were developed. The first question focused on the use of the passive in different styles of writing. The second question was related to the use of the passive to indicate lack of control. The third question concerned the placement and pattern of passives in different styles. Previous research was useful in helping me design the empirical tests to be able to answer my research questions. The findings did not show support for the question that was the starting point of the thesis. However, the research did uncover some interesting results related to the use of adversative, neutral, and positive passives in Poe's different styles of short stories.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CDA = Critical Discourse Analysis

DA = Discourse Analysis

NP = Noun phrase

ppt = passives per thousand words



# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The underlying argument of this thesis is that there is an aspect of narration that hints at the narrator's emotional state or personality. Korzybski (1937) argues that what we are experiencing is shown in the way we act, and especially in how we speak and narrate our reality both to ourselves and to others. "We are sort of a mirror, and we mirror only inside us, in our nervous system what is going on outside of our nervous system" (Korzybski 1937:43). This quotation illustrates how internal emotions are externally displayed. This emotional state and interpretation become a determining factor in how the narrator is portrayed through their description of themselves within their textual world. Jonson claimed "Language most shows a man: Speak, that I may see thee" (Jonson 2004).

In this thesis, I address if language, specifically the use of passives, is used to create feelings. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the possible correlation between the use of the passive voice and the style of writing. The context for the research is Edgar Allan Poe's writing. My presupposition is that Poe used the passive voice in his horror fiction to create a feeling of unease. This thesis will focus on the specific style marker and how it is used across the spectrum of writing styles that Poe utilized.

In this chapter I describe the characteristics of the gothic short story and depict other styles of short fiction that Poe used. Then, to build support for my choice of investigating Poe's short stories, I present some of the stylistic elements that Poe has used in his writings. This is followed by a brief presentation of the passive in the discourse of victim mentality. Based on this, I argue for the reason the passive can be expected in Poe's horror stories. This leads to a precautionary note concerning whether Poe's use of the passive was a style choice. I present the three research questions that I attempt to answer in this thesis.

## 1.1 Poe's short stories

The context for the research is the genre of short stories written by Poe. Short stories, or articles as Poe sometimes referred to them, were Poe's most frequently used genre. In addition to the short stories, he wrote one piece of longer fiction, as well as essays on composition and a significant number of poems. Although there were other authors who had

written short works of fiction, Poe is credited (Lawrence 1917:274) for the invention of the short story.

Poe is perhaps best known for his gothic fiction. Gothic fiction has many literary qualities that distinguish it from other types of fiction. The term gothic most likely comes from the use of stylistic elements common in German fiction of the time. This is supported by the critical review of *Metzengerstein* by the reviewer Joseph C. Neal:

These grotesque and arabesque delineations are full of variety, now irresistibly quaint and droll, and again marked with all the deep and painful interest of the German school. (Neal 1938; in Thomas & Jackson 1987:279)

Jeffrey Meyers (1992) specifies Poe's use of the classical gothic elements in the story *Metzengerstein*:

...Poe first dramatized his own violent emotions and employed many of the Gothic properties that characterize his classic stories: an ancient, decayed, remote, secluded, vast and gloomy building, with strangely shaped rooms, armorial trophies, artificial lighting, vivid colors, underground vaults and somber tapestries. (Meyers 1992:64)

Although Poe may be best known for his gothic stories, he was also considered the father of detective fiction. Poe shaped the forensic logical reasoning in his detective, C. Auguste Dupin. This was before Arthur Conan Doyle introduced the world to Sherlock Holmes (Sova 2001:163). Doyle cites Poe as the creator of detective fiction and is quoted as saying: "Each [of Poe's detective stories] is a root from which a whole literature has developed... Where was the detective story until Poe breathed the breath of life into it?" (Doyle; in Knowles 2007:67).

This thesis focuses on the specific style marker and how it is used across the spectrum of writing styles that Poe utilized. Poe's writing, in addition to the gothic short story and detective stories, includes other styles. This stylistic variation allows me to investigate whether Poe's use of the passive can be observed as a style marker.

## **1.2 Stylistic elements in Poe's writing**

Poe published his theories on writing in the form of two essays on composition. These included *The Poetic Principle* and *The Philosophy of Composition*. In *The Philosophy of Composition* Poe specified rules about how long the work of fiction should be, in order to be able to retain the attention of the reader. One of the guidelines was that the length should not exceed what could be read in a single sitting.

If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression- for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. (Poe 1846)

He created this model during his active period of writing so not all his stories followed this guideline. It was achieved in *The Tell-Tale Heart* which was published in 1846. *The Philosophy of Composition* was written that same year, just three years before he died, and after the bulk of his professional career. Since the model was developed late in his career, we cannot hold it up as a standard by which we may judge all his works.

Another element of Poe's philosophy of composition is unity of effect: "My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable" (Poe 1846). An example of unity of effect is his use of unstable narrators. We cannot trust what unstable narrators say because of their compromised perception, mental instability or vanity. The use of unstable narrators, along with Poe's use of imagery and supernatural elements, makes the reader uncertain as to what is happening. These elements contribute to making his fiction powerful. In *The Pit and the Pendulum* a lot of the story takes place in pure darkness. The reader can rely only on the narrator's sense of touch to try to get a glimpse of what is happening. Later in the story it becomes clear that the narrator's description was misleading in part because he had no sense of how much time that had passed since he was placed in the pit, nor did he know when he was awake and when he was sleeping. Sensory input, how people know that they are alive in this world, is one of the things that Poe was playing with in this story (Zimmerman 2005).

Poe, during his lifetime, was well known for his literary criticism. He worked for several newspapers, perhaps most famously as editor of *Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine* (Silverman 1991:143-4). He would criticize works for being too preachy or for only partly covering a hidden agenda. One example of this was his criticism of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in what became known as the Longfellow War. Poe criticized Longfellow's poetry for being derivative, preachy and thematically plagiarized (Zimmerman 2005:96). What we learn from Poe's criticism is his sense of what makes good writing. Poe believed that original works should stand on their own as independent stories and not lead people to contemplate deeper meanings behind them.

Poe's style has been the focus of many academic studies. Zimmerman's (2005) book on Poe focuses on Poe's rhetoric and style and the variations within the use of styles.

While learning how to use the Python and modules for text analysis, I was able to find all references to the first person (I, me, mine, my) that the narrator used in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Seven percent of the text was self-referential, as opposed to three percent as a mean for his entire collection of short fiction. This percentage would likely be higher if one were to include homophone of 'I' and 'eye'. I mention this as a stylistic element to demonstrate that Poe focused on the narrators' perception of the action.

Poe famously utilized phonemes in *The Raven*. One example of this was the use of the word *nevermore*. Poe felt it sounded sad and drawn.

That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel in connection with r as the most producible consonant.  
(Poe 1846)

Although Poe did not comment extensively about the function of language and style, it would be a mistake to consider his lack of commentary to mean that he was not conscious of how other linguistic elements affected the style of a text. For example, he purposely used an Irish accent (another style marker) in *Why the Little Frenchman Wears his Head in a Sling*.

It is possible to conclude that he was aware, consciously or not, of other stylistic elements. The focus here is on how he used a given stylistic element. The use of style may be noticeable even if not consciously done.

### **1.3 The passive voice**

In my research I focus on the passive voice, specifically on how and when the passive voice was used as a stylistic element. I am particularly interested to see if the passive was used in situations where the narrator would be negatively affected by what was happening.

The reason for this presupposition concerning the passive voice in situations where the narrator would be negatively affected is a quote from Stephen King's book, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. There he outlines why the passive should be avoided. King is not a linguist; however, he is a best-selling author. This should give some merit to his opinions about writing and on style.

Verbs come in two types, active and passive. With an active verb, the subject of the sentence is doing something. With a passive verb, something is being done *to* the

subject of the sentence. The subject is just letting it happen. *You should avoid the passive voice.* I'm not the only one who says so; you can find the same advice in *The Elements of Style*. (King 2000:122; emphasis original)

King argues that the passive should be avoided because it indicates that something is being done to the subject. He implies that the narrator should be an active participant. The language should portray the subject as active and use the active voice. We can then assume that the reverse should then also be true, namely that when the subject is letting something happen to them, the voice should be passive.

Quirk et al. (1985:159) give a good definition of what grammatical voice is: “A grammatical category which makes it possible to view the action of a sentence in either of two ways, without change in the facts reported.” Quirk et al’s criteria for the passive are presented in table 2.2.1.

The passive is marked by shifting the position of the object and the subject. The clause is rearranged by using the auxiliary and the past participle. Instead of using the terms object and subject, it is common to use agent and patient. One of the main reasons for shifting the voice of a sentence is because: “one of the major functions of the passive is that it demotes the agent of the verb (often the person doing the action of the verb), while giving topic status to the affected patient (the entity being acted on)” (Biber et al. 1999:477). The constructed sentences below illustrate how the agent and the patient’s position has shifted in the two sentences, without changing the facts reported.

(1) Active voice:

*Agent* acts upon **patient**.

(2) Passive voice:

**Patient** is acted upon by *agent*.

#### **1.4 The passive in the discourse of victim mentality**

This thesis focuses on how the passive voice is used in fiction. My supposition is that Poe may have used the passive in a strategic way to create horror in his gothic stories. As stated above, the use of the passive indicates that something is happening to the character. In sentence (2) the **patient** is acted upon by *agent*. Victim mentality and learned helplessness are two concepts in which a person may feel acted upon. I draw on the concepts of victim mentality and learned helplessness to place the use (or not) of the passive in this perspective.

The passive may be a part of the discourse of victim mentality. Victim mentality or

victimization are defined “as the individual’s self-perception of having been the target, either momentarily or over time, to harmful actions emanating from[sic] one or more other persons” (Aquino & Byron 2002:71). People who suffer from victim mentality often describe themselves as being acted upon. This is tied to the lack of personal responsibility they feel since they blame outside sources for their behavior. Their narrative reality is focused on themselves as being acted upon by outside forces. Hayakawa (1947:104) points out how our interpretation of the outside world is based on our thoughts: “[...] we confuse the abstraction that is *inside* our heads with that which is *outside* and act as if the abstraction *were* the event in the outside world”. Korzybski’s (1937) concept of the mirror, as mentioned earlier, is relevant here. People with victim mentalities will often blame others for how they feel, making themselves passive and not in charge of their own emotions.

The concept of victim mentality or victimization is linked to learned helplessness. Learned helplessness was first conceptualized in the late 1960's by Seligman. “Such uncontrollable events can significantly debilitate organisms: they produce passivity in the face of trauma, inability to learn that responding is effective, and emotional stress” (Seligman 1972:407). Seligman at the time was working on classical conditioning, the study of how subjects respond to stimuli. These two personality traits, victim mentality and learned helplessness, are often comorbid, meaning that people often suffer from both at the same time. Learned helplessness is a feature that both humans and animals can exhibit. If the subject has repeatedly experienced adverse stimuli, then he/she learns that there is no point in trying to shift the outcome of his/her situation and decides not to waste energy on trying to do so (Seligman 1972:407–408).

These two personality traits, although not directly linked to the fiction that I will examine, served as the inspiration for looking at how people speak to themselves, and how people choose to narrate their own reality. The goal of the horror fiction genre is to create fear in the reader. The reader should be scared by the action in the story. The author, by putting the reader in the situation of the narrator, minimizes the distance between oneself and the story. The reader is an observer but also a participant who becomes the narrator, and thus experiences the victim mentality.

The focus on a given grammatical feature may lead to the impression that the author was deliberately using or not using it to create a certain effect upon his readers. I take a cautionary note as to whether Poe’s use of the passive was a deliberate or strategic choice. I acknowledge that writers may not choose to utilize one specific grammatical feature to get a point across. Rather, authors may shift their writing style to match the narrative in the same

way that speakers code-shift to match their social situation. The use or non-use of the passive voice may be an effect of this shift.

## **1.5 Research questions**

The discussion above leads to three questions that I will investigate in this thesis.

### **1.5.1 Research question 1**

Is there a difference in the use of the passive in different styles of writing? In this thesis I look at the use of the passive in different styles. The underlying supposition was that Poe used passives to create suspense in his horror stories. Do the findings imply that the use of the passive was a style choice?

### **1.5.2 Research question 2**

Does the use of the passive indicate a lack of control? In addition to researching the use of passives in the different styles, I investigate whether the passives are used to convey adversative situations. Did Poe use the passive in negative (adverse) situations to indicate that the narrator of the story was not in control of the things happening to him?

### **1.5.3 Research question 3**

Is the placement and pattern of the passives in different styles related to the sense? If the passive has a defined function, for example, demonstrating a lack of control or a situation that is bad for the narrator or main character, does it also have a defined place in a particular part of the story? Does Poe, when writing suspense stories, use passives to build up suspense toward the end of his stories?

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the passives and their use. In Chapter 2 I present the theoretical basis for the thesis. I discuss the passive as compared to the pseudo-passive and present the forms the passive can take. I draw on the context of the thesis presenting the role of language and personality. I present several fields of analysis and argue for my choice of stylistics. The methodology is presented in Chapter 3. I explain what qualifies as a token and how I compare them. I present the method of analysis for each of the three research questions. The findings are presented in Chapter 4. I report on how passives are used in different styles,

and how passives are used in adversative, neutral and positive senses. I also present the patterns and place of the passives in the different styles. Where possible, I compare my findings to those of other researchers. The final chapter summarizes and draws conclusions. I also highlight some of the limitations of this study, and present areas of future research.



## CHAPTER 2. THEORY

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether the passive is used as a style choice. I begin this chapter by discussing the passive voice in comparison to the active voice. I then describe different forms of the passive. The practical grammarians' views on the passive are presented, as are the theoretical grammarians' views. I draw on Poe's philosophical perspective on writing to support my proposition that the use of the passive can be viewed as a strategy. I present theoretical perspectives which can be viewed as a basis for the three research questions. I conclude the chapter by arguing for my choice of stylistics to address the research questions.

### 2.1 The passive

To be able to examine my research questions concerning Poe's use of the passive, it is important to understand what the passive is, both semantically and syntactically, as well as the relationship between the active and passive. In this section I present the passive and then discuss the relationship between the active and the passive.

#### 2.1.1 Definition of the passive voice

Pence & Emery (1963) give the following grammatical and semantic definition of the voice:

Voice is that property of a verb which makes clear whether the subject of the verb performs the action or receives the action described by the verb. If the subject performs the action (or is in the state or condition) described by the verb, the verb is said to be in the active voice. If the subject receives the action, the verb is said to be in the passive voice. (...). The passive voice employs the auxiliary verb *be* combined, in its many forms, with the past participle of the notional verb. (Pence & Emery 1963: 42–3).

In this definition, we find both the grammatical definition, a form of *to be* plus the past participle of the notional verb (hereafter called: *be* + Ved), as well as the semantic definition, namely the subject is the causer or receiver of the action of the verb. The *be* + Ved structure does not always mark a passive, as we will see later. Passives of being, that is states in which

the subject finds himself, should be distinguished from passives of becoming. (Pence & Emery 1963:42–3). As I present later, not all linguists share these definitions of passives as true passives.

The passive is used most often with a hidden or unknown agent. However, the use of the term someone or something can act as an alternative. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate this point.

(1) John helped Peter.

(2) Peter was helped by John.

(Bækken 2003:200)

Examples (1) and (2) should be seen as stylistically and syntactically different, but semantically the same. Linguistic necessity means that what is being said (message) does not define how it is being said (style). The reason for having different ways of saying one thing is that they serve different functions.

## **2.1.2 Different forms of passives**

### **2.1.2.1 *to be* + Ved**

The most common form of the passive is a form of *to be* as the passive auxiliary, plus the past participle (*to be* + Ved). This form is called the short passive. When an agent is added at the end it is known as a central passive (*to be* + Ved + *by* N). The passive construction can also use a form of *get* in the place of *be*.

While *to be* + Ved is the most common form, there are incidents in which the auxiliary is dropped. A passive clause without an auxiliary is known as a bare passive (Language Log 2011, accessed 31 July 2020). This form is often used in headlines to grab attention, as shown in example (3) below.

(3) City Hall damaged by storms.

(Language Log 2011, accessed 31 July 2020)

### 2.1.2.2 *to be* + Ved + Ved

In the most common form of the passive there is a *to be* corresponding to each instance of *V+ed*. However, in some instances there are multiple *V+ed* constructions after a single *to be* as shown in example (4).

- (4) A teenager was shot and killed while rapping on Facebook Live.  
(CNN 2020, accessed 24 February 2020)

The use of multiple *V+eds* after a single form of *to be* is common as an attention grabber in headlines taken from news outlets.

Svartvik (1985:4) looks at a set of passive constructions and observes a formal feature of the passive: “they all have verbs combinations of *be* (or auxiliaries commutable with *be*) and a past participle”. This claim is too broad and too subjective. This early definition of Svartvik’s may work well when looking at the theoretical aspects of the passive, but not when it comes to finding passives in a large corpus, since this would cause a great deal of difficulty in finding tokens of the passive. The commonly used verbs that are commutable with *be* are *get* and *become*, which are discussed below.

Other linguists argue that there are more forms that need to be included. These are mainly forms that have a different auxiliary. Jespersen (1909:120) offers this definition: “[t]he English passive is formed with an auxiliary, generally *be*, but often also *get* or *become* [...], and the second [i.e. past] participle”. This definition works better when dealing with an untagged corpus.

### 2.1.2.3 *get* + Ved

The *get* passive uses the auxiliary *get* instead of *be*. Schwarz (2015) investigated the differences in the use of the *be* and *get* passives in the Corpus of American Soap Operas to find if there were contexts in which one was favored over another. Schwarz found that *get* was favored in negative contexts. Example (5), taken from Schwarz, illustrates a clearly adversative sense that is commonly associated with the *get* passive. An exception to the adversative sense was the use of the phrase “get married”, which occurred often enough to warrant its own category. The adversative and other types of sense will be covered in section 4.3.2.

(5) He got killed.

(Schwarz, 2015:154)

This sentence taken from Schwarz is an example of a clearly negative situation which is commonly associated with the *get* passive.

#### 2.1.2.4 Statal and actional passives

Onions (1971:99) distinguishes between types of the passive: “The forms of the passive have two distinct meanings: they may express continuous or habitual action (...) or they may express the state resulting from an action”. Curme (1931:443) refers to these as *statal* and *actional* passives. Example (6) illustrates the difference. The first passive in example (6) is statal; the second passive is actional.

(6) The Door *was shut* at six when I went by, but I don’t know when it *was shut*.  
(Curme 1931:443; my emphasis)

Jespersen (1909:98) refers to these as passives of *becoming* and *passives of being*.

#### 2.1.2.5 *v-ing* and *v-able*

The discussion of other forms of passives includes the *v-ing* passive construction and the *v-able* construction. Puckica’s (2009) examples include:

(7) *v-ing* passive: This needs checking by a structural engineer.

(8) *v-able* passive: Those tenements shall be recoverable by the donor or his heirs.  
(Puckica 2009:215)

Example (7) is usually known as a gerund form in that it has nominal as opposed to adjectival properties. Puckica (2009:224) claims that it should be considered a verb because it can take a noun as a subject, it can be modified by an adverb and not an adjective, and it cannot be modified by an article.

Example (8) illustrates different characteristics as it is closer to an adjectival form rather than a verb form. These verb forms cannot take a complement and can usually be classified as adjectives as they can be modified with *very*, *seem*, and *look* (ibid: 231–32). These are mentioned as possible passives, since they could be considered as passives in some

cases and have been discussed by others as forms of the passive.

#### 2.1.2.6 Medio-passive and causative construction

Granger (1983) includes in the *be+past participle* construction in spoken English forms such as the medio-passive and the causative construction. These constructions, although they are not active, do not qualify as passive, but rather as a third or middle-voice. Example (9) illustrates the middle voice, or medio-passive. A *by* phrase can be added indicating that it could be a passive; however, since there is neither a past participle nor an auxiliary it cannot be said to be a passive construction. The lack of an agent indicates that it is not an active construction. If a person should choose to have something done to them, then it is a causative construction, i.e. the subject of the construction has the semantic role of causer, the agent is not mentioned, but is implied. See example (10). Including the medio-passive under the category of the passive should be questioned as it is technically not a passive but a third type of voice. The causative construction should not be seen as a passive semantically or syntactically, since the causer is causing the action to be performed on itself, and there is no auxiliary commutable with *to be*.

(9) The medio-passive: This shirt washes easily.  
(Granger 1983:3)

(10) Causative construction: I had my hair cut yesterday.  
(Granger 1983:3)

#### 2.1.3 Grammatical and semantic passive

The standard grammar of the passive construction is described by Bækken (2003) as a complex verb phrase consisting of auxiliary *be* + *ed* participle. I have included this description because it allows us to look at the syntactic structure rather than semantic structure. Bækken's work is used as an introduction to English grammar for Norwegian university students. Bækken does not discuss the subject of the passive in the same depth as works such as Svartvik (1985), Granger (1983), Halliday (1976) and Puckica (2009).

The auxiliary *be* in the passive changes the clause to a passive rather than an active one. However, this grammatical definition of the passive voice may include constructions that appear passive but are in fact active. Many argue that the difference between the active

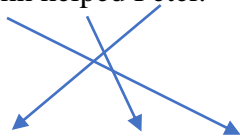
voice and the passive voice is only grammatical, that they represent the same semantic structure. Chomsky's (1957:42–43) transformational grammar tried to make the point that the active and the passive are just two different ways of saying the same thing. However, Poutsma (1914:29) argued "... it is a mistaken notion that that an active sentence and its passive conversion are identical in meaning". To conclude, to be able to find passive sentences we must look at sentences that are in fact both grammatically and semantically passive. "We are therefore justified in analyzing and describing linguistic construction from both a semantic and a grammatical perspective and in seeking to relate the two analyses" (Jackson 1990:iii).

#### 2.1.4 Semantic function

The argument has been made that the passive constructions can only exist as complements to the active voice. Granger's (1983) structural semantic approach argues that passives are only in direct opposition to actives, that is, all passives are derived from actives. With this approach, we only look at the passives when they are in direct opposition to the actives. Passive constructions that are derived from active constructions are referred to as inverted subjects or objects.

An active sentence is inverted to a passive one by means of adding *be + ed* (and an agent phrase if possible). If there is an agent included in the passive it is known as an agentive passive as opposed to a non-agentive passive. The following examples (11) and (12) previously shown as (1) and (2) illustrate the transformation of an active to a passive sentence.

(11) John helped Peter.



(12) Peter was helped by John.

(Bækken 2003:200)

Jespersen (1909:3) recognized this transformation in his statement: "What in the active is an object, is made the subject in the passive". The implication of this would mean that every active sentence has a passive counterpart. Granger (1983:6) argues that this is not necessarily true and suggests verb phrases that cannot be passivized such as those in examples (13–16).

(13) To change color.

(14) To lose courage.

(15) To keep guard.

(16) To take leave.

(Granger1983:6)

These examples illustrate that one cannot make a passive construction of all active constructions. This would indicate that voice is not always a choice to be made by the author. While some active sentences do not have passive counterpart, we will see later that passive sentences can only be called true passives if they have an active counterpart.

## 2.2 Practical grammarians' views on the passive

In a passive statement, the object of a verb in the active sentence is in the subject's place. In other words, the patient is being acted upon by the agent. The interesting part here is that the initial noun phrase (NP) is acted upon, namely that something is done to it. It is not always the case, however, that the patient is affected by the agent. With action verbs this is usually the case (such as in example 11). With perception verbs however, the distinction is different. Perception verbs describe observing, or in some other way sensing an action, without being affected by it.

PERCEPTION VERBS refer to a sense perception and include items such as *feel*, *hear*, *see*, *smell* and *taste*. When these verbs denote nonvolitional sense perception ie when the perception takes place independent of the perceiver's will, they do not accept the progressive aspect. However, when a perception verb refers to *volitional* sense perception, i.e. when the perception is intended or endeavored on the part of the perceiver, the progressive aspect is already admitted. The difference between non-volitional and volitional perception sometimes finds expression in the form of two distinct verbs, such as in *hear – listen (to)* and *see – look (at)*. (Bækken 2003:191)

When examining perception verbs it becomes necessary to discriminate between volitional and non-volitional perception verbs. The non-volitional verbs denote ability more than they denote action. Perception verbs still function grammatically as verbs even though they are actions which at times may be involuntary.

When we start asking questions about the meaning of the possible passive constructions, we realize that we are looking for a sentence that is both grammatically and

semantically passive. For this, we can draw on the criteria in Quirk et al.'s (1985:167–71) *passive gradient*.

### **2.2.1 Quirk et al.'s passive gradient**

Quirk et al. (1985) introduce us to the passive gradient and passive scale. The passive gradient is a series of questions wherein one may be able to find out if a construction is passive, or if it is a pseudo passive.



- (a) Is there an active analogue?
- (b) Can the participle be coordinated with an adjective?
- (c) Can the participle be modified by *quite* or *rather*?
- (d) Can *be* or *get* be replaced by a lexical copular verb like *feel* or *seem*?
- (e) Is there no possibility of agent addition?
- (f) Is the active version of the sentence perfective?"

(Quirk et al. 1985:167)

To be termed as a central passive and not merely a pseudo or medio passive, the sentence must stand up to this scrutiny: one should be able to affirm (a) and negate (b) – (f). Only if it is possible to make an active version of the same sentence can it be viewed as a passive construction. This will eliminate the doubt of an adjectival phrase masked as a passive, which may be the case with many *to be* + Ved structures.

*Table 2.1: Quirk et al. 's Passive Scale*

Quirk et al's passive scale				
Central or true passives		Semi-passive or mixed passive	Pseudo-passive	
With agentive phrase	Without agentive phrase		With current copula verbs, e.g., <i>be, feel, look</i>	With resulting copula verbs, e.g., <i>get, become, grow</i>

Note: taken from Quirk et al. (1972:266)

In table 2.1 we can see the different classifications into which we can place the *to be* + Ved structure. The true or central passive has a direct active counterpart, it cannot be modified, and it may be with or without an agent. The semi or mixed passive has an adjectival function. The pseudo passive only has a surface similarity to the passive voice.

(17) Central or true passive: The president's authority has been much diminished.  
(Pullum 2014:60)

Example (17) meets Quirk et al's criteria for a central or true passive without agentive phrase: it has an active counterpart; it cannot be coordinated with an adjective: it cannot be modified or replaced by *quite*, *rather*, *feel* or *seem*; an agent can be added; and the active version of the sentence is not perfective.

(18) Semi-passive or mixed passive: I am very interested in poetry.  
(Granger 1983:112)

Example (18) shows us the semi-passive or mixed passive category. This category is marked by having adjectival characteristics, even though a verb is used.

(19) Pseudo passive: He went to mass for the first time since he **had been taken ill**.  
(Granger 1983:100, my emphasis)

Example (19) does not qualify as a central passive since *be* can be commuted with *feel* or *seem*; as such it must be classified as a pseudo passive.

The different categories that Quirk et al. present in table 2.1 of the *to be + Ved* structure shown above are not universally agreed upon, as we will see in the next section.

### 2.2.2 Granger's classifications

Granger (1983:181–90) has concentrated on the *be + past participle* construction, and classified it into seven categories, namely, passives, adjectival pseudo-passives, verbal pseudo-passives, mixed *be + Ved* combinations, unusual passive category, peripheral combinations and stative combinations. Examples are from Granger (1983).

(20) Passives: That attitude was maintained by the government in the further nine days of debates in the Lords.

(21) Adjectival pseudo-passives: Perhaps the tick is rather more complicated.

(22) Verbal Pseudo-passives: She's been rather elusive as far as I'm concerned, so I don't really know her.

(23) Mixed *be + Ved* combinations: I am amazed at the price of houses out here.

(24) Unusual passive category: I feel we're all faced with this problem.

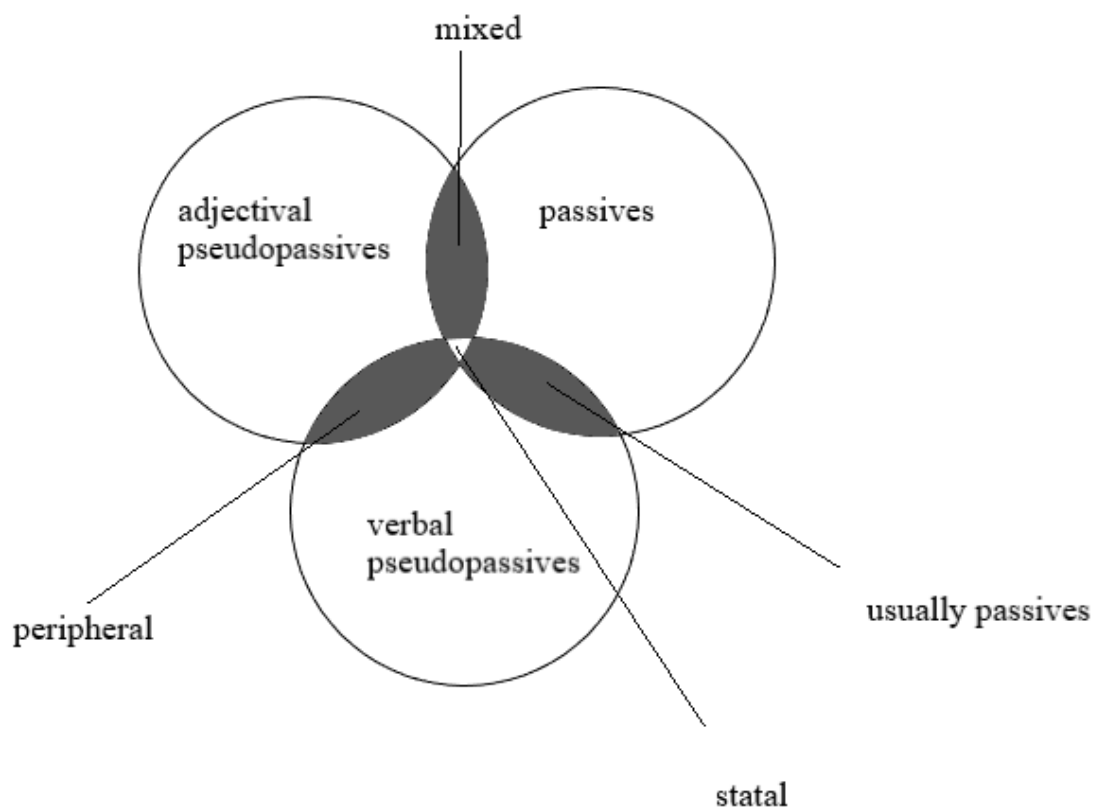
(25) Peripheral combinations: I'm fairly closely connected with that work.

(26) Stative combinations: But I have these two houses that are built on to the next door's back garden sort of thing...  
(Granger 1983:181–90)

Granger's classification is very detailed. The latter four categories, examples (23–26), are the borderline cases, meaning that although they qualify as passives, their active counterparts are uncommon or unusual constructions. They are closely related to the passive, and sometimes included in the first category.

Passives are *be* + *Ved* combinations which stand in direct alternation to a semantically equivalent active verbal group. They are said to be agentful if they contain an overt agent [...] and agentless if the agent is simply potential. [...] Adjectival pseudo passives are *be Ved* combinations which do not stand in alternation to a semantically equivalent active verbal group whose *Ved* form behaves like a central adjective. [...] Verbal Pseudo passives are similar to adjectival pseudo passives as regards their relationship with the active, but differ from them in that the *Ved* form display no adjectival features. [...] mixed *be Ved* combinations [...] differ from passives inasmuch as they display adjectival characteristics [...] usually passive category contains doubtful: they all share the characteristics of passives but the active counterpart is far less common, sometimes even unlikely. [...] Peripheral combinations make up the third intermediate zone. *Be Ved* forms will be classified in this category if they display only one of the two adjectival features used by Quirk et al. [...] i.e. they cannot function attributively, but can be used predicatively after verbs other than *be*. (Granger 1983:108–13).

Granger (1983) illustrates the seven types of the *to be* + *Ved* in figure 2.1. The figure illustrates that the mixed, usually passive, peripheral and statal categories exist in the intersection of their parents' categories.



*Figure 2.1 Granger's Classifications of Be+Ved Structures (Granger 1983:107)*

Although the two linguists chose different terms, Granger's (1983) and Quirk et al.'s (1978) classifications overlap. Quirk, et al.'s (1978) central passives are the same as Granger's (1983) passives. Semi-passives are to some extent equal to mixed *be-Ved* combinations. Pseudo-passives are divided into adjectival and verbal pseudo-passives in Granger's classification.

### **2.3 Theoretical grammarians' views on the passive**

The theorists we have looked at so far, Jespersen, Quirk et al., and Granger, have been practical grammarians. Their focus has been on how the passive is used. By looking at real world examples of the passive they created classifications and sub classifications in order to better categorize how the passive is used. In this section the focus will be on how the theoretical grammarians, Chomsky and Halliday, view the passive.

Chomsky (1957:42) introduced transformational grammar. In this theory, language has a deep structure and a surface structure. The deep structure is the hidden sentence that contains all the meaning which is expressed through the surface structure, the sentence we express.

Chomsky examined the passive voice as it related to his first theory of transformational grammar, and concluded that the passive is derived from an active deep structure. Therefore, there is a choice between using the active and the passive. He outlines what he calls the passive transformations as such:

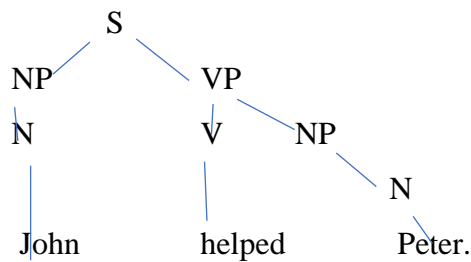
$$\begin{array}{l} \text{NP1 - Aux - V - NP2} \\ \longrightarrow \text{NP2 - Aux + be + en - V - by + NP1} \end{array}$$

*Figure 2.2 Passive transformation (Chomsky 1957:43)*

Figure 2.2 shows how the active sentence transforms from the top sentence to a passive sentence through additional elements. The active-passive correlation is viewed by Chomsky as a side by side structure. The passive transformation means that the passive is derived from the active.

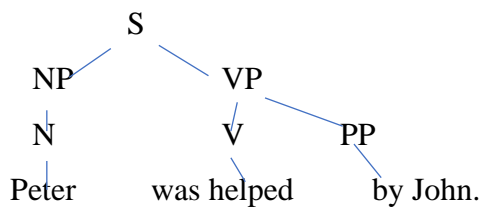
In later versions of transformational grammar, known as the Standard Theory, Chomsky (1965) moves away from this claim. Although the passive and active structures may be derived from the same deeper structure, the two do not carry the same meaning according to the Standard Theory. Chomsky's claim opposes the view of some of the practical grammarian researchers, such as Pence & Emery (1963), who argued that the passive was a direct function of the active. Jespersen's (1909) theory also opposes Chomsky's definition. His theory is that the only difference between the active and the passive is a case of perspective. To understand more of how the two schools of thought differ we need to look further at transformational grammar.

Chomsky's first theory on transformational grammar viewed the passive and active structures as derived from the same deep structure. The argument for transformational grammar was that if two sentences can be traced back to the same deep structure, then they should, in theory, be the same sentence (Chomsky 1957). The deep structure can be defined as the structure of a sentence before applying the transformational rules. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 use the examples (1) and (2) from earlier in the chapter.



Deep structure

Figure 2.3 Deep Structure of a Sentence (Chomsky 1957)



Surface structure

Figure 2.4 Surface Structure of a Sentence (Chomsky 1957)

In Chomsky’s first model of transformational grammar these derive from the same deep structure. In later revisions of his theory, to what is known as the minimalist theory, Chomsky (1993) claimed that there was no distinction between deep and surface structures. He later (1995) argued that there were no deep structures.

An opposing point of view to Chomsky’s early work is given by Katz & Postal (1964:72–3) who claim that: “Passives are not derived from actives, and the argument that the transformation which produces passives will change the meaning fails even if passives and their corresponding actives are different in meaning.” If this were the case, then all passives should have an active equivalent. As discussed above, Granger claims that they do not.

Halliday (1979) presents us with a different perspective of the passive as a function of the active. The view that the passive and active have the same meaning is different when we look at Halliday’s three functions of language.

If the ideational component is language as reflection (the speaker as observer of reality), and the interpersonal component is language as action (the speaker as intruder

in reality), the textual component is language as relevance (the speaker as relating to the portion of reality that constitutes the speech situation, the context within which meanings are being exchanged). (Halliday 1979:60)

When we see the speaker (or writer) as the observer of reality, we understand the textual reality in the same way as the speaker does. The speaker's focus therefore comes into play as the representation of reality. According to Halliday (1976:161) the passive has precisely the function of moving the agent away from the point of prominence, or even removing it altogether, and placing the patient in the point of prominence. Earlier work by Poutsma (1914) supports Halliday. Poutsma states that the agent, by placing it at the end, is given prominence.

#### **2.4 The passive as a style choice**

The first research question asks if there is a difference in the use of the passives in different styles of writing. This question addresses the issue as to whether the use of the passive is a style choice or necessity.

Strunk (2011) in *The Elements of Style*, one of the most often used style guides, recommends using the active voice rather than the passive. Section 10 of the Elements of Style is entitled "Use the active voice. The active voice is usually more direct and vigorous than the passive" (Strunk 2011:19). He gives somewhat forced examples of the passive. The examples are passives made from actives that would normally not be used as passives unless to accentuate a certain part of the sentence. Below is one such example of the active and the passive voice:

(27) I shall always remember my first visit to Boston.

This is much better than

(28) My first visit to Boston will always be remembered by me.  
(Strunk 2011:20)

These examples appear to be little more than a strawman, aimed at making the point more concise. Strunk does, however, point out that:

This rule does not, of course, mean that the writer should entirely discard the passive voice, which is frequently convenient and sometimes necessary.

The dramatists of the Restoration are little esteemed today.  
Modern readers have little esteem for the dramatists of the Restoration.

The first would be the right form in a paragraph on the dramatists of the Restoration; the second, in a paragraph on the tastes of modern readers. The need of making a particular word the subject of the sentence will often, as in these examples, determine which voice is to be used. (Strunk 2011:20)

Strunk was a professor of English at Cornell University when he first published *The Elements of Style* (the precursor to *The Elements of Language and Style*). It is interesting that he did not feel a need for more of the passive voice in academic discourse. The findings shown in Table 2.2 indicate a high use of the passive for science texts. It is possible that the criticism of the passive was based in part on the professor's frustration of the overuse of the construction. This has been seen earlier with initial use of coordinating conjunctions.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some schoolteachers took against the practice of beginning a sentence with a word like *but* or *and*, presumably because they noticed the way young children overused them in their writing.

But instead of gently weaning the children away from overuse, they banned the usage altogether! Generations of children were taught they should 'never' begin a sentence with a conjunction. Some still are. (Crystal 2012:9–10)

Restricting the use of conjunctions in the beginning of sentences and advising against using passive constructions purely because they are used too often appear to be similar prescriptions. The intent for both is to decrease the overuse. There is general agreement in style guides that the use of the passive voice should be avoided. This is perhaps because of novices are the intended users of style guides. The recommendation to avoid the passive may be a way to limit the passive voice so that writers use it less frequently.

Quirk et al. (1985:166) suggest that the passive voice is used more frequently in informative, rather than in imaginative texts. This makes the use of the passive voice popular when the writer is attempting to be objective and impersonal.

If we look at the passive as a choice that can be made by the author, such as Chomsky (1957) claims can be done by derivation, and Halliday (1979:161) says can be done to shift the focus of a sentence, then the passive becomes a strategic choice. Stanley (1975) claims that when using the passives as a strategy:



The passive voice provides us with a syntactic construction for deceiving our readers into believing that we've given them information when we've not. It is a construction that allows us to lie without lying and only the careful, analytical reader will notice that information is missing. (Stanley 1975:30)

Stanley's strategy for the use of the passive implies that there is some dishonesty in using the passive. This may be the reason that many authors and style-guides dislike the use of the passive. As mentioned earlier, King (2000), had some harsh words to say about the passive voice.

There is a shift of focus with the passive voice from the agent to the patient or, or from one part of the story to another. The focus is more on the patient or object that something happened to rather than the agent of the action. This statement makes sense only if it is applied to agentless passives. If we are being tricked into thinking that we have all the information that we need in the context, then it is clear that there is a piece of information missing (that would have been included in the active analogue). The only piece of information that can be missing is the agent, since the passive voice only needs to include a subject NP and a verb phrase. When the sentences are missing information, the reader makes assumptions to fill in the blanks. How readers interpret passive sentences can shift the understanding of causality.

When people were exposed to reports of crimes, including rape and battery, written in passive voice, their attitudes became more negative towards rape victims, more accepting of rape myths, and more accepting of physical abuse towards women. (Henley, Miller & Beazley 1995:80)

Hiding information from the reader is another use of the passive. Granger (1983) claims that this method of hiding information is frequently used in government documents, scholarly documents etc. while the passive is more unconscious in more informal writing.

Table 2.2 The use of passives in eight text sets

TEXT SET	SAMPLE SIZE IN WORDS	AGENTIVE PASSIVES	QUASI-AGENTIVE PASSIVES	NON-AGENTIVE PASSIVES	TOTAL
'Science' (Texts H, J)	50 000	967 (19.3)	9 (0.2)	178 (3.6)	1154 (23.1)
'News' (Texts D, E, G)	45 000	611 (13.6)	21 (0.5)	77 (1.7)	709 (15.8)
'Arts' (Texts I, K)	20 000	200 (10.0)	6 (0.3)	48 (2.4)	254 (12.7)
'Speech' (Texts A, B)	40 000	261 (6.5)	25 (0.6)	80 (2.0)	366 (9.2)
'Sport' (Texts F)	30 000	211 (7.0)	13 (0.4)	45 (1.5)	269 (9.0)
'Novels' (Texts M)	80 000	354 (4.5)	141 (1.8)	153 (1.9)	652 (8.2)

'Plays'	(Texts L)	30 000	37	(1.2)	64	(2.1)	57	(1.9)	158	(5.3)
'Advertising'	(Texts C)	28 000	51	(1.8)	4	(0.1)	28	(1.0)	83	(3.0)
Eight text sets		323 000	2696	(8.3)	283	(0.9)	666	(2.1)	3645	(11.3)

Note: taken from Svartvik (1985:155)

Svartvik (1985) investigated the different types of passives used in different genres or styles. Table 2.2 supports Svartvik's claims about the passive as an impersonal style. There is also little support for Palmer's (1974: 86–7) claim that "The passive is used when the 'agent – the subject of the active verb – is unknown or unspecified". In most cases, there are fewer quasi-agentive passives and non-agentive passives than the agentive-passives. Crystal & Davy (1969) in *Investigating English Style* look at the passive as a style marker. They note that the passives are used less often in conversational styles, so that there is less use of the passive in informal styles. The results shown in table 2.2 support this, as there are fewer tokens of the passives in plays than in the other genres. Svartvik (1985) concludes that passives are used more often in non-fiction than in fiction.

The results indicate (...) that the major determining factor in the frequency of its use seems to lie in a distinction such as that between informative and imaginative prose rather than in a difference between spoken and written language. (Svartvik 1985:155)

With this background, the thesis will investigate the use of the passives in different styles. The study of style in fiction is known as stylistics, and will later be discussed as an academic discipline, and choice for this thesis.

## 2.5 The use of the passive to indicate lack of control

The second research question addresses the use of the passive to indicate a lack of control. In this section I draw on theories concerning the relationship between language and personality.

### 2.5.1 Linguistic relativity and mind style

The theory of linguistic relativity argues that "The background linguistic system partially determines the associated conceptual system; and [...] a distinctive "world view" concerning the universe and his [the speakers] relations in it" (Black 1959:229). This means that language either controls or influences one's perception of reality. The view that people will present the world in a way that reveals something about the way that they think has been suggested by the theory of linguistic relativity.

The reverse, namely that how one views reality shapes one's language, is known as *mind style*. To understand the narrator's way of describing the events in which they are involved we need to look at the opportunities and limitations of description.

Cumulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another, give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a "mind style". (Fowler 1977:73)

Mind style is the use of a different stylistic option in order to create the narrator's realization of the 'textual world' in which they are living. This forces the reader to see things in the same way as the narrator. Based on the description the narrator gives, the reader will try to find out what is happening. Mind style is a concept borrowed from cognitive linguistics. Leech & Short (2007:187) describe mind style as the distinction between what is happening and what the narrator perceives: "the fictional world is *what* is apprehended, whereas our present concern is with how that world is apprehended, or conceptualized". It is more often used to describe how a number of stylistic elements (of which the passive voice is only one) create a certain style. Mind style is perhaps best described by Fowler (1977:76) as "[c]umulatively, consistent structural options, agreeing in cutting the presented world to one pattern or another give rise to an impression of a world-view, what I shall call a 'mind style'".

The difference between Poe and his narrators needs to be mentioned. We cannot see Poe in his narrator's voices.

I believe [...] that Poe's narrators possess a character and consciousness distinct from those of their creators. These protagonists, I am convinced, speak their own thoughts and are the dupes of their own passion. In short, Poe understands them far better than they can possibly understand themselves. Indeed, he often so designs his tales as to show his narrators' limited comprehension of their own problems and states of mind; the structure of many of Poe's stories clearly reveals an ironical and comprehensive intelligence critically and artistically ordering events. (Gargano 1963:177-8)

Raskin & Shaw (1988) claim that there is a correlation between the use of the first-person pronouns and narcissism personality disorder. While irrelevant as a tool for use on fictional characters written before its publication, the finding does show that different personalities use language differently, and that the personalities are expressed through style markers of language. This suggests that subtle linguistic cues can be used to learn more about, for example, weak personalities and the feeling of lack of control in these works of fiction. The use of stylistics as a discipline for answering these questions will be presented in section

#### 2.7.4.

The second research question will investigate the relationship between the use of the passive and the feeling of lack of control. The investigation will focus on the correlation between passives and adversative situations.

### **2.6 Structuring of sentences**

The third research question addresses whether the placement and pattern of the passives can create a given effect. In this section I draw on the literature regarding the use of language to create an effect. People choose one structure over another for varying reasons. An author who wants to create a certain effect with their writing will choose the structure that is suited best for the effect they want to create.

Iconicity is the reflection, in a statement, of a sequence of events. If two things happen, you mention first what happened first. Sequencing, or sequential order principle, mirrors the sequence of what is being said to the sequence in which things happened. Iconicity is described as the conception of similarity between real world events and the language used to describe them. “The iconicity principle predicts that the linear ordering of main and subordinate clauses mirrors the sequential ordering of the events they describe” (Diessel 2008:465). Not only does iconicity indicate that the first event that happens in the real world is the first event that is described, but also that we process the sentence that way.

While iconicity of sequence is often characterized as a semantic factor, it can be seen as a processing principle that is especially relevant for complex sentences with initial adverbial clauses because these structures are difficult to parse, so that speakers seek to limit the overall processing load by using an iconic clause order. (Diessel 2008:486)

However, this can be manipulated. This is done by moving what the writer or speaker wishes to emphasize to the front of a sentence. There are two ways of doing this, namely fronting and left dislocation. Fronting is moving a clause element to the beginning. Left dislocation is when a sentence is divided into a theme and comment, the theme being introduced first and usually lasting over several sentences. Changing the placement of new or old information to the left or right can be done using the passive voice. Examples (1) and (2) from the start of this chapter show that the new or given information can be changed around using the passive voice. This changes how the reader interprets the story.

The third research question addresses the placement and pattern of the passives in different styles related to sense. The question is whether or not the passive was used as an element of suspense. In the same way in which iconicity can be used to create effect in a sentence, the placement and the patterns of the passives in a story can be used for effect.

## **2.7 Fields of analysis**

There are different fields of analysis for the study of passives. In this section, I will briefly present several of these approaches and evaluate them in terms of the purpose of this research. I then argue for my choice of investigating the passive as a stylistic choice.

### **2.7.1 Psycholinguistics**

The field of psycholinguistics is a potential field of analysis for this research especially when looking at victim mentality. The use of the passive makes the narrator seem inactive in the narration. In a study using psycholinguistics, Johnson-Laird (1968:20) found that readers generally take more time to understand sentences written in the passive. Johnson-Laird's study proved to be interesting for possible research on the uses of the passive and the effect on the mind of the reader. However, it would require a comparative analysis using both active and passive sentences to see if there was a difference in the effects on the reader. A study on the psychological effect of Poe's use of the passive would have been interesting, however, researching readers' perceptions would require a different methodology. This field is mentioned because to ignore it would be to ignore that passive sentences are perceived differently from active sentences.

### **2.7.2 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis (DA) is not an exact science that serves one purpose (Johnstone 2008). Rather it must be thought of as a collection of approaches to real world, non-fiction communication between people. This communication happens in a variety of forms including speeches, instructions from authority figures (police, doctors etc.) or conversations between social equals. Discourse in all its forms falls in under the category of texts, but the category text encapsulates more than discourse. There are, however, some communicative events that do not fit into the category of discourse such as visual arts, statues and other objects.

Johnstone (2008) suggests that discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary method of analysis, often incorporating fields such as sociology and anthropology. It incorporates a wide

variety of methods of analysis. Discourse analysis was described by Johnstone (2008:4) as “a methodology that can be used in answering many kinds of questions”. The questions posed in discourse analysis are often linguistic, such as uses of certain phonemes, grammatical constructions and so on. However, many researchers who use the methods of discourse analysis do so in order to find elements behind the linguistic, such as the reasons and motivations behind choices. In looking for the motivation behind the statements being made, discourse analysts look beyond the clause or sentence, to the whole of the conversation or text.

### **2.7.3 Critical discourse analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is related to discourse analysis. Both study what is behind the real-world language produced and how that is manifested in the language. However, CDA is concerned with ideology and power in language. CDA was originally discussed in Fairclough’s book, *Language and Power*. “This book is about language and power, or more precisely about connections between language use and unequal relations of power” (Fairclough 1989:1).

Johnstone, (2008) in her book, *Discourse Analysis*, describes how critical discourse analysis is used as an umbrella term that utilizes varying methodologies to identify social dynamics, power structures etc.

The goal of CDA is thus to uncover the ways in which discourse and ideology are intertwined. (...) every choice about how to produce discourse, but also every choice about how to interpret it – is a choice about how the world is to be divided up and explained. Every choice is strategic, in the sense that it is flavored via that choice and not via others. Among the many things that discourse producers make choices about are these. There are almost always several ways to organize a sentence, all of which, if considered in isolation, mean more or less the same thing. (Johnstone 2008:53–4)

It is common to look at how dialogue reveals power structures when looking at power dynamics through linguistics. This field of study discusses the how the power relationship between two people are expressed, often in the context of gender. A powerless person might ask for verification of his/her statements more often than claiming something to be true. This is perhaps due to the powerless person’s lack of self-esteem that has made him/her fundamentally unsure about the statements. The person with the most power in a conversation would be the one that interrupts or makes definite statements that affect both parties. This is

not due to greater knowledge, but rather to a greater self-esteem, or being in a perceived or actual position of authority over the other person.

CDA emerged from a field of study known as critical linguistics, and while they may differ in some sense, they are both concerned with ideology hidden behind language. One of these aspects that is concerned with the passive is critical linguistics (Jaworski & Coupland 2006).

Some of the key linguistic/discourse features discussed in critical linguistics include: nominalization, passivation and sequencing. They are used for ideological control and ‘masking devices’ (Ng and Bradac 1993) as they allow speakers or writers to withhold the identity of the actors and the causality of events. For example, nominalization, as ‘*Failure* to display this notice will result in prosecution’ and passivation in ‘John was murdered’. (Jaworski & Coupland 2006:474; original emphasis)

Jaworski & Coupland here identify how speakers can manipulate one’s perception of events using phrasing or of withholding certain information. Manipulation can also happen through false equivalencies or presenting correlations as causations.

Discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis have focused on real life situations as opposed to fiction. “Our objective is to focus on language in social life [...]” (Fairclough 1989:vi). Using DA or CDA would perhaps be possible for this study if the text to be analyzed only consisted of dialogues between characters that were imitating real conversations, such as in drama.

#### **2.7.4 Stylistics**

In this section I discuss the function of style and use that to develop my argument for the choice of stylistics as the field of analysis for my research. As described in 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 the research questions focus on Poe’s use of the passive as a style choice.

##### **2.7.4.1 The Function of style**

The function of style in fiction can be difficult to separate from the fiction itself. One can look at the style as being determined by the fiction. This means that how something is written is a function of what one is writing. Examples of this are using an academic style to write about an academic topic or an informal style to relay a humorous anecdote. There are, however, times when one deliberately uses an ‘incorrect’ style to achieve a certain effect. In looking at the style of a text, we need to be able to separate the style from the text. There is a question of

whether this can be done. The dualist view claims that this is possible. This view claims that there are two elements to a text, namely the message and the style. This is what Leech & Short (2007) refer to as *content* and *form*.

There are two types of dualism. The first theory is what Leech & Short (2007) call *dress of thought*. This theory states that style is used as an adornment, as decoration. The second theory of dualism is that the style is the way in which the author chooses to express him or herself. The choices of style are then limited to the different ways in which the author can express him or herself. In this case every text has a style. Regardless of how little the author tries to color the narrative there will always be an element of style in a text.

The Russian formalist school, as represented by Shklovsky (1916; in Lemon & Reis 2012), reduced fictional structures to two elements, *plot* and *story*. This is similar to Leech and Short's *dress of thought*.

They distinguished *syuzhet* (**plot**) from *fabula* (**story**), defining the first as how the events are actually presented in a **narrative** and the second as how those events would be recounted chronologically. (Murfin 2003:424; emphasis original)

Regardless of how it is viewed, the story cannot be presented without a style, and the style of the story cannot have a function without the story.

Shklovsky wanted to separate the style and the story. If these can be separated, then we are able to look at the style as different from the story. Separating the style and story allows us to see the style as a function of the story, namely that the story determines the style that is used. Changing the style of the story will change how it is perceived and thus change the impression of the story. Poe mentions that the mood of a text defines how the text should be written. As mentioned in the introduction, Poe uses the example of the sounds in *The Raven* as an example of low sonorous sounds.

The debate as to whether the style should function as a part of the story or should be seen as separate (or separable) from the text is not the focus of this thesis. Rather for this thesis, the focus is on the style choice made by the author. Poe should be viewed as an author who made very deliberate stylistic choices when writing, not only in how his characters expressed themselves but also in how the story is presented. The choice in how to present a story is made on several levels starting with whether it should be written as a play or as a first-person account, right down to the use of dialect or idioms that the characters use. Language serves several different functions. Giving and receiving information is only one of



the functions of language.

#### 2.7.4.2 The choice of stylistics

The field of stylistics is seen by many as being a discipline that is related to discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis. The field of stylistics can be viewed as the interplay between the linguistic aspect of fiction and the literary aspect of fiction. The field of stylistics is an obvious choice for this research, as it is concerned with the writing style.

This study falls into the category of stylistics, as it seeks to find meaning behind the linguistic choices that Poe made. Zimmerman's (2005) multivariable approach to studying Poe looked at the different linguistic as well as rhetoric elements found in Poe's fiction and how they worked together to create an effect. Looking at several variables, Zimmerman focused on the effect and how the linguistic elements created the effect. I will be looking at a single linguistic element and determining the effect.

Stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to *language*. The reason why language is so important to stylisticians is because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text. The text's functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation. While linguistic features themselves do not constitute a text's 'meaning', an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible. (Simpson 2004:2)

It is most common to use the methods from comparative literature or literary criticism when studying literary texts. These methods do not fall under the discipline of linguistics, even though literary criticism sometimes uses methods or classifications from linguistics. Looking at the style of a text from a linguistic viewpoint brings us to stylistics. "Doing stylistics thereby enriches our way of thinking about language and, as observed, exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of (literary) texts" (Simpson 2004:3). While much can be said about realism in fiction as well as methodological similarities between these three fields of analysis, this study falls within stylistics on the basis of the source material and the research questions.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I present the corpus used for the study, and how it is divided in order to answer the research questions. I present methods used to determine the passives, and their placements. I then discuss the methods used to analyze and present the data.

### 3.1 Classification of Poe's short stories

To address my first research question which focuses on whether there is a difference in the use of the passive in different styles, it becomes necessary to differentiate the styles of Poe's writing.

As mentioned earlier, Poe's writing includes more than the first-person gothic fiction for which he is famous. In order to compare the occurrence of passives in stories in which, for example, the narrator is directly involved in the action as compared to a story told by an omniscient narrator, it was necessary to classify Poe's short stories into different styles. If the narrator is directly involved in the action, then the story will have a different style than a story told

To answer the research questions, I needed to classify Poe's works of short fiction into different genres or styles. Broadly defined, a genre is a set of works that share:

...a set of similarities some (but by no means all) of which are shared by those works classified together. Viewed this way, genre is a convenient, though arguably loose and arbitrary, categorizing and descriptive device that provides a basic vantage point for examining most historical and many modern and contemporary works. (Murfin & Ray 1998:190)

Genre is too broad a term for classifying Poe's works of short fiction. The reason for this is that the method of analysis calls for a closer division of the narrative works. I will use the term *style* to divide Poe's works into smaller categories. This has been attempted before, for example, Stauffer (1996) divided Poe's stories into different styles, based on certain stylistic elements.

Altogether, there are five distinct styles, which may be divided into two broad categories, the *ratiocinative* and the *intuitive*. The three ratiocinative styles are orderly style, characterized by parallelism and antithesis, by complex sentences, by

transitional elements, usually by more abstract terms, by fewer adjectives and highly charged emotional words, by normal word order, by the use of transitional devices, by a polysyllabic latinized vocabulary, and by precise word choice. [...]

The two intuitive styles, on the other hand, are characterized by repetition, by piling on of adjectives, by loosely coordinated or short sentences, by evocative, archaic or poetic vocabulary, by parenthetical expression, and by emphasis upon the sound of the words themselves. (Stauffer 1996:457)

Under the Ratiocinative Style we find the Plausible/Verisimilar, the Critical/Analytical, and the Hyperbolic. Under the Intuitive style we find the Parabolic and the Arabesque. Some of the placements are obvious. *The Tell-Tale Heart* is placed in the Arabesque category due to its focus on details and emotional tone. The Dupin stories are placed in the Critical, Analytical category, since they are clearly works of detective analysis, have complex sentence structure and avoid emotional outbursts (Stauffer 1996).

Stauffer's five categories may be a useful way for analyzing Poe in comparative literature. However, it may be a less useful classification for differentiating the contrasting styles of Poe's short stories for the purpose of this research. Stauffer lays out only a few examples of the five styles giving little evidence of the different styles and in which style the different stories would belong. The categories appear to be open to interpretation that may result in unintentional placement of the stories in the categories. Also, other classifications of Poe's works based on style did not attempt to show what works would fit into what styles.

I used an observational approach to classify Poe's work into the different styles. I was able to distinguish eight stylistic categories. This allows me to distinguish the first from the third person narratives and separate the dramatic fiction. The eight categories are:

1. Landscape Sketches
2. Detective Fiction
3. Adventure
4. First-Person Horror
5. Third-Person Horror
6. First-Person Humor
7. Third-Person Humor
8. Angelic Dialogues

### **3.1.1 Landscape sketches**

The three works included as landscape sketches are interesting because they do not fit into any other style, nor do they have any plot. They are descriptions of landscapes.

Poe uses this style for dramatic effect to set the scene for the other stories. Most of the first page of *The Fall of the House of Usher* could be seen as a sketch, although a nightmare sketch when compared to the other stories in this style. In this story, the landscape description sets the scene for one of Poe's most famous works. It is, however, only used to set the scene for a story. For this reason, the story is not placed in this category.

### **3.1.2 Detective fiction**

“Edgar Allan Poe is commonly regarded as the father of detective fiction” (Hayes 2003:133). I have included in detective fiction all the stories written about the detective character, C. Auguste Dupin. I have also included the spoof he wrote of the detective genre, *Thou Art The Man*, as it is an exaggeration of the style of the Dupin stories.

### **3.1.3 Adventure fiction**

The stories that fall into the category of adventure fiction are all written in the first person. This gives the sense that it was written by the person who experienced it, to better create the sense of the reader being there with the narrator. In this style I have also included the hoaxes that he wrote and attempted to have published as news stories. Although these are written as deception, they can also be considered as adventure fiction.

### **3.1.4 Horror**

Poe is famous for his horror stories. Some horror stories, such as *The Masque of the Red Death*, have a very explicit supernatural element, for example, the anthropomorphized plague that haunts the mansion. In other stories the supernatural element is hinted at but never explicitly stated. An example of this is the heart beating in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

#### **3.1.4.1 First-person horror**

This is the most famous of Poe's styles. It is a surprisingly small category considering its notoriety and reason for so much of Poe's fame. These stories are narrated by a character who is part of the story. We need to be wary of what is happening, since we may have an unreliable narrator.

#### 3.1.4.2 Third-person horror

The most famous story in this style is *The Masque of the Red Death*. Although it is written with a lot of emotion and suspense, it is still written from the point of view of an omniscient narrator.

#### 3.1.5 Humor

Poe is, perhaps, least known for his humorous stories, but they make up a surprisingly high percent of his work. Not all readers will view these as being humorous. The stories have some supernatural elements but make light of the situation. If *The Premature Burial* were written in this style then it would be concerned with the narrator's boredom of being inside a box instead of his claustrophobia. The humor category is a difficult one to classify as some of the stories are classified as humor as defined by the time period in which they were written. *A Tale of Jerusalem* is a parody of *Zillah, a Tale of Jerusalem*, by Horace Smith. It makes more sense to read it as a reaction to Smith's work instead of as an independent work.

*The Duc de L'Omelette* was meant as a satire of Nathaniel Parker Willis' works. Willis was perhaps the best known writer of his time. He aided Poe in publishing his works as well as offered advice on his writing. The reason I classify this as a humorous story is the juxtaposition of the theme and the style of the story.

*Bob-Bon* is a satire of the classical philosophers. It is similar to *The Duc de L'Omelette* in that the protagonist meets the devil but makes fun of his appetite for souls.

##### 3.1.5.1 First-person humor

In addition to humor, the supernatural elements come into play in this style. This is exemplified in the story *Loss of Breath*, where the supernatural element is that the narrator can breathe but is still alive. The point of the story is how awkward the experience would be. He encounters trouble when he cannot talk and does not want to be studied as a curiosity.

##### 3.1.5.2 Third-person humor

Many of the stories in this style are written as satires of other stories. The supernatural elements come directly into play here. An example is *The Duc de L'Omelette* in which the main character finds himself in hell, face to face with the devil and only escapes by beating the devil at a game of cards.

### **3.1.6 Angelic dialogues**

The angelic dialogues give us an insight to Poe's views of the supernatural. They are a series of three dialogues of mythical beings discussing earthly affairs. These stories seem to draw inspiration from the Socratic dialogues. I have chosen to include the angelic dialogues in the study, although there are only three relatively short works in this style. The three stories total 6600 words. They are different from the other styles in that they are written as dialogues and not as works of prose. The reason they are included despite this is to provide a counterpoint to the other works of short fiction and to the other styles. It also makes possible a comparison with the plays that were included in Svartvik's (1985) research.

### **3.2 Identifying the passives**

The focus of the first research question is the use of the passive in different styles of writing. This section focuses on the method used for identifying and classifying constructions of the passive voice.

To find the passives, I identified lemmas of *to be* that appear before a past participle. This created a list of potential passive constructions. This needed further classification to determine central passives from other constructions.

### **3.3 Determining the central passives**

Using the list that resulted from identifying the passives, I sifted through the results and determined the passives that qualified as central passives using Quirk et al.'s (1985) criteria (see 2.2.1). This method of sifting through the results was also used in Schwarz's (2015) study on passives in soap opera dialogues.

Some of the *to be* + Ved structures that fall into other categories presented by Granger (1983) or Quirk et al. (1985) do not have the usual active counterpart. The passive has no alternate way of being stated, and thus cannot be seen as a style choice. Therefore, they are not classified as passive structures for this study.

In some cases, it is difficult to distinguish between verbs and adjectival statements. These adjectival statements or statal verbs will present as passive constructions, even though they should be classified as adjectives. The reason for this being that it indicates an unknown actor. Therefore, they also are not classified as passive structures for this study. Example (29) and (30) are constructed to illustrate this.

(29) The ground was covered with leaves.

(30) The ground had been covered with leaves by someone.

Example (29) is a description of a state of being that cannot be extended to add an agent and therefore an adjectival statement. Example (30) is also a description of a state, however, can potentially be classified as a passive since we can add a *by* phrase to the sentence. This distinction proved to be difficult, as many of the potential passive constructions were ambiguous. The distinction was made where an agent could be added, as indicated by Quirk et al. (see section 2.2.1). Passives that did not have an active counterpart and adjectival statements were identified and removed from the list of potential passives.

The data collected were treated using RStudio for statistical methods, and graphic representation of results.

### **3.4 Operationalization of the Situation**

#### **3.4.1 Classifications of sense**

To answer the second research question, I needed to determine whether the passives were used in a positive, negative or neutral way. Schwarz (2015:160) used the term *sense* in her work and introduced the adversative, neutral and positive sense. I have chosen to use the same terms. The examples below are taken from Schwarz to illustrate how the use of sense classified.

#### **3.4.2 Determining the sense**

Although we can look in the story to find the paragraph from which a given data point was taken and determine if it was a positive, adversative, or neutral situation, there are some problems in doing this. The situation may be adversative to the protagonist in the situation but positive from the view of the omniscient narrator. The character experiencing the situation may be an antagonist we, as the reader, wish harmed. The situation could also be positive, but the specific sentence could be adverse, or vice versa (Schwarz 2015:160). In order to be able to determine whether or not a situation is positive, neutral or adversative, I needed a metric by which to measure it. The method that I use to classify the passives as positive, neutral or adversative is the same that Schwarz (2015) used in her classifications of the passives in her soap opera corpus. Following Schwarz (2015:160) I removed the sentence from its surroundings since the sense of the passive is only in the clause that uses the passive voice.

Schwarz's method for determining whether a construction was adversative, neutral or positive is taken from Persson's (1990:52) test for adversity. If the answer to the question "Is

it worse to be X than not to be X?” was “Yes” then the passive was labeled “adversative”. The following three examples are taken from Schwarz’ study and illustrate her use of adversative, neutral and positive.

The test for adversativity was based on one developed by Persson (1990: 52). If the answer to the question “Is it worse to be X than not to be X?” was “Yes,” then the passive was labeled “adversative,” as in examples (16)–(19) below.  
(16) Well, you’re about **to be laid off** from that job, Jennifer, because it won’t exist.  
(DAYS, 2002)

[...]

If the answer to the question is “No, one of the alternatives isn’t clearly better or worse than the other,” then the construction was labeled “neutral,” as in (20)–(23).

(20) I heard that Maria **was brought** in here, so I came to check on my patient.  
(AMC, 2002)

[...]

If the answer to the question is “No, it is actually BETTER to be X than not to be X,” then the construction was labeled “positive,” as in (24)–(27).

(24) Well, obviously you haven’t heard that I have **been completely exonerated** from all wrongdoing.

(AMC, 2002)

(Schwarz 2015:160, examples from Davies 2012)

The first example illustrates the use of the adversative sense, the second is the use of the neutral sense, and the final as the use of the positive sense. Since Schwarz used this as an accurate classification test, the same test will be used here so that the results may be comparable. In the context of the present study, the reader is experiencing the story through the eyes of the narrator. The research question addresses the function of the passive voice within the narrative, so the test for adversity needs to be for the narrator or main character in a story. This means that the sense of the passive construction will be tested against the protagonist and his experience of the action of the passive construction.

#### 3.4.2.1 Examples of adversative passives

When determining the adversative sense, it is necessary to interpret what is adversative, as well as for whom it is adversative. Adversity for the antagonist may be beneficial for the protagonist/narrator. It becomes necessary to look only at situations that somehow affect the protagonist/narrator.

(31) It must have been drugged; for scarcely had I drunk, before I became irresistibly drowsy.  
(Poe, *The Pit and the Pendulum*)



(32) The truth is—that the introduction was attended, upon my part, with a degree of anxious embarrassment which operated to prevent any definite impressions of either time or place. (Poe, *The Man That was Used Up*)

The patient (it, in this case a jug of water) in example (31) is not the protagonist, but he does suffer as a direct cause of the action of the passive construction. In example (32) the patient is the social gathering (the introduction), and the narrator plays the role of the agent. However, this is written in such a way as to suggest there is an adverse outcome on the part of the narrator in attending this gathering, which is why I have labeled it as adversative. The narrator or main characters are central to how sense (whether something is adversative, neutral or positive) will be judged.

#### 3.4.2.2 Examples of neutral passives

If the answer to the question was “No, one of the alternatives isn’t clearly better or worse than the other,” then the passive construction must be labeled “neutral,” as in given in examples (33) and (34).

(33) The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. (Poe, *The Black Cat*)

(34) I received this note within half an hour after it was written, and in fifteen minutes more I was in the dying man's chamber – (Poe, *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*)

As mentioned earlier, when looking at the passives for the adversative sense we needed only to look at the ones affecting the narrator/protagonist. For neutral passives, it is necessary to look for the passives that do not affect the narrator, or that do not affect the narrator in a good or bad way. Example (33) is a description of the rubble after the narrator’s house had collapsed, and the narrator finding one part that had not fallen. This is classified as a neutral statement because he is describing how he is surveying the damage. The reason for the neutral classification of example (34) is that it affects the narrator only to move the story forward. As this is a detective story, being in a dead man’s chamber is not a bad situation for the detective.

#### 3.4.2.3 Examples of positive passives

Positive: If the answer was “No, it is actually *better* to be X than not to be X, then the construction was labeled “positive.”

(35) Leeches were applied to the temples. (Poe, *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains*)

(36) Here a broad, deep, circumvallatory trench, hewn from the solid rock, was defended by a wall of great strength erected upon its inner edge. (Poe, *A Tale of Jerusalem*)

Although example (35) may not at first seem positive, one must view it in the medical knowledge of the time. According to Greenstone (2010:12–14) bloodletting by way of leeches was a common treatment for any number of maladies, especially in Europe peaking in popularity between the 1830's and 1850's. It is necessary, when dealing with old text to interpret based on the time period. Applying leeches today would be considered a negative event.

The protagonists in example (36) are the Jewish people in Jerusalem and not the Roman besieging it. This is a positive event as the defenses would benefit the defenders.

For each passive in Poe's short fiction, I asked the question: "Is it worse to be X than not to be X?". This allowed me to classify the passives as positive, neutral or adversative for every instance of the passive in Poe's short fiction. This was time consuming, but the result should present an accurate picture of Poe's use of sense.

### **3.5 Passive placement**

The third research question concerns the placement and pattern of the passives. Does this differ depending on style and sense? To answer this question, I needed to determine where each of the passives of different senses were placed within the length of the story. By focusing on the placement of the passives, I can see whether or not there are tendencies towards placing passives in a specific part of a story and whether this would vary by story style.

The data collected was the placement of the passives within each of the stories. This makes it possible to determine whether or not the passives cluster in any particular part of the story. The metric that I have used to be able to look at this is how far along in the story the passive is placed. This is marked as a percentage placement relative to the story. A low percentage indicates a passive early in the story; a higher percentage, indicates a passive later in the story. This will help determine if the placement of the passive is different for the different styles and/or senses.

### 3.6 Methods of analysis

The three research questions require different methods of analysis. In the following, I discuss how the data for each of these questions will be analyzed in order to address the question.

#### 3.6.1 Comparing the use of passives in different styles

The first research question asks if there is a difference in the use of the passive in different styles of writing. I developed a table listing the stories with the number of passives and number of words. This allowed a graph to be developed showing the relationship between the number of passives and length of the stories.

To be able to determine if there was a relationship between the use of the passive and the style, I need to be able to compare the different styles. The styles vary in terms of number of stories as well as length of each story. It is necessary, therefore, to have a measure so that I can make these comparisons. Svartvik (1985) solved this by presenting the number of passives in a text as passives per thousand words (ppt). Using this method allows me to obtain a concentration of passives for each text and from that calculate the average and mean for the entire corpus. This method of finding the concentration, measured in ppt also allows the findings to be more easily compared to Svartvik's findings. To find out if there is a consistent use of passives, the correlation coefficient (also known as Pearson's R) was calculated for each style.

The most common coefficient of correlation is known as the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, or Pearson's R. It is a measure of the linear correlation (dependence) between two variables XX and YY, giving a value between +1+1 and -1-1. It is widely used in the sciences as a measure of the strength of linear dependence between two variables.

*(Boundless Statistics: Correlation, accessed 20 April 2020)*

The calculated values, on a scale from -1 to +1, will indicate how consistent the use of the passive is within a given style. The values in the table indicate the strength or weakness of the positive relationship. If the value is close to +1, the use of the passive is consistent across the style, that is, the use of the passive is relative to the length of the text for the stories in that style. A value close to -1 indicates a strong negative correlation; the use of the passive is inversely related to the length of the text. A correlation close to -1 or +1 would indicate that it could be considered a style marker. Low correlations indicate that the use of the passive is not related to the size of the text, and therefore would not be considered a style marker.



**Table 3.1:** *Classification of Correlation Coefficient Values*

1	Perfect positive linear relationship
0.7 – 1.0	Strong positive linear relationship
0.3 – 0.7	Moderate positive relationship
0.0 – 0.3	Weak positive linear relationship
0.0 – (-0.3)	Weak negative linear relationship
(-0.3) – (-0.7)	Moderate positive relationship
(-0.7) – (-1.0)	Strong positive linear relationship
-1	Weak positive linear relationship

Table based on data from  
DM STAT-1: The Correlation Coefficient

For the data collected for this thesis, we focus on the linear relationships.

Linearity Assumption. The correlation coefficient requires that the underlying relationship between the two variables under consideration is linear. If the relationship is known to be linear, or the observed pattern between the two variables appears to be linear, then the correlation coefficient provides a reliable measure of the strength of the linear relationship. If the relationship is known to be nonlinear, or the observed pattern appears to be nonlinear, then the correlation coefficient is not useful, or at least questionable. (DM STAT-1: The Correlation Coefficient)

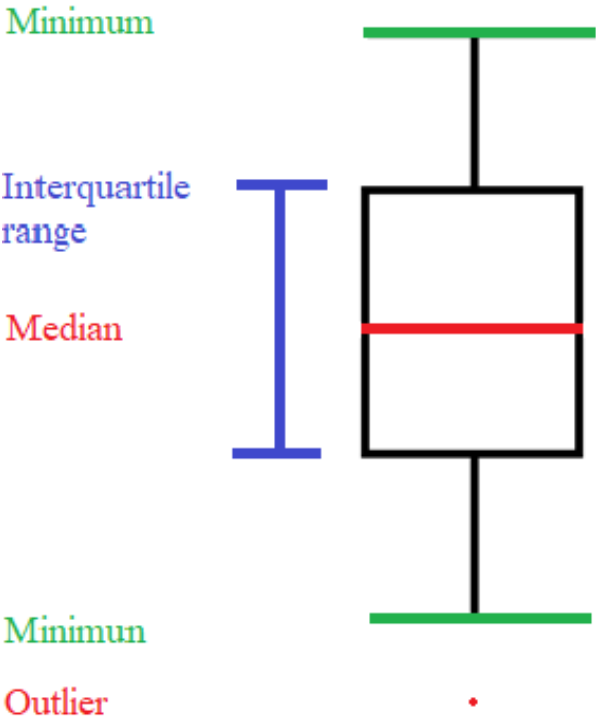
The linearity assumption is one that can be checked in the graphs of the tokens as a variable of length.

### **3.6.2 Comparing the senses of the passives for the different styles**

The second research question addresses the relationship between the different senses of the passives and different styles. To look at how the passive is used one can count the number of times it is used in adversative, neutral and positive situations and calculate a percentage based on that finding. However instead of dealing with the passives in absolute numbers (in bar graphs), as was done in Schwarz' (2015) study on the sense of the passive, I have chosen to use a box plot to display the result of the different styles. A box plot displays data differently than bar graphs, as it shows the amount of variation within a population. This method was used in The Cambridge Handbook of English Corpus Linguistics (Biber 2015).

To display the findings in a box plot, I first calculated the median and variation of each of the sense categories for the stories in the style. In the box plots I combine two measurements, namely the median concentration of the passive in ppt and the variation among the different works within the style. This is shown by the size of the box and whiskers.

To find the variation of distribution within a population I use the quartiles and medians, projected onto a box plot. When analyzing a group of numbers, a quartile is the division point between four equal parts of an ordered number set. The median is the middle number in an ordered set of numbers. A box plot is a simple representation of the quartiles and the mean that allow the observation of (in this case) the distribution of the concentrations in a population. Together these methods of analysis should illustrate where the passives can be found, the style in which they are prominent, and the sense that is most commonly used. The center square (box) depicts the first and third quartile, the bold line in the center depicts the median (middle value), the lines outside the boxes depict the minimum and maximum values. Outliers are depicted as individual points. (The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University: *Box Plot: Display of Distribution*, accessed 20 April 2020)



*Figure 3.1: Box plot as illustration of values taken from a population*

The use of statistical methods would allow us to determine if the differences shown were statistically significant. However, in this study I have used the whole population of Poe's short stories. Thus, it is possible to state that any differences that are seen here are true differences.

### **3.6.3 Comparing the placement and patterns of passive senses**

To address the third research question concerning the placement and patterns of the passives in the different styles depending on the sense, I first determined where in the story the passives are placed. This is done by determining the percentage of the story that was covered when the passive occurred. To compare across sense for each style, I chose to display the results in a graph. The y axis shows the percentage of the story that was covered. The x-axis indicates how many passives of each sense are placed at each five percent interval.

### **3.7 Summary of methods**

My underlying supposition is that passives are used as a stylistic element in writing to portray situations adversative for the narrator. To determine this, it is necessary to find criteria to test to determine central passives. For this test I have chosen to use Quirk et al.'s (1985) criteria. This aided in determining what was a passive and most importantly what was not a passive.

I used Schwarz's (2015) definition of sense to determine whether the passive is used to portray an adversative, neutral or positive event. The narrator or main characters are central to how sense will be judged. The stories are too diverse to be looked at as a single unit, therefore they have been sorted into different styles. This allows me to research differences in the use of the passives as well as the placement of the passives.

The data were analyzed using correlation coefficients, box plot diagrams, and graphs.

## **CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter I present and discuss the findings of the study as related the research questions. The presentation of the findings follows the order of the research questions. A discussion of the findings addresses the research question. To determine if the use of passives is related to the length of the story, I first report the number of passives (tokens) in each story and the length of the story. I then present the correlation coefficients of the relationship between length and number of passives. To answer the research question as to whether passives are used in negative situations in which the narrator has no control, the findings for the adversative, neutral and positive passives for each style are presented. Finally, recognizing Poe's reputation for building suspense towards the end of the story, I plot the pattern of the passives by sense. The pattern will show if there is any correspondence between the placement throughout the story and the concentration of passives, i.e. if there are more passive constructions towards the end of the story.

### **4.1 The use of the passives in different styles**

The first research question addresses whether Poe used passives as a style choice. To address that question, I first report on the number of tokens and length of each story. Based on this, I develop a graph that indicates a linear correlation between the passives and length of each story. Then to determine whether the passives are used as a style choice I look at the correlations for stories in each of the styles. Finally, I compare the correlation coefficients among the different styles.

#### **4.1.1 Relationship between passives and length of story**

Table 4.1 lists Poe's short stories ordered by style. The table presents the number of passive tokens, the calculated passives per 1000 words (ppt) and the length of the work for each story. This table will be used as data for the analysis.



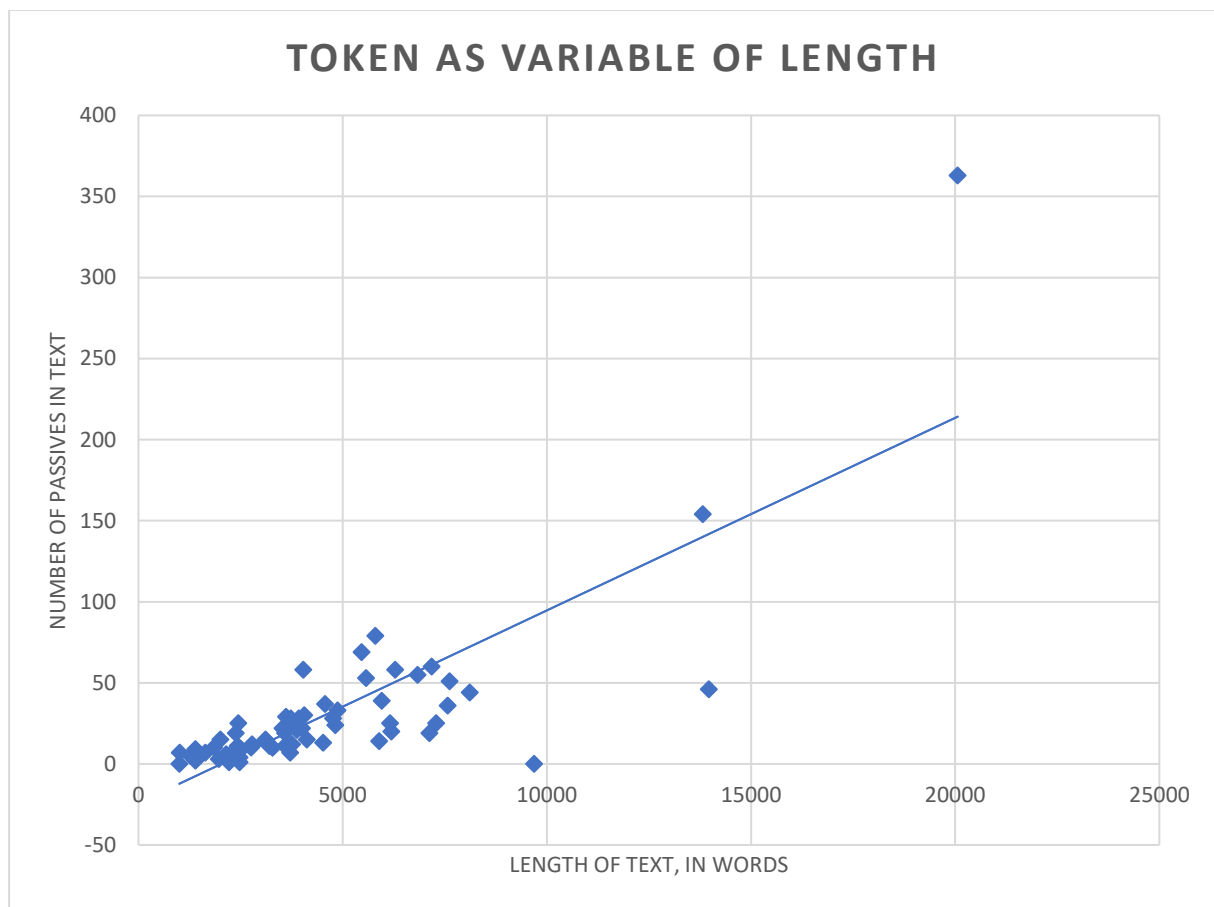
**Table 4.1:** Titles, token, ppt, length and style of stories.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Tokens</b>	<b>PPT</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Style</b>
<i>The Domain of Arnheim</i>	39	6,55	5956	<b>Landscape Sketches</b>
<i>Landor's Cottage</i>	33	6,76	4879	<b>Landscape Sketches</b>
<i>The Landscape Garden</i>	22	6,19	3556	<b>Landscape Sketches</b>
<i>The Mystery of Marie Rogêt</i>	363	18,09	20063	<b>Detective Fiction</b>
<i>The Purloined Letter</i>	60	8,36	7178	<b>Detective Fiction</b>
<i>Thou Art the Man</i>	79	13,63	5797	<b>Detective Fiction</b>
<i>The Murders in the Rue Morgue</i>	154	11,14	13818	<b>Detective Fiction</b>
<i>A Descent into the Maelström</i>	19	2,67	7123	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>Mellonta Tauta</i>	53	9,51	5575	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>Mesmeric Revelation</i>	28	7,51	3729	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>MS. Found in a Bottle</i>	15	3,64	4126	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>A Tale of the Ragged Mountains</i>	30	7,39	4057	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>The Island of the Fay</i>	3	1,52	1969	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>The Gold-Bug</i>	46	3,29	13972	<b>Adventure Fiction</b>
<i>The Cask of Amontillado</i>	19	7,98	2380	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Assigination</i>	13	2,87	4525	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Berenice</i>	10	3,05	3281	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Diddling</i>	58	14,38	4033	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Black Cat</i>	28	7,14	3924	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Eleonora</i>	10	4,13	2419	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Tell-Tale Heart</i>	1	0,45	2220	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Ligeia</i>	25	4,06	6161	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Morella</i>	6	2,79	2150	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Oval Portrai</i>	6	4,64	1293	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Pit and the Pendulum</i>	20	3,23	6196	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar</i>	19	5,29	3590	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Shadow—A Parable</i>	7	6,91	1013	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Silence—A Fable</i>	2	1,44	1392	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Imp of the Perverse</i>	11	4,52	2432	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Man of the Crowd</i>	22	6,24	3525	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Oblong Box</i>	37	8,1	4568	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Premature Burial</i>	69	12,64	5460	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>	25	3,43	7292	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>William Wilson</i>	44	5,42	8115	<b>First Person Horror</b>
<i>Hop-Frog</i>	29	8,03	3613	<b>Third Person Horror</b>
<i>King Pest</i>	28	5,88	4764	<b>Third Person Horror</b>
<i>The Masque of the Red Death</i>	25	10,23	2443	<b>Third Person Horror</b>

<i>Metzengerstein</i>	14	4,47	3129	<b>Third Person Horror</b>
<i>Von Kempelen and His Discovery</i>	12	4,31	2782	<b>Third Person Horror</b>
<i>A Predicament</i>	11	3,06	3593	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Angel of the Odd</i>	12	3,19	3760	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Devil in the Belfry</i>	11	3,43	3209	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Four Beasts in One—The Homo-Cameleopard</i>	10	3,63	2756	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Lionizing</i>	7	4,27	1641	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Loss of Breath</i>	24	4,98	4818	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Mystification</i>	15	4,82	3109	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Never Bet the Devil Your Head</i>	22	5,49	4006	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Some Words with a Mummy</i>	58	9,23	6283	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Spectacles</i>	0	0	9688	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Business Man</i>	22	5,97	3687	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade</i>	51	6,7	7617	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Man That Was Used Up</i>	7	1,88	3714	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Sphinx</i>	10	5,41	1850	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.</i>	36	4,75	7572	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether</i>	55	8,05	6835	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Three Sundays in a Week</i>	4	1,61	2478	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>X-ing a Paragrab</i>	9	3,59	2510	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sling</i>	1	0,4	2474	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>How to Write a Blackwood Article</i>	21	5,41	3880	<b>First Person Humor</b>
<i>A Tale of Jerusalem</i>	6	4,18	1437	<b>Third Person Humor</b>
<i>Bon-Bon</i>	14	2,38	5893	<b>Third Person Humor</b>
<i>The Duc de L'Omelette</i>	5	3,93	1273	<b>Third Person Humor</b>
<i>The Colloquy of Monos and Una</i>	10	3,04	3286	<b>Angelic Dialogues</b>
<i>The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion</i>	15	7,48	2005	<b>Angelic Dialogues</b>
<i>The Power of Words</i>	9	6,47	1392	<b>Angelic Dialogues</b>
Total	1929	6,53	295264	

To indicate whether there is a relationship between the number of passives and length of the story, I plotted the data from the table on a graph.

**Graph 4.1:** Token as a variable of length, with trendline



Each point in this graph represents a work of fiction. The horizontal (x-axis) indicates the length of the story by number of words. The vertical (y-axis) indicates the number of passives in the story. Using the data, a regression line was calculated. Graph 4.1 indicates the linear relationship between the length of the stories and the number of passives used in the stories.

One simple method of finding out if the passive is used as a style choice in Poe's short fiction is to see if the number of passives is related to the length of the story. In order to better compare the relationship between the length of the stories and the number of tokens I calculated the correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient (also known as Pearson's R) is a measurement of the linear correlation between two variables.

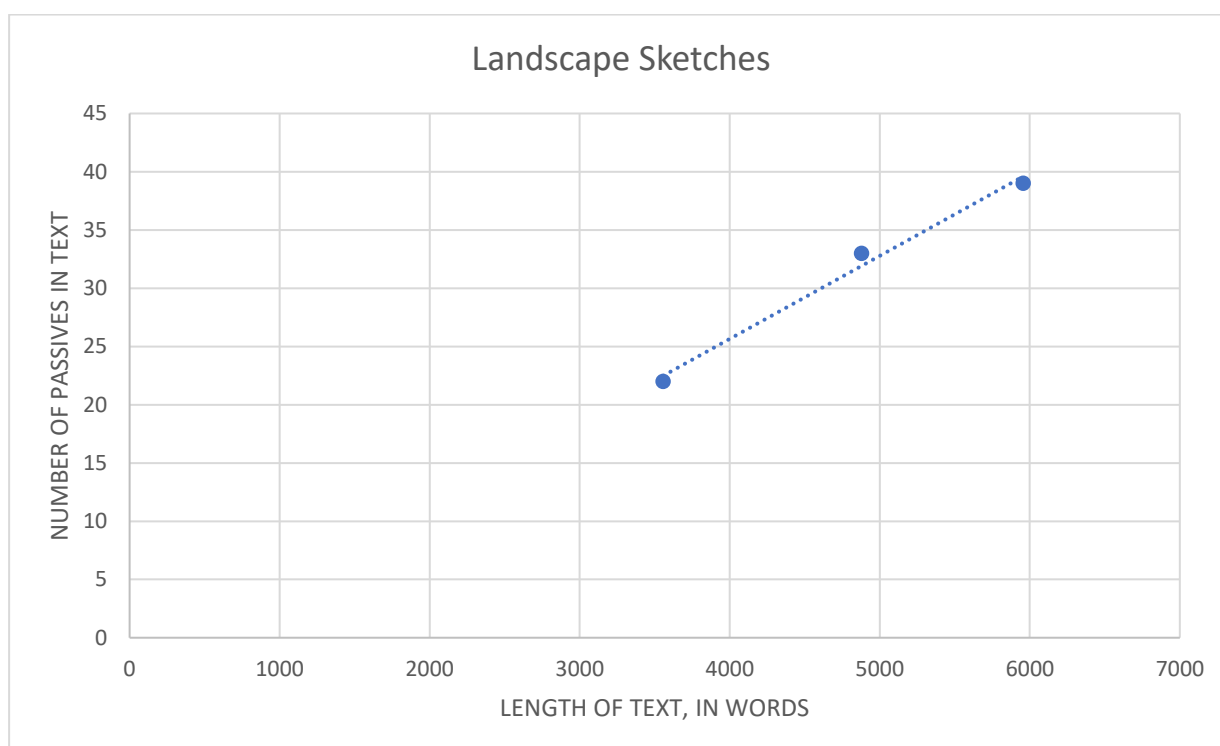
The correlation coefficient of the distribution of the entire body of works is 0.80, meaning that there is a strong positive correlation between the length of a story and the number of passives. The relationship is for all the short stories and might hide differences in the relationship for the different styles. This can be used as a baseline to which we can compare the other correlation coefficients.

### 4.1.2 Relationship between passives and length of story for each style

In this section, the correlation coefficient for the stories in each style has been calculated. The stronger the correlation coefficient is for a given style, the more likely it is that the passive should be viewed as a style marker for that style. The correlation coefficient does not indicate that there are more passives, but rather how well the passives fit into a trend for that style.

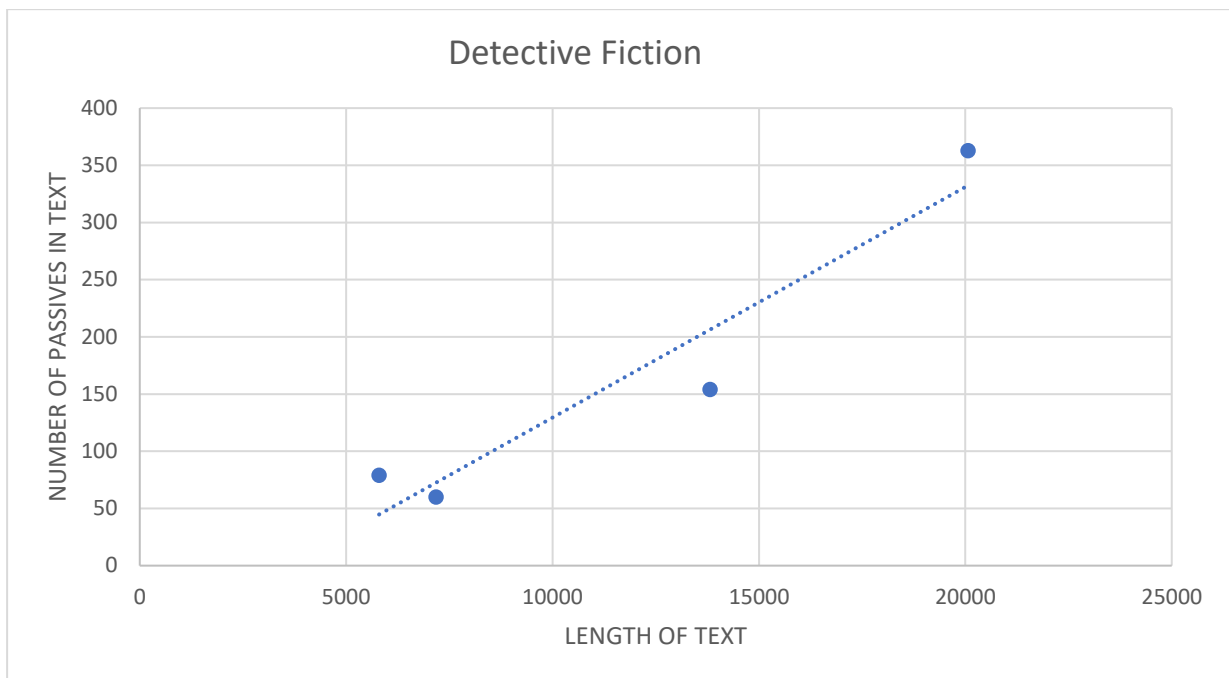
It is important to note in the graphs in this section that the scale on both axes differs for the styles. This was necessary since there is a significant difference in the length of the stories and the tokens of the passive. While the correlations can be compared across styles, it is not useful to compare the graphs. The graphs in this section show the length of the story and the number of passives in the text. The points on the graph mark the works of short fiction, indicating their length and number of passive tokens. The lines in the graphs are regression lines used to illustrate the trend. The regression lines will not be used in the findings but are shown only to better illustrate the trend.

**Graph 4.2:** *Passives in landscape sketches*



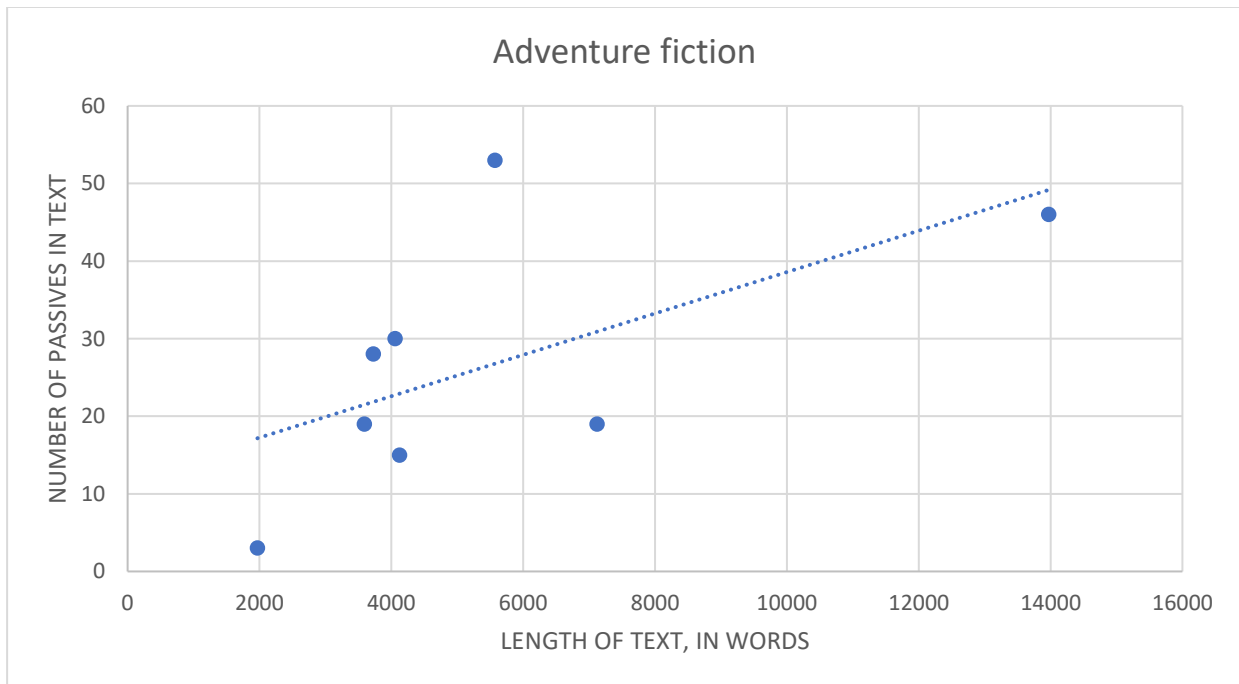
The correlation coefficient for this graph is 0.99. This very strong correlation here between the length and the tokens is, however, based only on three data points and few passives.

**Graph 4.3:** *Passives in detective fiction*



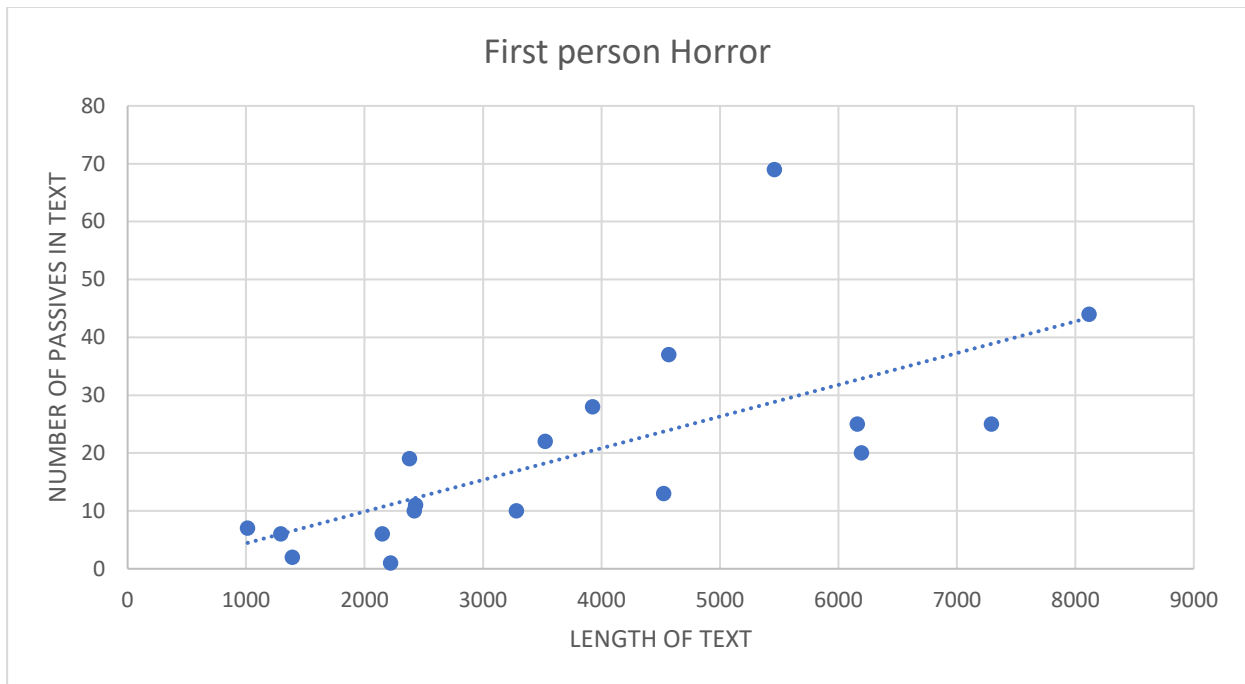
The correlation coefficient here is 0.95. This again shows that there is strong correlation, indicating a pattern between the length and the use of the passives. With this level of correlation, and since the stories in this style are significantly longer as well as significantly higher in number of passives this style may be indicative of a systematic use of the passive for the small number of stories in this style.

**Graph 4.4:** *Passives in adventure fiction*



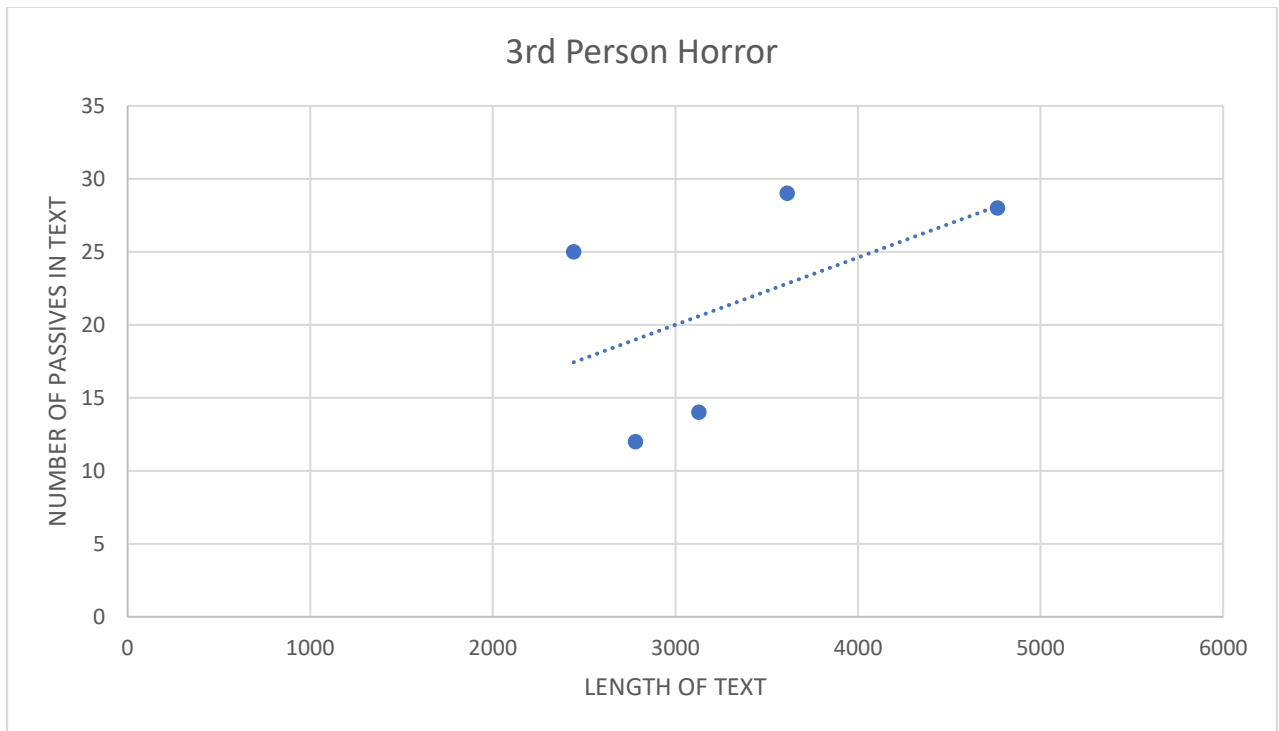
The correlation coefficient for adventure fiction is 0.61. Here we see a moderate positive relationship, with some major outliers. The moderate correlation between the length of the stories and the use of the passive, it gives an indication that the use of the passive is not used as a style marker in this style. If we were to look closer at this style we see that may consist of smaller sub-styles. Some of the stories are taken from what Poe wrote as a hoax for newspapers. These may represent a different style.

**Graph 4.5:** *Passives in first-person horror*



The correlation coefficient for first-person horror is 0.68 indicating a moderate positive relationship between the number of passives and the length of the text. The results indicate variation in the use of the passive as a style element. The higher number of stories in this category may be the reason the coefficient is relatively lower than in other styles.

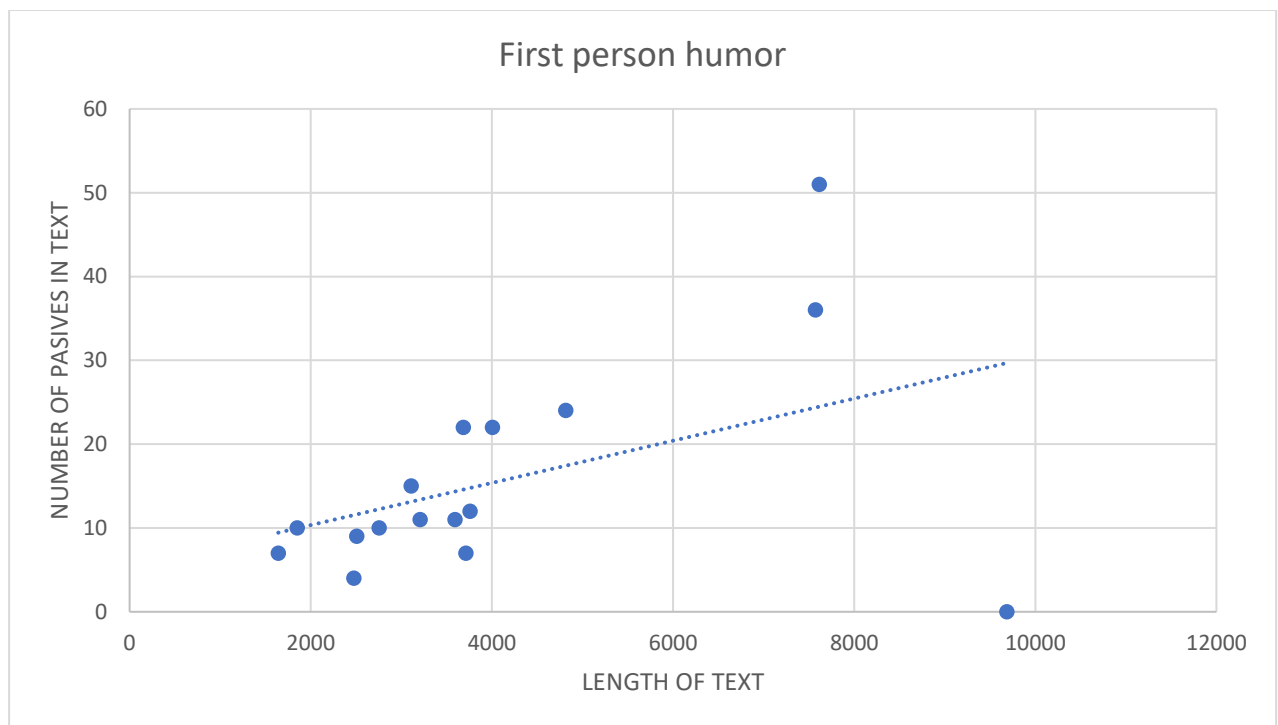
**Graph 4.6:** *Passives in third-person horror*



This graph indicates moderate positive correlation between the length and the tokens. The correlation coefficient of 0.52 indicates a moderate relationship between the passives and length of the stories as compared to the other styles. This indicates that the use of the passive may not have been a style choice for the stories this style.



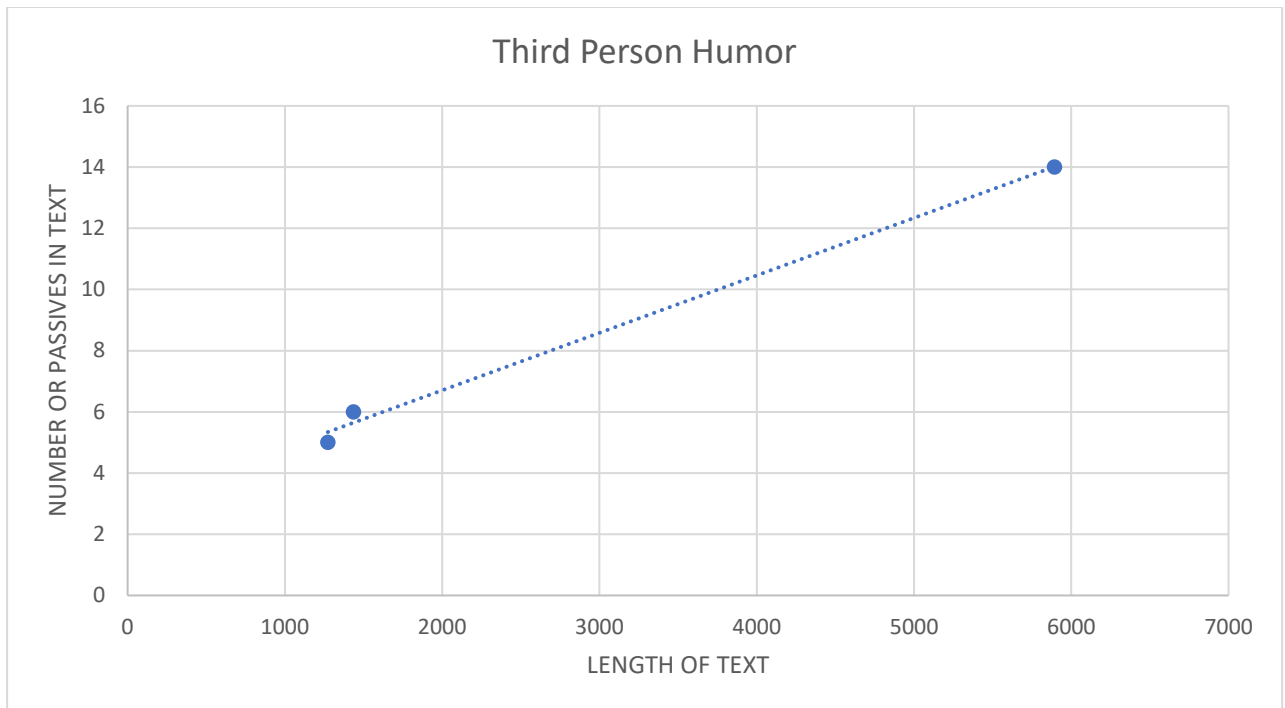
**Graph 4.7:** *Passives in first-person humor*



The correlation coefficient for these stories is 0.44. However, there is a very clear outlier here in this data set, namely the story *The Spectacles*. When I recalculated without this story, the correlation coefficient is 0.91. This high correlation would indicate the passive as a style marker for the other stories in this category.

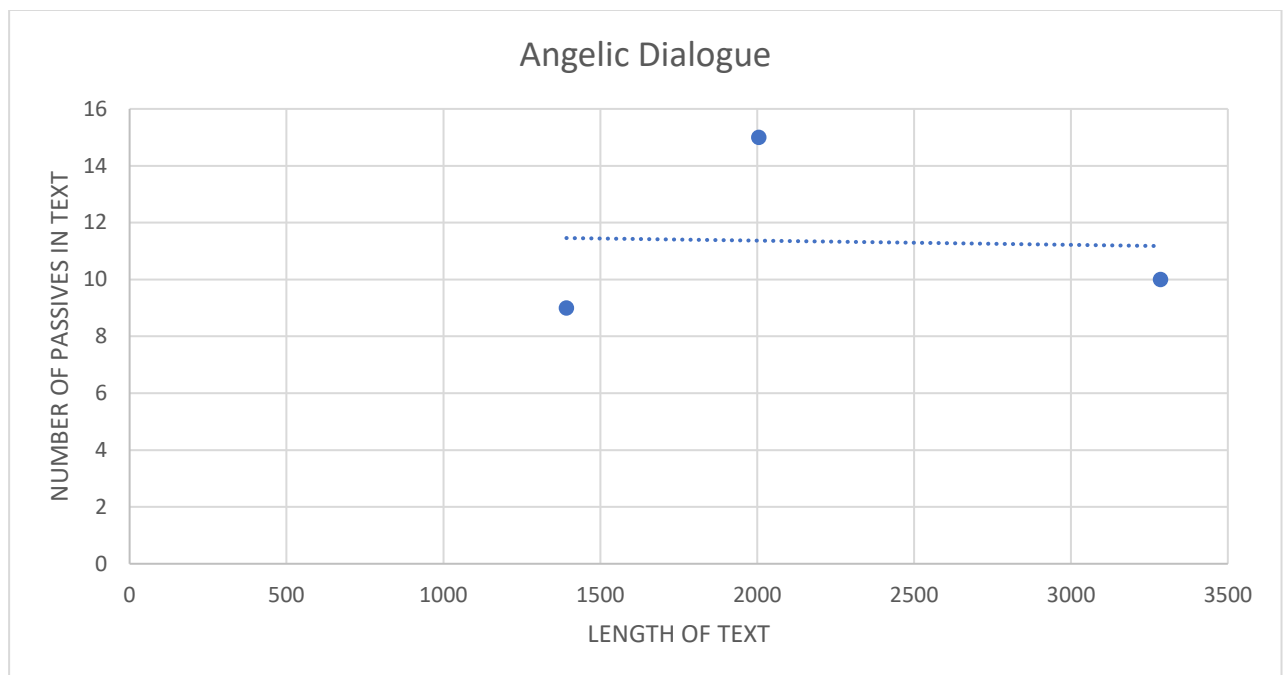
The findings here lead to the question of whether or not *The Spectacles* is correctly classified. The story is meant as a humorous morality tale about people needing to listen to their eye doctors, and it is told from the point of view of a person with bad eyesight. The story is nearly 10 000 words without a single instance of the passive. The publication of this story was criticized for being too lengthy, and some critics believe that Poe was paid by the word.

**Graph 4.8:** *Passives in third-person humor*



The correlation coefficient for the stories here is 0.99 indicative of a very strong correlation between the length of the story and the tokens of the passives. The reason that the coefficient is so high may be that there are only three data points in this style. This result must be counted as an outlier, given the small number of texts and their short length. There is a high correlation here, however, with such a low number of stories, it is difficult to say if this was deliberate or not from these results alone.

**Graph 4.9:** *Passives in angelic dialogues*



The correlation for angelic dialogues is -0.04. This is a weak negative correlation. A negative correlation indicates that the longer the stories get, the fewer passives are used. However the correlation is very close to 0, indicating very little, if any correlation. With the very limited number of stories in this style, it is difficult to draw any conclusions concerning the use of the passive as a style marker for this style.

Table 4.2 summarizes the information on the correlation coefficients for all stories and for the eight styles. This table includes two calculations of the category First-Person Humor, due to the fact that the outlier in that category shifts the results here quite substantially.

**Table 4.2:** Correlation coefficients in different styles

Style	Correlation Coefficient	Strength
Third-Person Humor	0.99	Strong relationship
Landscape Sketches	0.99	
Detective Fiction	0.96	
First-Person Humor *	0.91	
Mean of all stories	0.80	
First-Person Horror	0.68	Moderate relationship
Adventure Fiction	0.61	
Third-Person Horror	0.52	
First-Person Humor	0.44	
Angelic Dialogue	-0.04	Weak relationship

\*showing First-Person Humor without *The Spectacles*.

This table shows the correlation coefficients between the length of the stories and the tokens of the passives in each category. Strong correlations suggest that for these styles Poe's use of the passive was strategic, if we can assume that a strong relationship between the number of passives and length of story is a style choice. In general, the categories with the strong correlations consist of few stories. For this reason I suggest caution in drawing strong conclusions as to whether Poe's use of the passive was a style choice for these categories. The category, first- person humor, showed a strong correlation when the outlier was removed.

First-person horror, the focus of the first research question, had only a moderate relationship. I was expecting the correlation coefficient for first-person horror to be higher, as I expected the victim language to include passives. A high correlation would mean that there was a relationship between the number of passives and the length of the stories, which could be an indication of the passive as a style choice. The results did give support to this.

The correlation coefficients report only the relationship between the passives and length of the story. In the next section I report on the concentration of the passives for each style.

### 4.1.3 Concentration of passives in different styles

The first research question, although formulated in a more general manner, was formulated based on the supposition that Poe used passives more often in horror stories than in other styles. To address this question, I compare the average number of passives per 1000 words (ppt) for the different styles. I have chosen this method so that the concentrations could be compared to Svartvik's (1966) findings. The ppt for the different styles are given in the table below:

*Table 4.3: Concentration of passives found in Poe*

Style	Concentration
Detective	14.00
Landscape Sketches	6.53
Third-Person Horror	6.45
First-Person Horror	5.19
Angelic Dialogues	5.09
Adventure	4.83
First-Person humor	3.80
Third-Person Humor	2.90

In his research, Svartvik (1966) reported the concentration of the passives. He developed a table of the ppt for the different styles. It is interesting to see how Poe's styles are ranked together with Svartvik. Table 4.4 gives the comparison of the average ppt of different styles from Svartvik and Poe.

**Table 4.4:** Concentration of passives found in Poe and Svartvik

Science	23.1
News	15.8
Detective Fiction	14.0
Arts	12.7
Speech	9.2
Sport	9.0
Novels	8.2
Landscape Sketches	6.4
Third-Person Horror	6.5
Plays	5.3
First-Person Horror	5.2
Angelic Dialogues	5.1
Adventure	4.8
First-Person humor	3.8
Advertising	3.0
Third-Person Humor	2.9

Table 4.4 integrates the ranking of the passives found in Svartvik (white background) and the passives found in Poe's (highlighted) styles. (I have rounded the numbers to the same place as used in Svartvik. This did not affect the ranking in the table.)

The table indicates that most of Poe's works seem to use considerably fewer passives than the works included in Svartvik's research. The detective fiction has the highest frequency of the passives for Poe's styles. It is ranked between Svartvik's categories of arts and news. The high use of the passive in detective fiction may be explained by suggesting that the use of the passive in detective stories is similar to that in academic discourse, or it may, at the least, be meant to imitate it. An alternative explanation would be that passives in detective fiction are used to describe unknown processes.

While the ranking integrating Poe's styles with the categories in Svartvik's study is interesting, there are many differences in the data used in the two studies. This makes it difficult to draw any further conclusions.

#### **4.1.4 The use of the passives in the different styles**

In Research Question 1 I asked whether there was a difference in Poe's use of the passive in different styles of writing. To address this question, I chose to look at the relationship between the number of passives and length of the stories as well as the concentration of the passives in the different styles.

The correlation coefficient for all stories was moderate to strong. That gave a base line for comparison among the subcategories. When I calculated the correlation coefficients for each of Poe's styles, the relationships varied from strong to moderate with one style classified as weak. This suggests that that Poe's use of the passive could be viewed as a style choice for those styles with strong correlation coefficients. To follow up, I compared the ppt to further investigate the use of the passive. The calculation of ppt indicates differences in the different styles. The results run counter to my supposition that the highest concentration of passives would be in horror stories.

The results of the correlation coefficients and ppt for the different styles give some indication of the use of the passive as a style choice in Poe's writing. However, given the small number of stories in many of the categories, we must be cautious about drawing conclusions.

#### **4.2 The use of the passives in different senses**

In this section, I address the second research question: Does the use of the passive indicate a lack of control or helplessness on the part of the narrator? The underlying issue is Poe's use of the passive in negative (adverse) situation.

First the sense of the passive had to be determined. As described in section 3.4.2 of the methods chapter, this was done by asking the question: "Is it worse to be X than not to be X?" for each passive in Poe's short fiction. This made it possible to classify the passives as adversative, neutral or positive. Although time consuming, it allowed me to achieve an accurate picture of Poe's use of sense. For each style, the median and quartiles were calculated for the use of the passives in the three senses: adversative, neutral and positive. These are plotted on a box plot. This makes it possible to compare the use of the passive sense within each style. The box plots were then compared for each sense across styles.

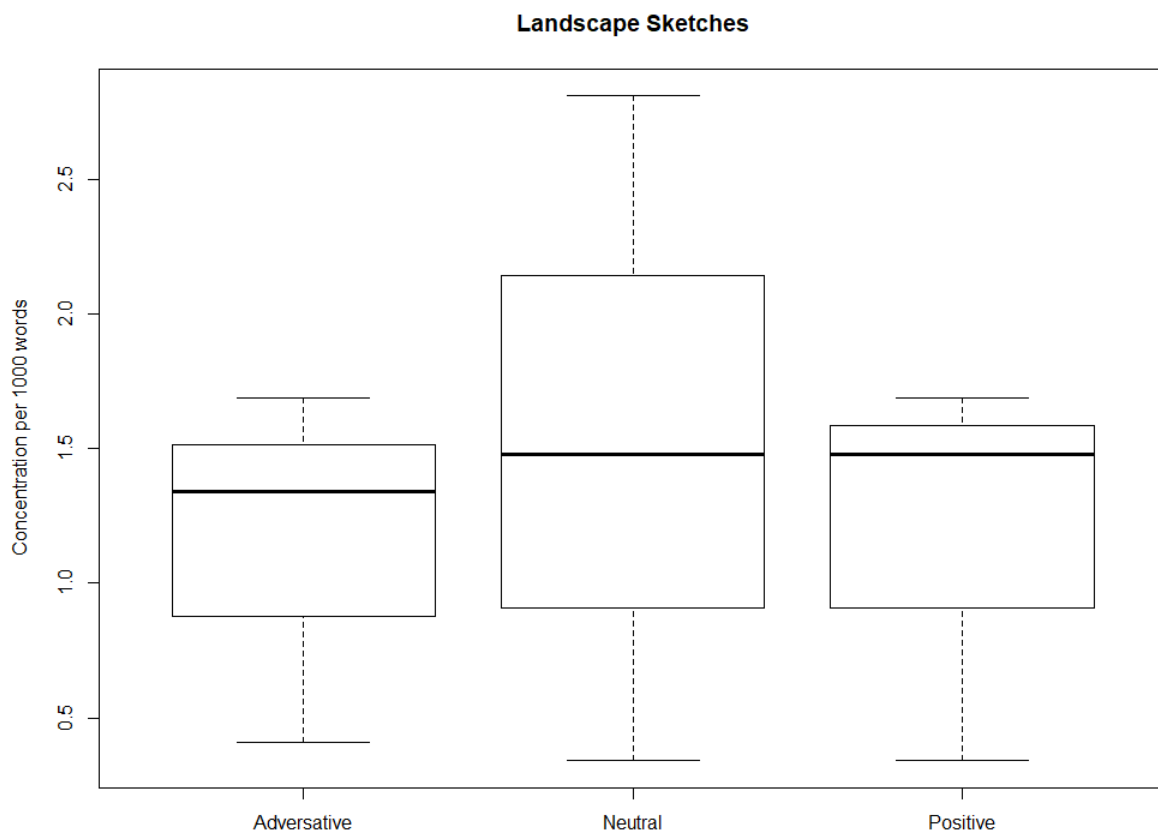
##### **4.2.1 The passive senses for the different styles**

In this section, I report on the differences in the sense of the passive for the stories in each of the styles. The focus here is on whether the use of the passive is related to lack of control.

The results are given for each style. By comparing across sense within each style one can get an indication as to whether the passive was related to lack of control, that is, is the passive used more often in the adversative sense. In the box plots I combine two measurements, namely the concentration of the passive in parts per thousand (ppt) and how much variation there is between the different works for each sense within the style as is shown by the size of the box and whiskers. Note that the scale on the vertical axis varies for the different styles.

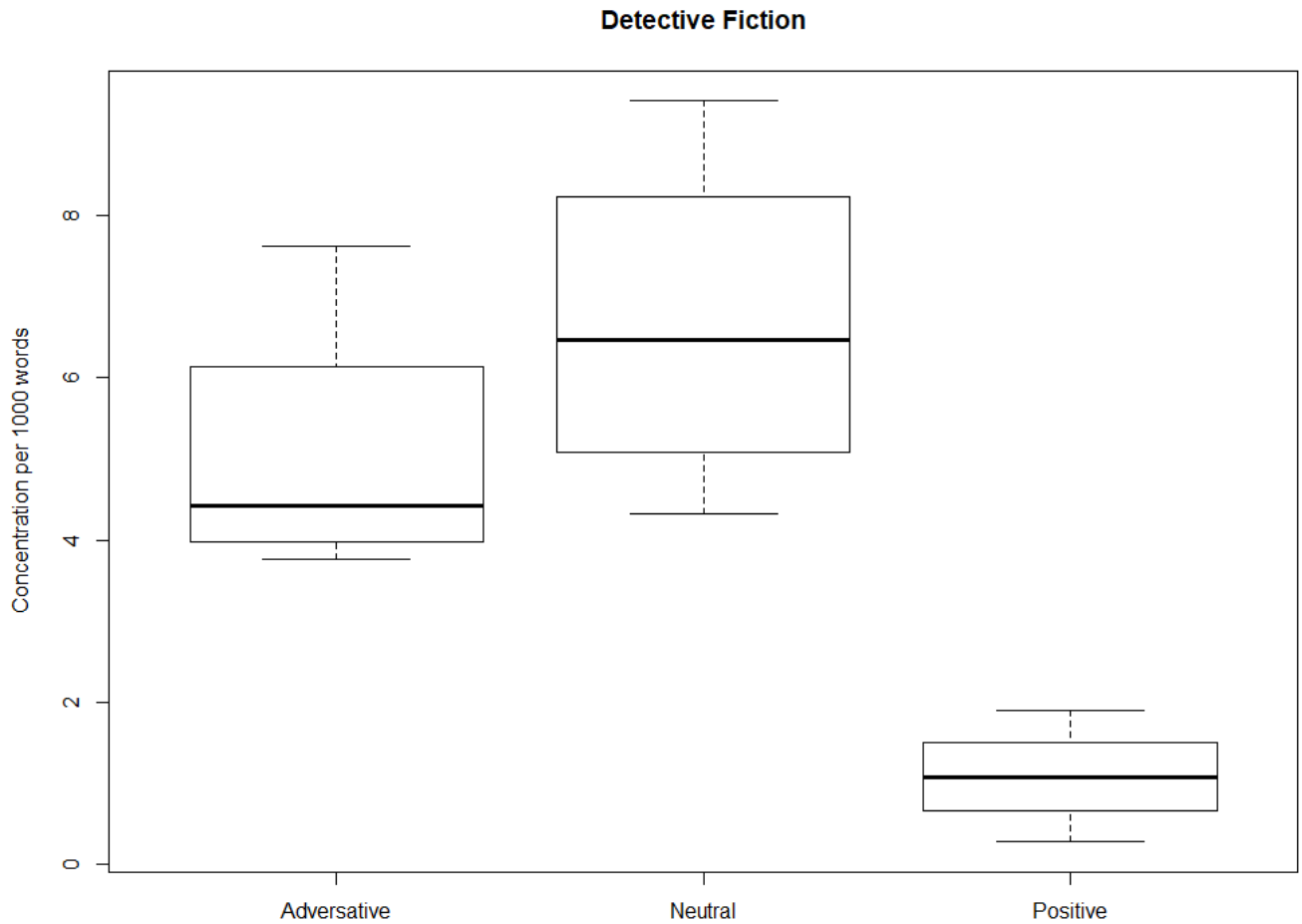


**Graph 4.10:** *Passives in landscape sketches by sense*



We see here that the adversative category is slightly lower than the neutral and the positive. Thus, for the landscape sketches there is no indication that the passives were used in an adversative sense as compared to neutral or positive. This can be explained by the style. The landscape sketches here are a description of scenery. Poe even may have been inspired by his own home when writing *Landor's Cottage*. The neutral passives are used to describe the scenery or elements outside the narrator. The neutral passives are descriptions of events that are inconsequential or help to set the tone of the text. Pseudo-passives are often disguised as neutral passives. There are many pseudo-passives in these works that were excluded as they were scenery descriptions rather than describing any actions. It also makes sense that there are more positive than adversative passives used in this style since the works are positively inclined rather than negatively inclined.

**Graph 4.11:** *Passives in detective fiction by sense*



The four works classified as detective fiction all deal with an analytical framework. They all attempt to find the cause of something. The excerpt below gives an example of this. The detective takes pride in his ability to mentally put himself into the situation that he is investigating.

(Dupin) throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes indeed absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation.  
(Poe, *The Murders of the Rue Morgue*)

For the detective fiction style, passives are used more frequently in an adversative sense as compared to positive sense. One potential explanation for this may be that in these stories the narrator is telling his story as a sidekick to the amateur detective C. Auguste Dupin. In *Thou art the Man*, the detective is the narrator relating the logic of Dupin to the reader. In these stories logical reasoning is shown through a cold hard representation of the facts in the cases

that Dupin is trying to unfurl. In this he is looking at the events that have happened and attempting, through them, to find out what really happened and who is to blame. The attempt to find reason and motivation without being clouded by assumption leads him in many cases to have to use descriptions of actions that are without agents, as well as descriptions that focus on the victim. This causes him in many cases to have to describe the action with a passive construction.

(37) She had **been subjected**, it said, to brutal violence.  
(Poe, *Mystery of Marie Roget*; my emphasis)

In example (37) the construction is typical of the style of the stories about Dupin. There is a clear focus on the victim, without any focus on the agent, or agents as it is unknown at that time in the story.

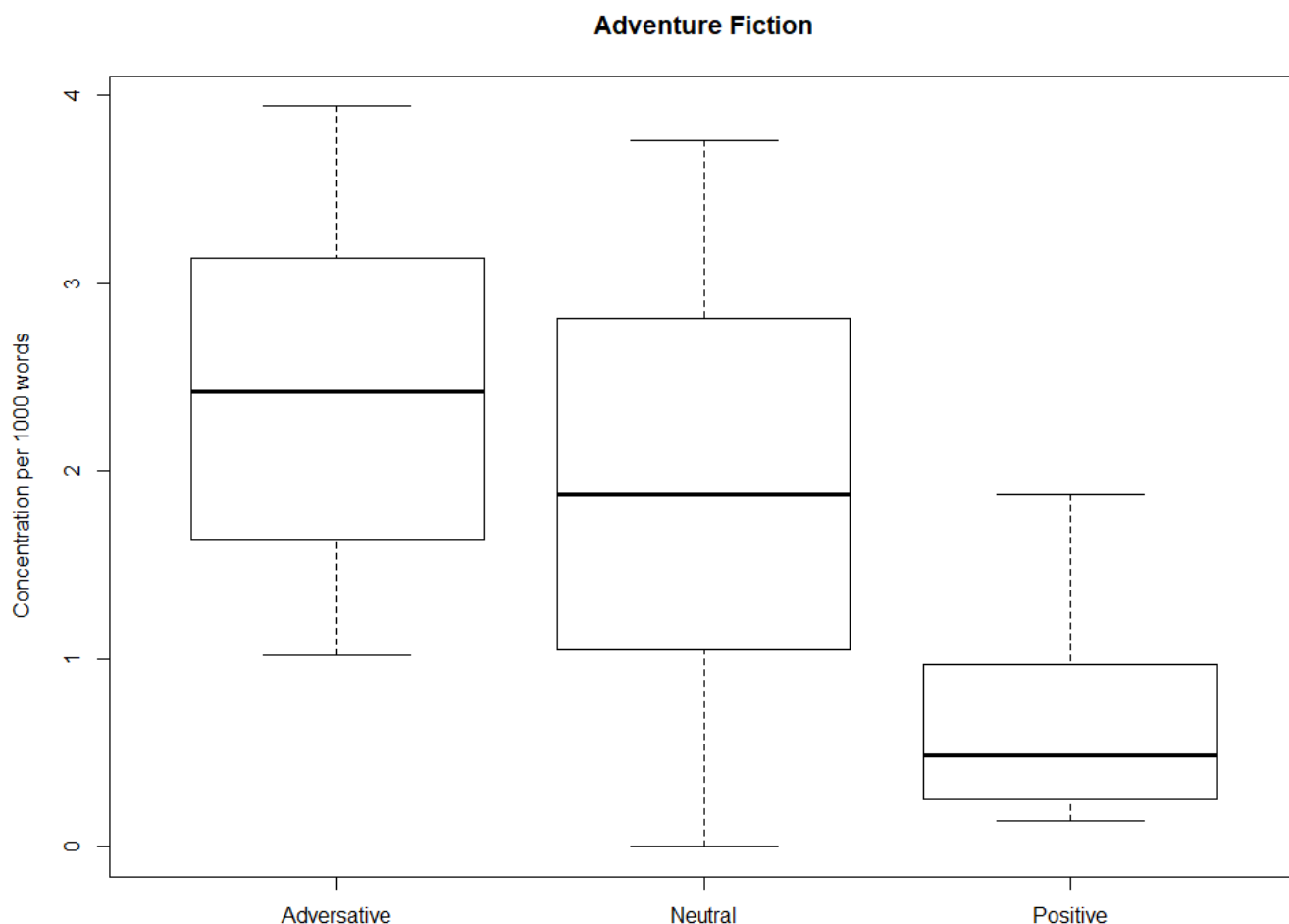
(38) The former **was found** securely fastened from within.  
(Poe, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*; my emphasis)

On the surface example (38) would seem as an adversative construction. It is, however, only a description of the events of finding a body. Therefore, it should be neither adversative nor negative, at least in the mind of the detective.

(39) Le Bon **was instantly released**, upon our narration of the circumstances (with some comments from Dupin) at the bureau of the Prefect of Police.  
(Poe, *Murders in The Rue Morgue*; my emphasis)

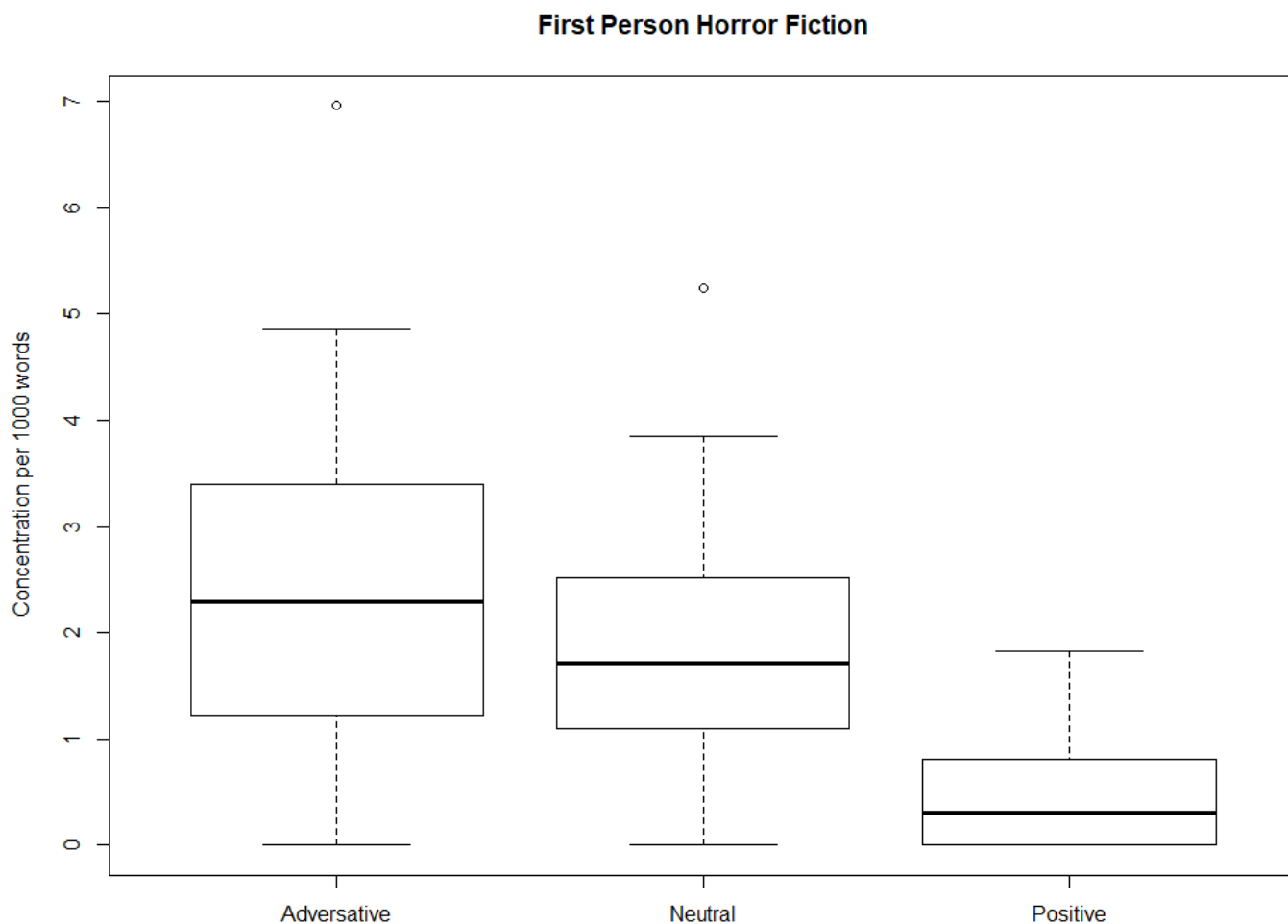
Example (39), the releasing from jail of an innocent person, is one example of the few positive constructions in this style.

**Graph 4.12:** *Passives in adventure fiction by sense*



In adventure fiction the use of the passive in an adversative sense is higher than both the neutral and positive senses. A potential explanation can be the style of adventure fiction. Many of the stories included here are written in the style of the sensationalistic journalism of the time. Adventure fiction is dependent on adversity to give a sense of accomplishment in the adventure. The effect of the events must be tangible for the main characters and the readers to keep them involved. The reason that the adversative passives are more frequent than the positive passives may be that the positive events taking place in the story utilize the active voice over the passive voice.

**Graph 4.13:** *Passives in first-person horror by sense*

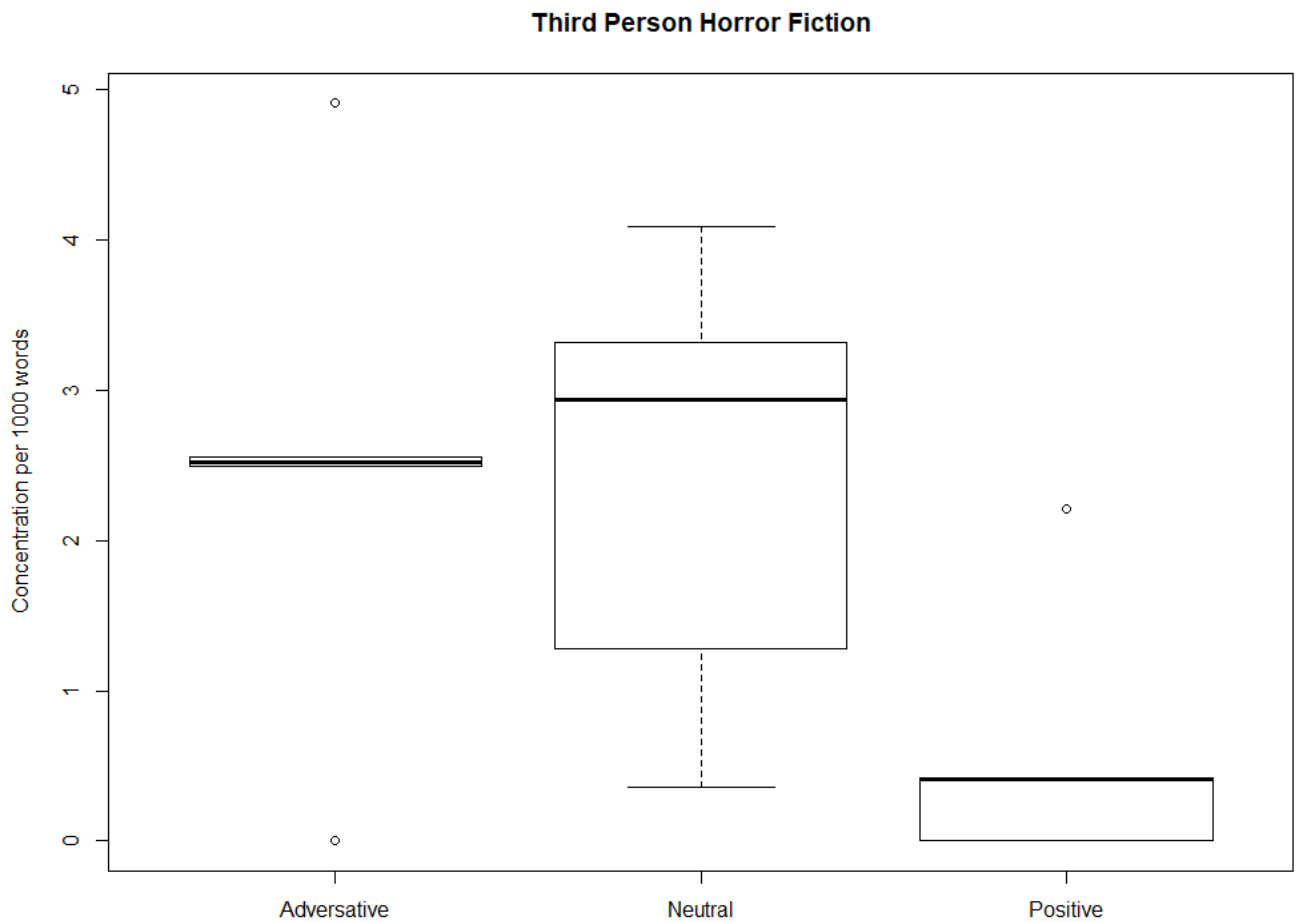


This graph shows the relative higher use of adversative passives as compared to positive passives. This was not unexpected for the first-person horror style. We can infer from the graph that the high use of adversative passives indicates something negative is happening. In horror fiction, passives were also used for neutral situations.

The highest number of adversative passives were found in the story *The Pit and the Pendulum*. In this story, there are many unknowns for the narrator. He is literally and figuratively in the dark about his surroundings for most of the story.

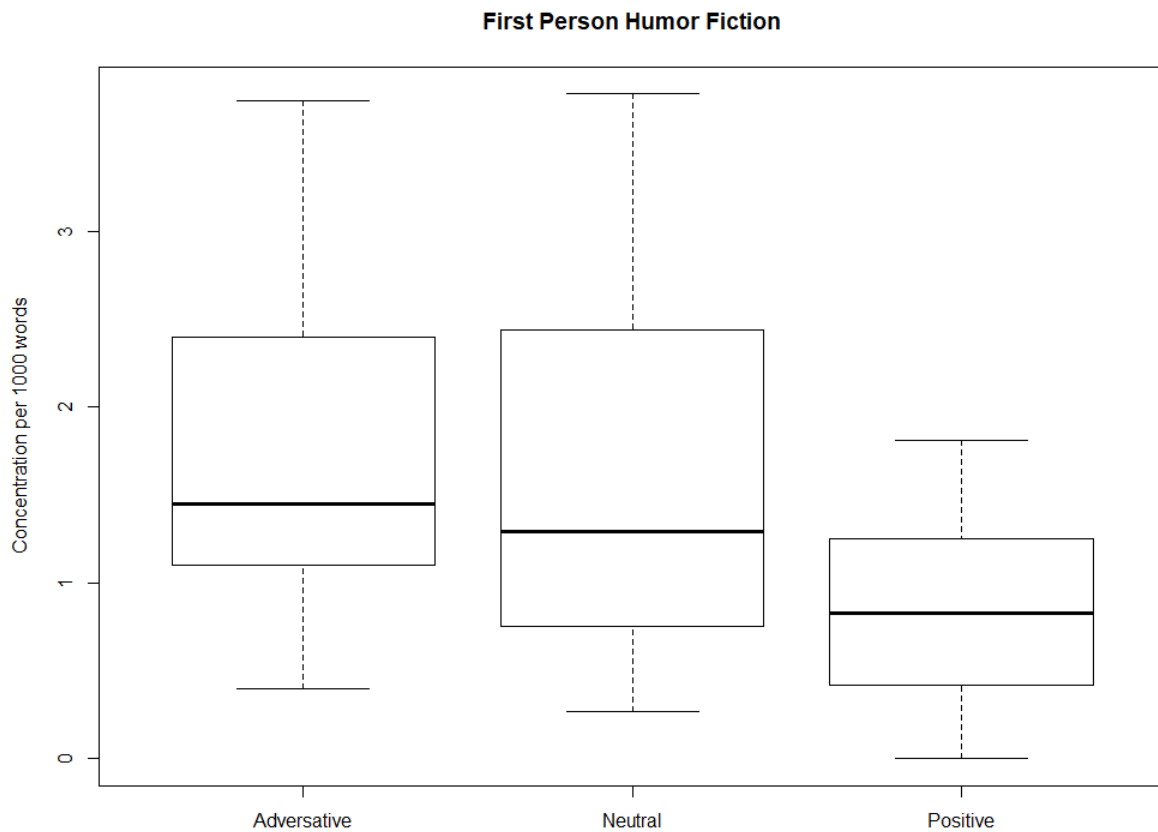
The box plot diagram for first-person horror fiction has two outliers indicated by the individual points on the top of the graph above the adversative and neutral box plots. The reason that the whiskers distribution is so low is that the story *The Spectacles* has no passives. However, the story's ppt value of zero falls into the main distribution and is not seen as an outlier.

**Graph 4.14:** *Passives in third-person horror by sense*



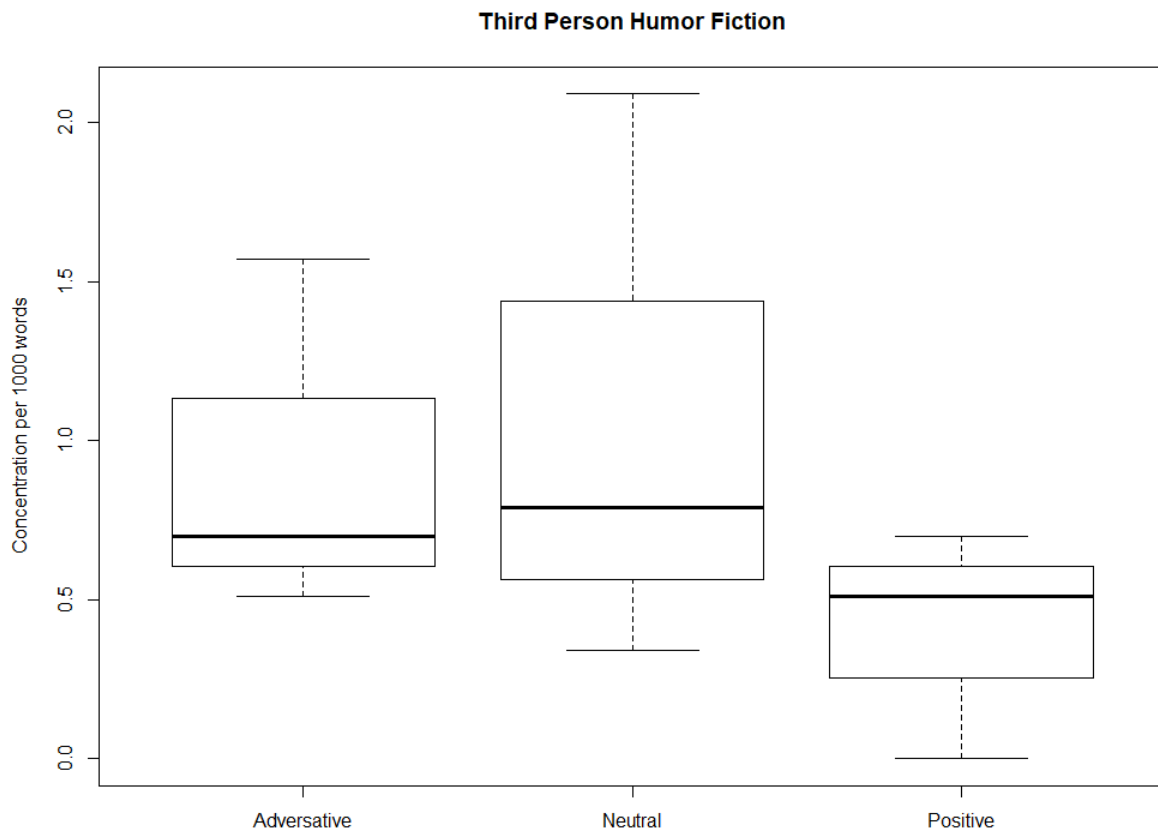
The concentration of the passives for the third-person horror fiction stories shows a clear pattern, if we discard the outliers. The adversative passives seem to be similar for the stories in this style. They have an almost uniform concentration. It should be noted, however, that there are very few passives and relatively few stories. This makes it difficult to compare third-person horror to other styles.

**Graph 4.15:** *Passives in first-person humor by sense*



The findings of the first-person humor style indicate a concentration at lower values than it is for the other styles. The degree of variation indicated may be a result of the style consisting of stories with many different types of humor. There are parodies of different types of stories as well as satire. A parody is, by its nature, an exaggeration of stylistic elements.

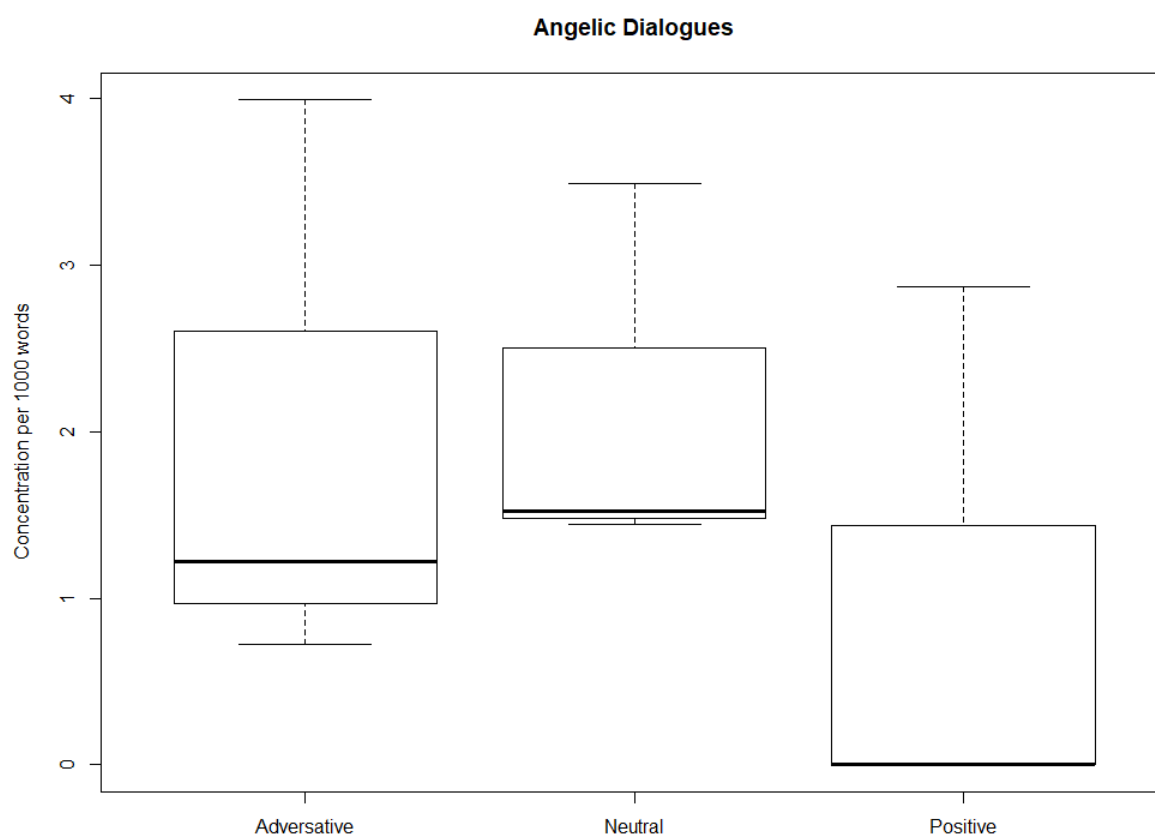
**Graph 4.16:** *Passives in third-person humor by sense*



The concentration of tokens in third- person humor is both closer and lower than was used in the first-person humor fiction. Although the concentration of passives for all senses is low, the indication here is that there is little differentiation for the use of the passive across sense in third-person humor.



**Graph 4.17:** *Passives in angelic dialogues by sense*



The concentration of passives in the angelic is low and shows little variation across sense in comparison with the variation we can see used in the other styles. The small number of passives in this style prevent us from making strong statements about the implication of the findings. However, the style is interesting as a representation of dialogue. In comparison to dialogue found in the soap opera corpus (Schwarz 2015), the angelic dialogues are not presented as approximations to common speech. The reason I argue that these are not an approximation to authentic dialogue is that they are instead meant to be a form of exalted dialogue, as would be found in ancient Greek philosophy. The low use of the passives in all senses is therefore surprising when considered this exalted form of speaking. A potential explanation for the low number of passives is that the dialogues are meant to be an imitation of speech.

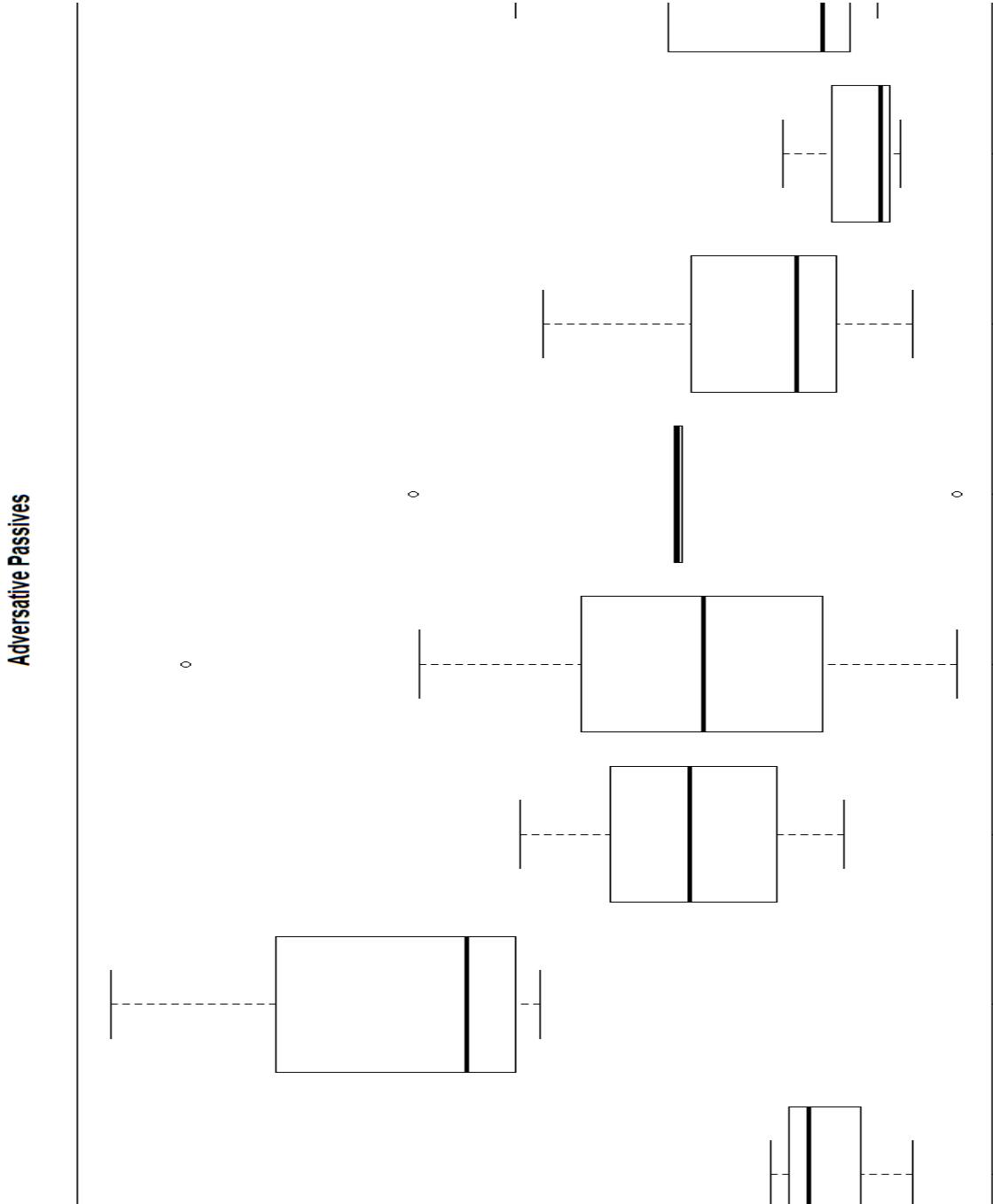
#### **4.2.2 Comparing passives in the different styles by sense**

In this section we compare the box plots across the different styles for each sense. This addresses the question as to whether the use of adversative passives is more prominent in

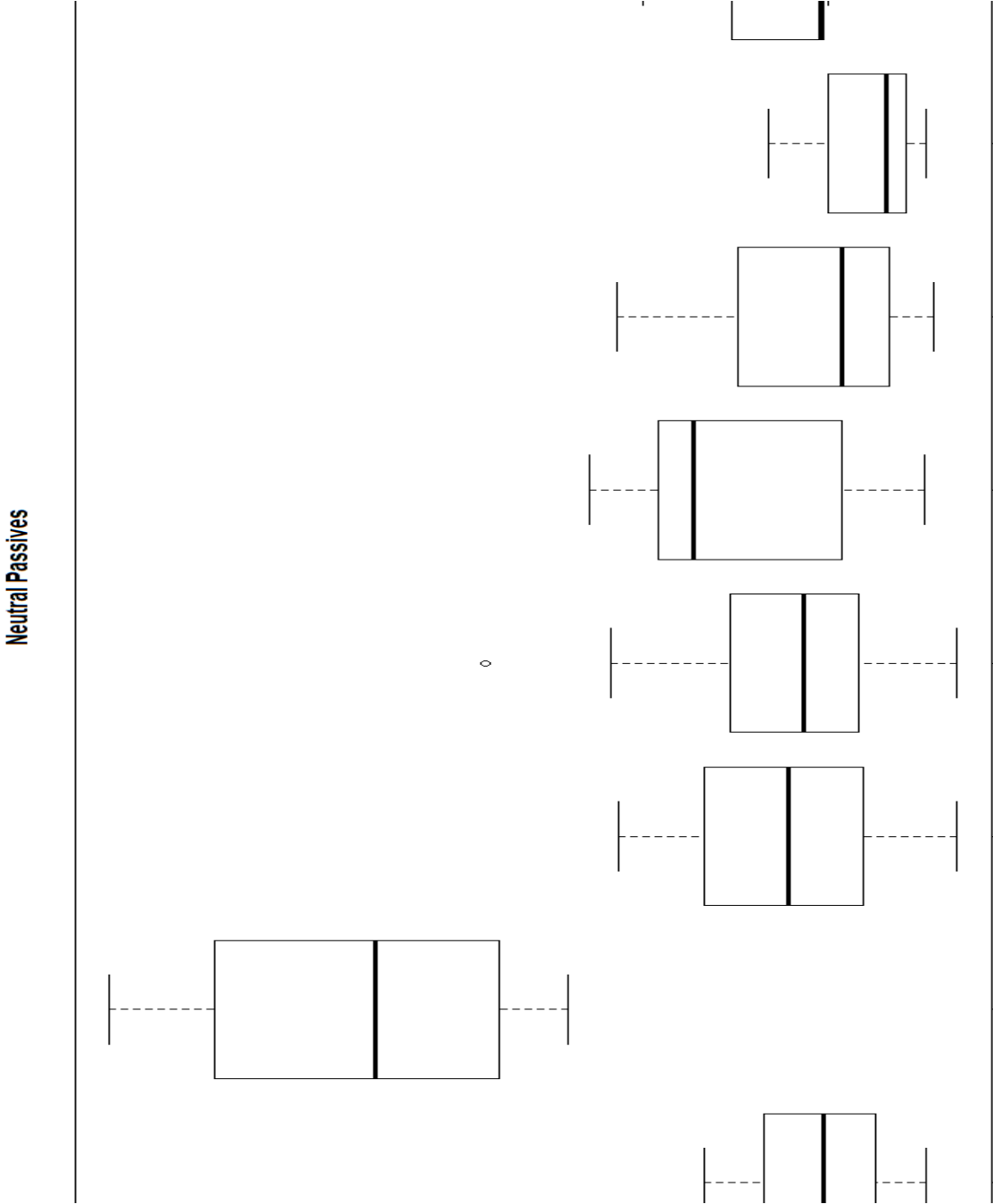
horror stories. The box plots are presented on the following three pages. Presenting this way allows for comparison for each sense across all styles. The discussion follows the presentation of all the graphs.

The comparison across styles allows us at least an initial indication as to whether the adversative passive is used more often in horror stories than in other styles. The adversative is the sense that is of most interest in relation to the research question. However, the analysis allows us to see differences for the positive and neutral senses across styles as well.

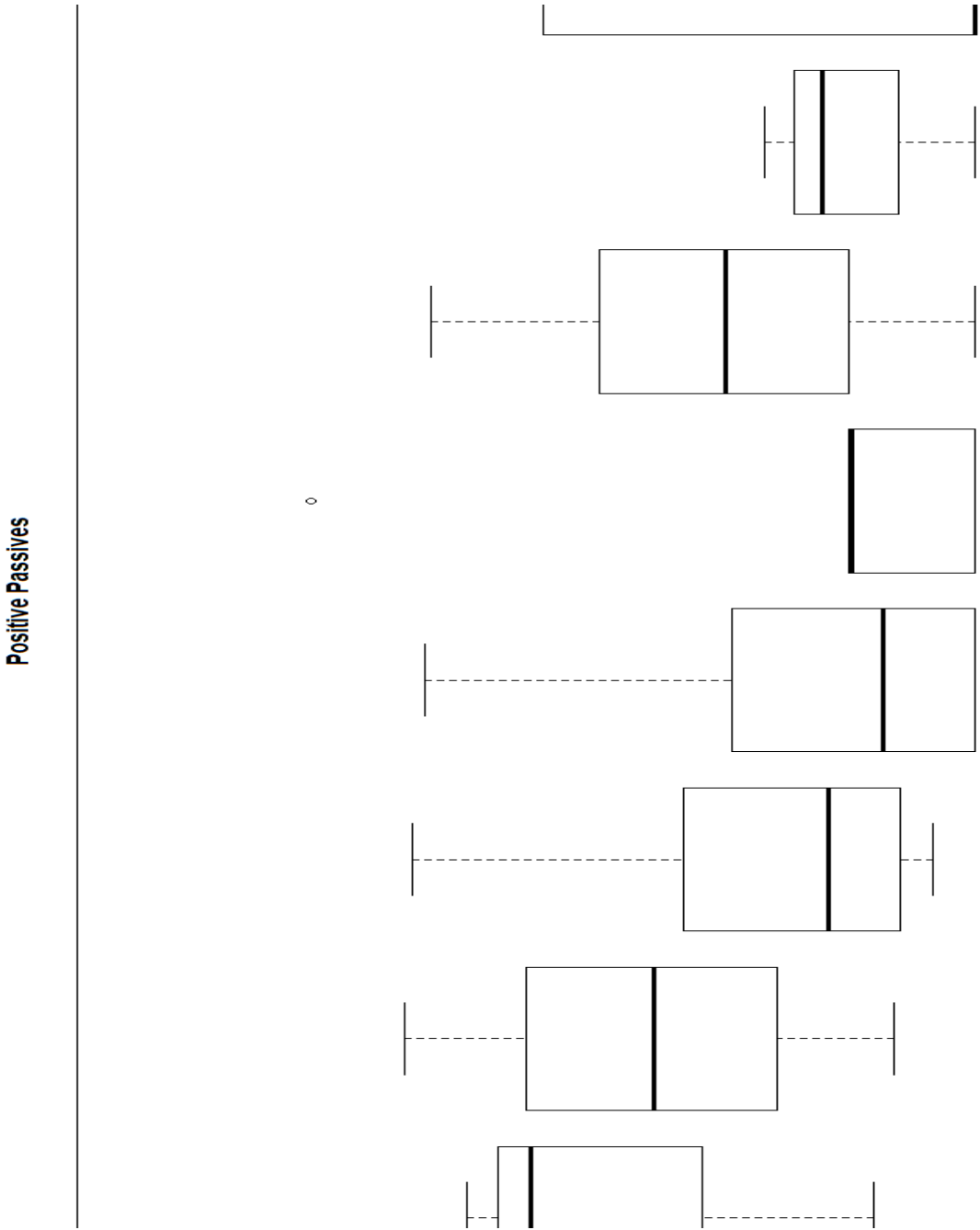
**Graph 4.18:** Comparison of adversative passives across styles



**Graph 4.19:** Comparisons of neutral passives across styles



**Graph 4.20:** Comparison of positive passives across styles



4.2.2.1 Comparison of adversative passives across styles

The box plots in graph 4.18 indicate that the highest use of the adversative passive across styles is in detective fiction. One explanation for this is, as suggested earlier, that the narrator and detective use the passive to describe what has happened to the victim. Most of the passives contain descriptions of the crime that they are trying to unravel.

The low numbers for landscape sketches can be explained in that these stories are relatively positively oriented works, without a number of negative events, so it is not unexpected that there would be fewer adversative passives.

The first-person horror, which I had expected to have the highest use of adversative passives is overshadowed by detective fiction. This finding does not support my initial assumption of the use of the adversative passive in horror stories. This is an unexpected finding and suggests a need for further research to determine if this result is general across horror stories by other authors.

#### 4.2.2.2 Comparison of neutral passives across styles

In the graph for the neutral passives (Graph 4.19) we see the clearest distinction in this whole study. The highest values can be found for the neutral passives that are in detective fiction. The reason, as mentioned earlier, is due to the descriptive nature of the effect of an action, without knowing its cause. The focus is on the patient rather than the agent. The analysis indicates that the most prominent use of the passive is to describe things that are happening, outside the control of the narrator. These are descriptions of actions that do not carry any positive or adversative judgment.

The concentration of neutral passives in detective fiction is so clearly notable that my initial assumption, that the passives were used in adversative situations as compared to neutral or positive situations, needs to be reevaluated based on this alone.

Many of the passives in the detective fiction seem to border on the pseudo passive or adjectival phrases. Detective fiction is also the style in which most of the pseudo-passives needed to be removed. This is due to the fact that they were describing the states of being resulting from an action rather than the action itself. Therefore, it was useful to draw on the criteria set forth by Quirk et al. (1985) to determine if these were true passives.

Although the detective fiction category consisted of only four stories, the ppt for this category was among the highest of all the styles.

#### 4.2.2.3 Comparison of positive passives across styles

In general, the concentration of positive passives (Graph 4.19) is low across all styles. (Note that the scale for concentration of passives for the positive passives is different from the adversative and neutral passives.) An implication of this is that passive constructions are used less frequently with positive actions than with neutral or adversative actions.

### **4.2.3 Summary of the use of passives in different senses**

To summarize, the findings show mixed results regarding the use of the passive to show helplessness. Within the first-person horror style, the box plot showed the relative higher use

of adversative passives as compared to the neutral and positive. That finding was as expected for horror stories with adverse situations indicative of lack of control. However, when comparing across styles, there was no support for the assumption that adversative passives would be most often found in horror stories.

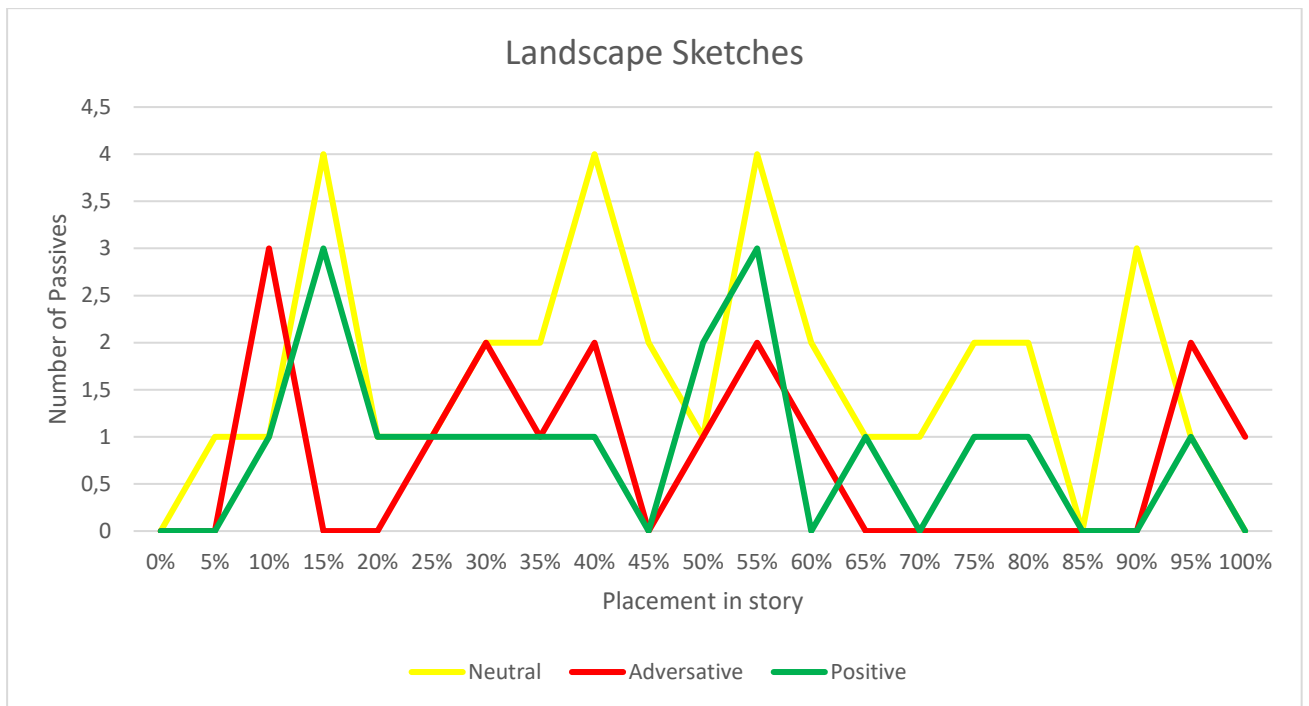
When comparing across styles, it was the detective fiction style in which both the adversative and neutral passives were found most often. This may be explained by the descriptive nature of the effect of an action, without knowing its cause. The passives were descriptive of states of being resulting from an action rather than the action itself. The narrative is told in the first-person. However, it may be more accurate to call this a second-person narrative as the narrator, although describing what he is doing, spends most of his time trying to assess what has happened that is outside his knowledge. He is trying to figure out the events surrounding a crime, making sure he only says what he actually knows without making assumptions. The narrator also uses repetition when paraphrasing what has been written in the newspapers. This repetition reminds the reader of what they are trying to solve. The repetitions are used to underscore the arguments of the narrator and back up his reasoning for what he is claiming. The detective fiction also comes close to the “News” and “Arts” section of Svartvik’s (1985) styles. This makes sense since much of the text, at least in *The Mystery of Marie Roget* comes from fictional newspaper articles that the narrator quotes or paraphrases.

#### **4.3 The pattern and placement of passives by sense**

In this section I focus on the third research question, does the placement and pattern of the passives differ by sense within a style? Again, there was a supposition that the passives would be used to build up suspense toward the end of a story. The placement of the passives is presented by sense as well as the pattern across the stories.

The graphs were generated to show if there were clusters of adversative passives at the end of the stories, namely, to indicate the use of a twist of fortune at the end, such as is the case in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. While this is the underlying question, the graphs allow us to also see if there are patterns in the placement of the passives in the stories. The graphs also indicate where in the stories the passives of a given sense cluster.

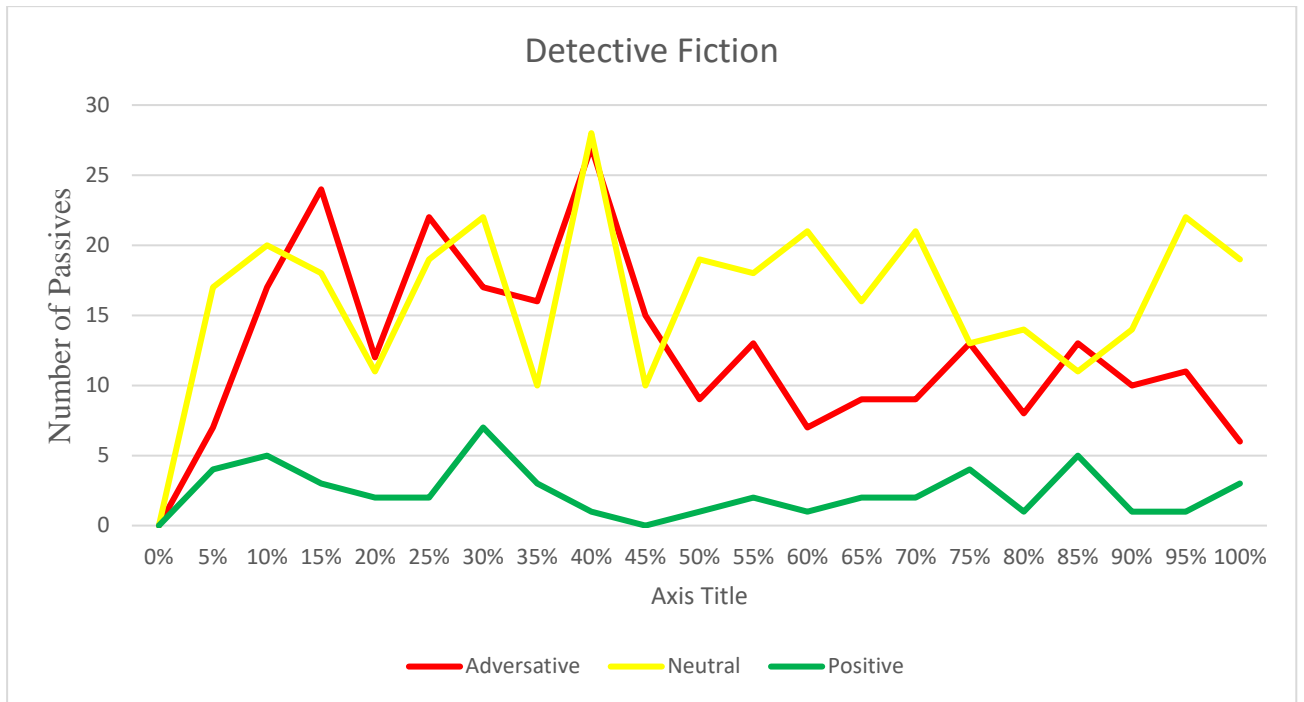
**Graph 4.21:** *Placement and pattern of passives in landscape sketches by sense*



Graph 4.21 indicates that in general all senses of the passives have been used throughout the stories in the landscape sketches style. There is some concentration in the beginning and in the middle of the stories. This finding is not unexpected for depictions of landscapes where there is no expectation of suspense or a twist at the end of the stories.

The neutral sense overlays the adversative and positive for the landscape sketches. This can be explained due to the low degree of adversative in this style. As mentioned earlier, depictions of landscapes are usually neither positive nor negative.

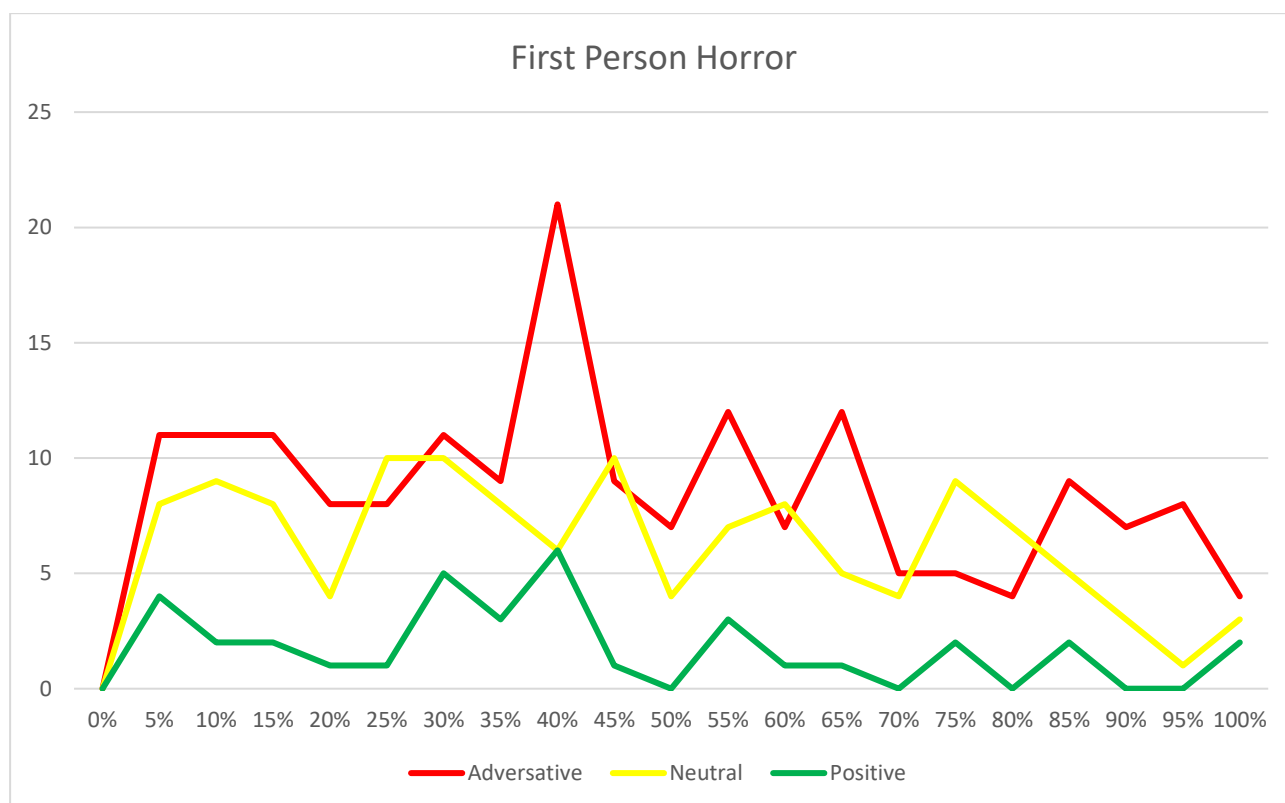
**Graph 4.22:** Placement and patterns of passives in detective fiction by sense



It is interesting to note in graph 4.22 that in the detective fiction style the adversative and neutral passives cluster in the first half of the stories. In the second half of the stories the neutral passives are prominent. One possible explanation for this is that the narrator and the detective describe the events in detail at the start of the story. The use of the adversative passives in the first half of the story can be explained by the narrator and the detective being unaware of who is causing the action to happen, or even how many people are involved. They are only aware of the patient.

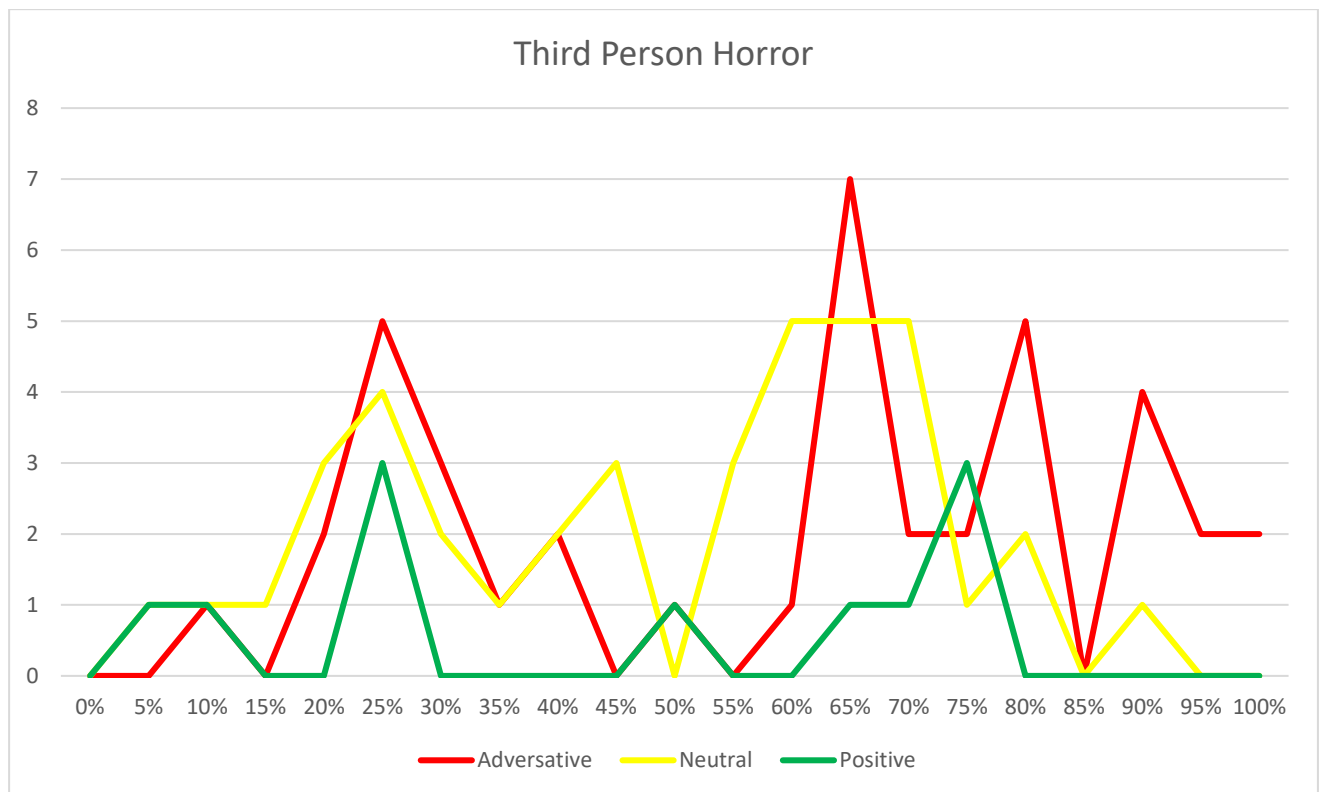


**Graph 4.23:** Placement and pattern of passives in first-person horror fiction by sense



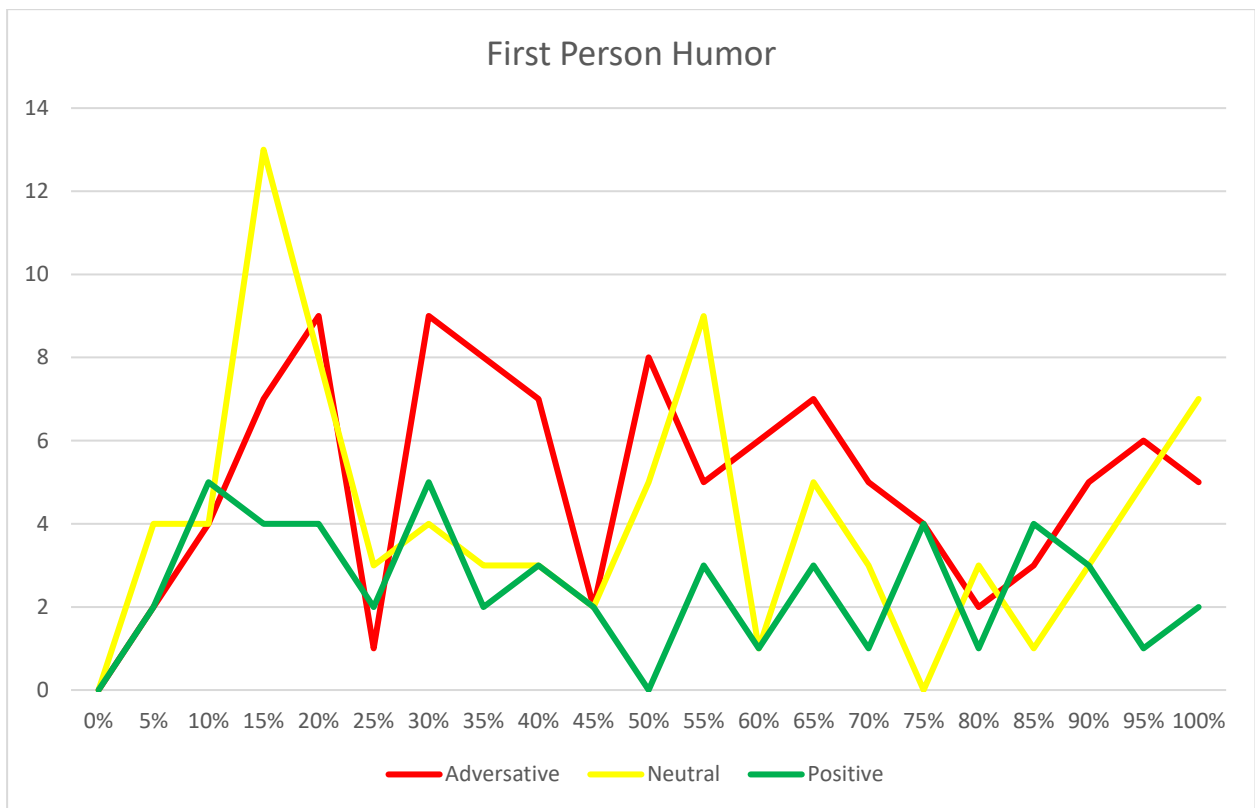
Graph 4.23 for horror stories is of interest since it does not support the supposition that the adversative passives were clustered at the end. The expectation was that the passive is used as a marker of helplessness. Suspense would build up towards the end of the story where the adversative passives would cluster. The graph does not show this pattern or placement. The adversative passives peaked towards the middle of the stories. Possible explanations would be that either the passives are not used as a style marker for adverse situations, or the situations that are the most adverse in horror stories are not towards the end of the story.

**Graph 4.24:** Placement and pattern of passives in third-person horror fiction by sense



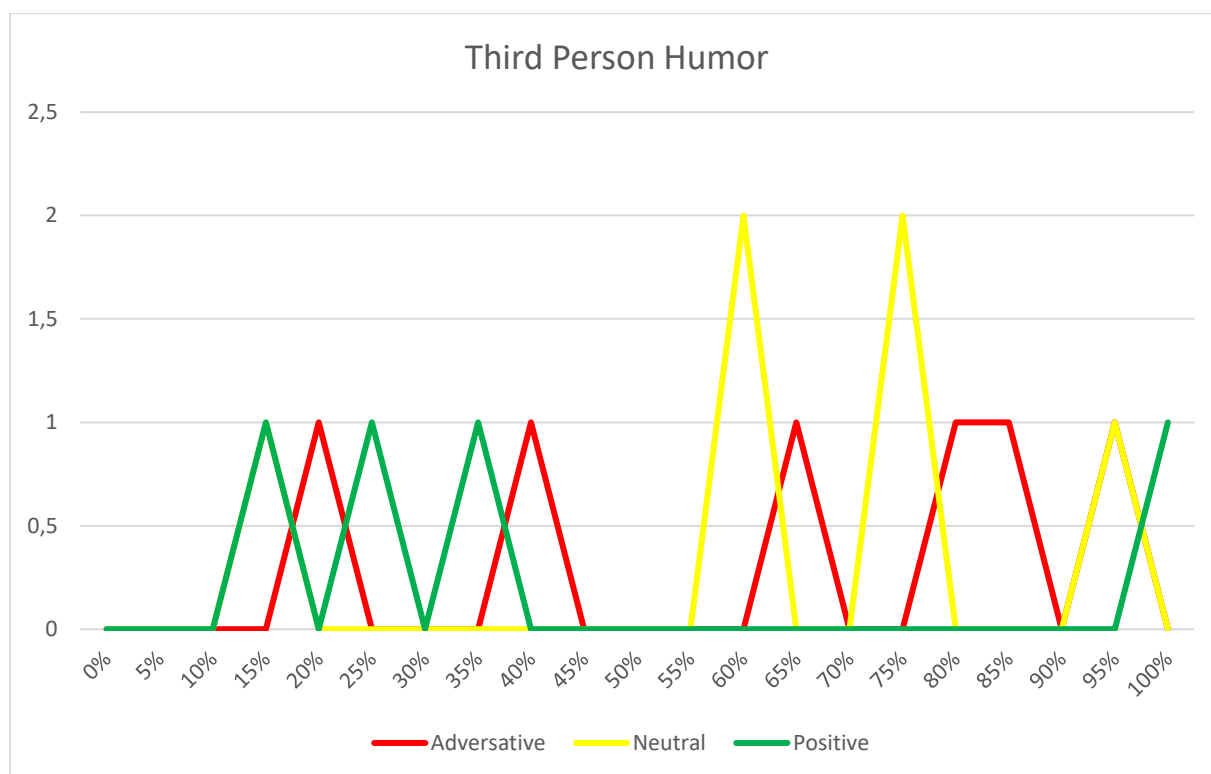
The plots on Graph 4.24 indicate that in third-person horror stories there are more adversatives passives in the second half of the story as compared to the first half. The neutral passives are found throughout, but particularly in the second half, along with the adversative passives. This finding is interesting because it is closer to the pattern that was expected for horror stories. The adversative passives do not cluster at the end of the story, but the placement in the middle of the second half may indicate a buildup of suspense before it is resolved at the end of the story. Further research could address whether there something about the third-person horror style which would suggest the high use of adversative and neutral passives toward, but not at, the end of the story. Does this placement lead to building up suspense before resolving a crisis?

**Graph 4.25:** Placement and pattern of passives in first-person humor fiction by sense



Graph 4.25 for first-person humor indicates adversative, neutral and some positive passives used throughout the stories. This graph shows a lot of variation in when it comes to the neutral and adversative passives. It is interesting that the variation drops at 25% for all passives. It might be an indication of some element in the first-person humor stories. A more reasonable explanation, given the surrounding values, is that this is just a coincidence. The low underlying positive values are consistent throughout the stories. This suggests an undercurrent in contrast to the peaks of the adversative and neutral passives. The neutral passives have a peak at the beginning of the stories. One explanation for this is that neutral passives can be used for scene or foregrounding descriptions. This is common before getting into the narrative of the story. The adversative passives are found throughout the stories. This can be explained by the style. These are humor stories, not horror stories. We did not expect a concentration at the end as there is nothing of an adversative nature happening in the stories.

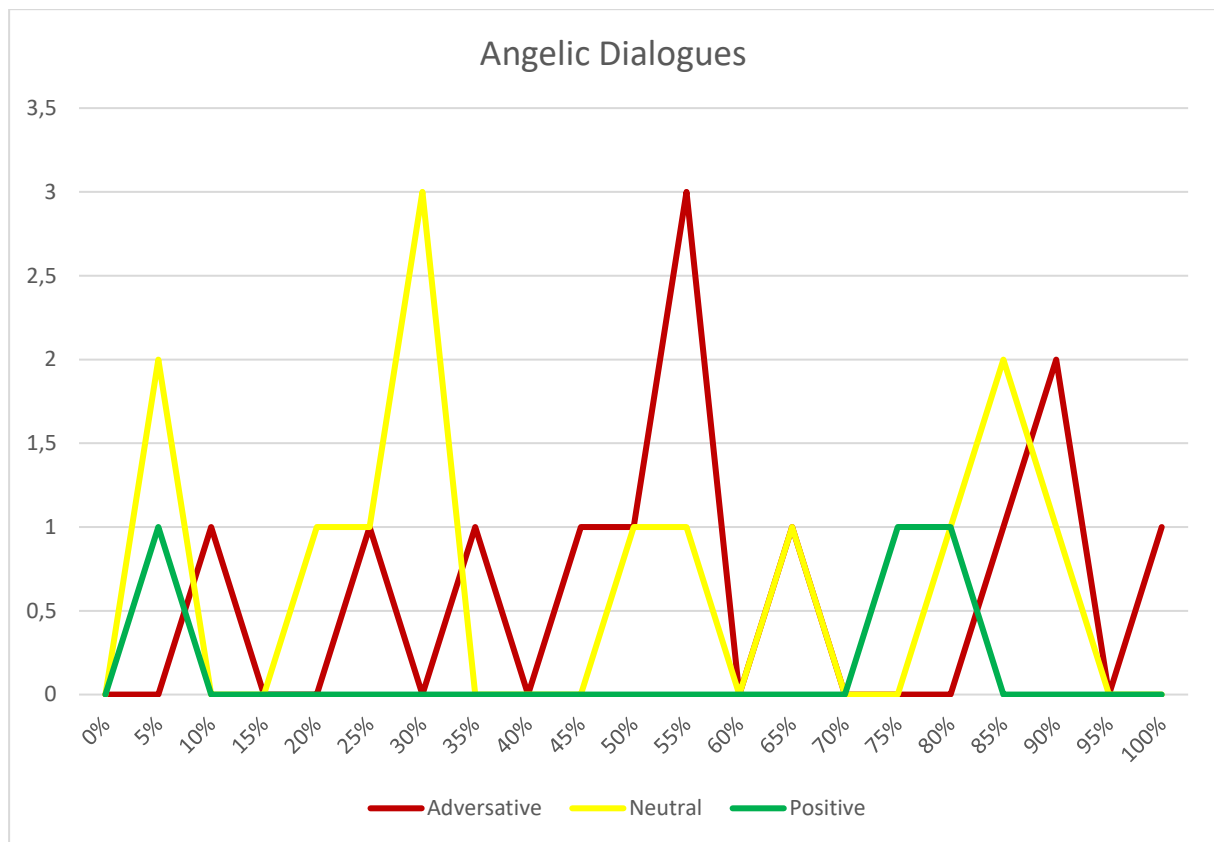
**Graph 4.26:** Placement and pattern of passives in third-person humor by sense



Graph 4.26 shows that the variation in the passives for the third-person humor is so small that it seems almost incidental. However, the graphing of the passives allows us to see an interesting pattern. Unfortunately, due to the small number of tokens it is not possible to assume an alternating pattern for positive and adversative passives for this style. During the second half of the stories the positive almost disappears. The neutral passives show up first shows up towards the end of the stories.

The general pattern for third-person humor as compared to first-person humor is similar to that for the horror stories. There also the use of the passives was much higher in the first-person narratives than they were in the third-person narratives.

**Graph 4.27:** Placement and pattern of passives in angelic dialogues by sense



Although there are interesting peaks in the angelic dialogues, there is little we can conclude from the information here as there are relatively few passives used.

#### **4.3.1 Summary comments on the placement and pattern of passives by sense**

The third research question focused on the placement and pattern of the passives for the different senses. The underlying question was whether the adversative passives clustered toward the end of the horror stories. While the graph for first-person horror did not support this, there were other interesting findings.

##### **4.3.1.1 Pattern and placement of adversative passives**

The interesting pattern for the adversative passive is that there are spikes in several of the styles. The major spikes are in detective fiction and in first-person horror. The spikes in both styles are around the forty percent mark, meaning that they occur forty percent through the story. There are spikes in the passives in the other stories as well, however, but the spikes in

detective fiction and first-person horror have much higher absolute numbers than in the other styles.

A potential explanation for this similar pattern could be that both are written in the first-person. However, in detective fiction, the narrator is just describing what has already happened. He only has a describing role, the same way that Doctor Watson has the narrating role in the Sherlock Holmes narratives.

I should also mention the peak toward the end of the stories for third-person horror. Although the absolute number of adversative passives for this style is lower than for first-person horror, the placement gives some indication of building up horror toward the end of the story, as was expected, but not found, for first-person horror.

#### 4.3.1.2 Placement and pattern of neutral passives

The use of the neutral passive appears to show no distinct pattern or placement across the different styles. The most interesting aspect may be that the neutral sense is the high throughout the detective stories. The plot in many of these stories is concerned with murders. A potential explanation for the pattern of the neutral passives throughout the detective style would be that they are used with description of things that had been discovered, or of actions that the narrator or detective knew must have happened for things to have been discovered. These would lead to solving the mystery.

A similar pattern which was uncovered in the first-person horror can be explained in the same way; that is, a need for description of things and actions throughout the stories.

#### 4.3.1.3 Placement and pattern of positive passives

The placement and pattern of the positive passives for the different styles are, in general, used less frequently, but they are found throughout the stories. The line for the positive passives in most of the styles is at a low level on the graph. It is interesting to note that the positive passives in several styles lead, follow, or overlap the same pattern as the adversative. This pattern was not anticipated but offers a potential for further investigation. For several styles (landscape sketches, third-person humor, and angelic dialogues) it is difficult to draw any conclusions since there are so few tokens of the passive to examine.

#### 4.3.1.4 Final remarks on placement and patterns of the passive senses

The rationale for doing this analysis was to seek to find a pattern in the use of the passives. I was expecting to find more adversative passives towards the end of the first-person horror stories because that was the part of the story where the narrator would feel the most helpless. This was, however, not the case. The adversative passives in first-person horror, as well as detective fiction, cluster around the middle of the stories.

The graphs also allow us to see the pattern of the neutral passives. Looking only at this, we see a wide variation. However, the pattern of the neutrals is more interesting when seen in relationship to the adversative passives. There are several cases of similarity in the pattern of the adversative and neutrals, for example the first half of detective fiction and third-person horror. Further research investigating these similar patterns might lead to an explanation.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

Does Poe use the passive to create the feeling of suspense in horror stories? The underlying argument of this thesis is that there is an aspect of narration that hints at the narrator's emotional state as well how they interpret the world they inhabit (Korzybski 1937).

The use of the passive in narrative fiction has been highly criticized by authors and in style guides which argue that language should portray the subject as active and use the active voice. Passives are used to indicate that something is being done to the subject of the sentence. Acquino & Byron (2002) argue that the passive may be a part of the discourse of victim mentality. Victim mentality is linked to learned helplessness, the feeling of not being in control (Seligman 1972). Discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis look at how language is used in a way to change the readers/listeners perception.

My focus in this research was to explore if language, specifically the use of passives, is used to create feelings of unease or helplessness. Stylistics is useful for this as the focus of the study is a specific stylistic choice made by an author in a text. I investigated Poe's horror stories, as well as in his other works of short fiction. Was the use of the passive a style choice in his horror fiction? In this chapter I summarize and draw possible conclusions based on the findings, then discuss the findings as related to previous research. I also address the limitations of this study and suggest areas for further research.

### 5.1 The use of the passive as a style choice

Poe focused his writing to be as effective and efficient as possible. As explained in his *Philosophy of Composition*, he believed literary works should be short (Poe 1846). The use of the passive as a style choice could allow him to achieve an effect without using a lot of words. Therefore, Poe's use of the passive construction may have been a style choice. Poe's style choices are well documented, even down to the point of using specific sounds in poetry to create the desired effect on his readers. We cannot know if he was aware, consciously or not, of his use of the passive as a style choice. I did, however, investigate how the passive was used in his works of short fiction.



The context of the research was Poe's short stories. Did Poe use passives as a style marker to create emotional states? The following research questions were posed:

- 1) Is there a difference in the use of the passive in different styles of writing?
- 2) Does the use of the passive indicate a lack of control?
- 3) Is the placement and pattern of the passives in different styles related to the sense?

In presenting the answers to these three questions I will briefly review the data and method and then present and discuss the most interesting findings.

## **5.2 Is there a difference in the use of the passive in different styles of writing?**

Poe wrote sixty-six short stories. To be able to answer the first research question, the stories were divided into eight categories based on the style in which they were written. The styles vary in terms of number of stories as well as length of each story. The central passives for each story were identified using Quick et al.'s (1985) criteria.

I plotted the number of passives and length of stories to determine if there was a linear relationship between the two. Then the correlation coefficients for the relationship between the number of passives and length of stories were calculated, first for the whole population of stories and then for each category. This allowed me to determine if there was a difference in the use of the passive as a style choice in different styles of writing. Strong correlations were found for several categories; however, there were few stories in these styles so caution should be taken in drawing conclusions about the passives being used as a style choice. More relevant for the research question was the moderate correlation coefficient for the horror stories. This test alone would not support the use of the passive to create suspense in horror stories.

A second test for determining if Poe used passives more often in horror stories than in other styles drew on the calculation of passives per thousand words (ppt). The highest concentration of passives was found for detective fiction, and not, as expected, for the horror fiction. This test allowed for a comparison with earlier work done by Svartvik (1966). This comparison showed that in general Poe used fewer passives than the stories included in Svartvik's research. The ranking of detective stories between news and arts suggests a possible explanation for the high concentration of passives in this style as the use of passives in detective stories may be to describe unknown processes, similar to that of academic discourse.

To answer the first research question, we can, with caution, say that there is some indication of the use of the passive as a style choice in some of Poe's writings, but support is not shown for the expected use of the passive to create suspense in horror stories.

### **5.3 Does the use of the passive indicate helplessness or victim mentality of the narrator?**

To investigate the second research question, I needed to determine the sense of the passive. For each passive, I asked the question: "Is it worse to be X than not to be X?" (Persson 1990). Following Schwarz (2015), I classified passives for which the answer was yes as adversative. If the answer was "No, one of the alternatives was not better than the other", the passive was classified as neutral. If the answer was "No, it is actually *better* to be X than not to be X" the passive was classified as positive. The ppt for each sense for each story in a style were aggregated so a comparison could be made within the style and across styles. I used box plots to display the findings. The box plot used the ppt and the variation among the stories within the style.

The findings for the second research question were mixed. The findings indicated that for the first-person horror style, the adversative passives were used more often than the neutral or positive. This gives some support to the expectation that adversative passives were used in stories with adverse situations suggesting lack of control.

However, when comparing across styles, there was no support that the adversative passives were used more often in the first-person horror style. Detective fiction was the style with the highest use of adversative and neutral passives. These results question the initial assumptions that passives were used in adversative situations as compared to neutral or positive.

### **5.4 Does the placement and patterns of passives differ by sense and by style?**

The third research question focused on whether the story used passives to build up suspense toward the end of the story. The underlying question was whether the adversative passives clustered toward the end of the horror stories. To determine this, I developed a graph in which the tokens of each sense were placed at the percentage of the story where the passive occurred.

The findings showed peaks for the adversative passives at about 40% through the stories for both the detective and first-person horror. This finding does not support the use of the adversative passive to build up suspense toward the end of the story.

Perhaps the most interesting finding for the neutral passives were that they were found to be high throughout the detective and first-person horror stories. The use of the passive in describing things or events may be necessary for the mystery to be solved. Positive passives were used less frequently although they are found throughout the stories.

## **5.5 Drawing on previous research to discuss the findings**

The findings from this research can be viewed considering previous research on the passive. I discuss my findings drawing heavily on the research done by Schwarz (2015) on the use of the passive in Soap Opera dialogue, as well as Granger (1983) and Svartvik's (1966) study on the *to be* constructions and passive voice.

### **5.5.1 The passive as a style marker**

One underlying question is whether the passive can be seen as a style marker as found by, among others, Crystal & Davy (1969). Is there evidence that Poe used the passive as a style marker in his short stories? Based on the findings in relation to Research Question 1 above, we can, with caution, say that there is some indication of the use of the passive as a style choice in some of Poe's writings.

### **5.5.2 Differences in use of passives in different genres or styles**

Several authors have investigated the use of passives in different genres or styles. Svartvik's (1966) study classified passives in eight text types. Classification of Poe's short stories did not allow me the same categorization as used by Svartvik. It was, however, interesting to see how Poe's styles were ranked combined with Svartvik (See Table 4.4). In general, most of Poe's works used fewer passives than works included in Svartvik's research. The table does show an interesting finding for the ranking of Detective Fiction. It was ranked between Svartvik's categories of Arts and News. While Poe's detective fiction is neither art nor news, it might be considered to be similar to academic discourse or to imitate it. Or it may be that the passives in detective fiction are used to describe "facts" needed to solve a case, similar to facts in a news story.

There are many differences in the findings from Svartvik's study using a 320,000 word corpus and the research reported in this study. However, the high ranking of the category of news from Svartvik's study are also similar to the research by Crystal & Davy

(1969) who found higher use of the passive in formal styles. This would help explain high use of the passive in detective fiction that depends on “facts” to build the story.

### **5.5.3. Use of the passive to build suspense**

The findings of this study did not support the expectation that the passives would cluster toward the end of the horror stories in order to build suspense. Johnstone (2002) argued that shifting an element from its natural place, right dislocation, can be used to create suspense in a sentence. In this study, the use of the passive was not found to create suspenseful sentences towards the end of the story. An interesting follow-up would be to see if right dislocations were used in horror fiction.

## **5.6 Limitation of the study**

### **5.6.1 Limitations based on definition of the passive**

A limitation in this research concerns how the passive was defined and operationalized. There are many variants and theories of the passive. This makes it difficult to find a working definition from which one can check all the possible structures.

I chose to determine the passives using Quick et al.’s (1985) check list. This determination of the passives requires a corresponding active structure. This implies a clear choice of the passive structure over the active structure, making the use of the passive deliberate.

This strict definition of the passive may have been conservative and may, thus, have affected the findings. I did not include pseudo-passives in this study. The passive has a function when it comes to putting the role of recipient in point of prominence in the sentence. However, this is also possible through other *to be* + Ved structures that do not fall into the definition of passive verbs by Quick’s et al.’s check list. When we look at the theta roles that the patient takes, we see that they also include what is used in pseudo-passives. In hindsight, including these passives might have given me a more interesting set of results to study. I also did not look at the different uses of the agitative and non-agitative passives. Distinguishing between the two may have made it clearer when information about the agent is shown as opposed to being hidden from the reader. If we assume that Poe did use the passive as a style choice, there is no guarantee that he had a strict definition of the passive.

The use of the strict definition, however, makes this study more comparable to the other research done in this area, since the results can be compared to Svartvik and others who have used Quick et al.'s classification for central passives.

### **5.6.2 Limitations based on context**

The data for this research was limited to Poe's short stories. Therefore, the only conclusions we can draw are how Edgar Allan Poe used the passive voice in short fiction. For many of the categories, the number of stories and passives was small making it difficult to draw conclusions. The supposition that passives would be used to create suspense in horror stories was not supported. The finding that detective fiction had the highest correlation of the passive as well as the highest frequency of adversative and neutral passives was unexpected. Although it is possible to suggest possible explanations for these findings, a study involving horror fiction and detective fiction from different authors would, if found to support these findings, increase the validity and generalizability of the findings.

### **5.7 Suggestions for future research**

Several areas for future research were mentioned as the findings were discussed. However, the suggestions I focus on here recognize the limitations of this research.

First, I suggest that the inclusion of pseudo-passives and adjectival phrases would be useful to uncover whether the results found with this study still hold. The underlying question regarded Poe's use of the passive to create suspense in horror stories. There was little support for this. Would a data set which included the pseudo-passives and adjectival phrases given stronger support? We cannot know if Poe used the passive as a style marker; nor can we know if his use would have included pseudo-passives and adjectival phrases. But it is possible to investigate whether the answer to the underlying question would have been different had these been included as passives.

A second suggestion would be a study of two of Poe's styles, detective fiction and horror, across a wider sample of authors. These were the two categories of interest; one because of the underlying question, the other because of the findings. A study that included works from other authors would allow us to draw conclusions which were more generalizable across the population of horror stories and detective fiction.

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## NORSK SAMMENDRAG

Formålet med denne oppgaven var å forske på bruken av passive verb i Poe sine skrekkhistorier. Poe var mest kjent for hans gotiske fortellinger, men hadde et vidstrakte forfatterskap. I denne oppgaven brukte jeg alle Poe sine fortellinger. Fortellingene ble delt inn i kategorier basert på ulike stilene. Dette resulterte i åtte stiler (kategorier), de stilene er; landskap skisser, detektiv fortellinger, eventyr, førsteperson skrekkfortellinger, tredjeperson skrekkfortellinger, førsteperson humoristiske fortellinger, tredjeperson humoristiske fortellinger, og engledialoger. Jeg ønsket å finne ut om det var forskjellig bruk av passive verb i situasjoner der fortelleren opplevde seg selv som offeret. Jeg utviklet tre problemstillinger for å besvare på dette spørsmålet.

1. Er det en forskjell mellom bruken av passive verb i de forskjellige stilene?
2. Blir passive verb brukt til å antyde at fortelleren er offeret i situasjonen?
3. Er plasseringen av de passive verbene i forskjellige stiler relatert til tilstanden?

For å svare på den første problemstillingen kalkulerte jeg korrelasjonskoeffisienten for å finne sammenhengen mellom antall passive verb og lengden på fortellingene. Grafen viste en lineær sammenheng mellom lengde og antall passive for alle fortellingene samlet. Det samme kalkulasjonen ble regnet ut for hver av stilene, for å finne ulikheter blant dem. Da ble det mulig å sammenligne de forskjellige stilene å se hvilken stil som hadde det mest konsekvent bruk av passive verb. Resultatene viste at detektiv fortellingene hadde høyere korrelasjon enn skrekkfortellingerne mellom passive og ord.

For å regne ut i hvilken stil passive verb ble oftest brukt regnet jeg ut passive verbum per 1000 ord. Dette gjorde det mulig å sammenligne mine funn med Svartvik (1966) sine funn. Passive verb ble mest brukt i krimfortellinger (som kan sammenlignes med Svartvik sitt funn om bruken av passive verb i akademisk diskurs) i forhold til de andre stilene.

Den neste problemstillingen gjaldt om passive verb blir brukt til å antyde at fortelleren er offeret i situasjonen. Til å finne ut om noe negative skjer med fortelleren, var det nødvendig å finne en klassifisering for negativitet. For hvert passivt verb stilte jeg et spørsmål tatt fra Persson (1990): «Er det verre å være X eller å ikke være X?» Dersom svaret er ja, var det en negativ tilstand for fortelleren/hovedkarakteren, altså at han var offeret i den

situasjonen. Dersom svaret var nei, var det en positiv tilstand for fortelleren/hovedkarakteren om det var verken ja eller nei, ble det klassifisert som nøytral.

Resultatene viste at innenfor stilen førsteperson skrekkhistorier ble negative passive verb brukt oftere enn positive eller negative. Men når alle stilene ble sammenlignet, var det underkategorien med krimfortellinger som hadde høyest bruk av negative og nøytrale passive verb.

For å svare på den siste problemstillingen, om plasseringen av de passive verbene i forskjellige stiler relatert til tilstanden, var det nødvendig å se hvor i fortellingene de passive verbene var plassert. For hver av stilene ble de passive verbene (organisert etter tilstand) plassert i forhold til plassering i fortellingen. Dette viste at for både kriminalfortellingene og skrekkhistorier skrevet i førsteperson var negative verb ca. 40% inn i fortellingene og ikke måt slutten som forventet. Det interessante her var at de nøytrale passive verbene var høy gjennom hele fortellingene for både de to kategoriene. Positive passive verb ble brukt mindre ofte.

Det mest overraskende funnet med denne oppgaven var at passive verb ikke blir brukt mest med skrekkfortellinger. Istedenfor ble det passive verb brukt for å vise tenkemåten til den analytiske detektiven i krimfortellingene.

En begrensning med denne studien er at det ble brukt et strengt regelverk som unnlot mange formuleringer som ligner passive verb. En kan da stille spørsmål om Poe hadde en like streng definisjon av passive verb. En annen begrensningen var at det var Poe sine fortellinger som ble sammenlignet, uten at verk fra andre forfatter ble brukt. Dersom fremtidig forskning bruker en mindre streng definisjon for passive verb og/eller verk fra flere forfattere vil det være av interesse å se om funnene gjort her vil bli støttet.