

Research Article

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**Sentence pattern analysis of active and passive constructions in the
news article “Deadly Storms Ravage Asia”**

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Abstract

This study analyzes sentence patterns of active and passive constructions in the news article “Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600 with Hundreds Missing.” The objective of this research is to identify the distribution of sentence patterns using the framework of Transformational–Generative Grammar. This study applied a qualitative descriptive method with syntactic analysis at the surface structure level. The data consisted of 40 sentences taken from a CNN news article. The results show that active constructions dominate the text with 28 sentences (70%), while passive constructions appear in 12 sentences (30%). The most frequent patterns are Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O) and Subject-Verb-Complement (S-V-C). The findings indicate that active constructions are used to present actions directly, while passive constructions emphasize impacts and affected participants. This study demonstrates that syntactic structure plays an important role in organizing information in news discourse.

Keywords: syntax; sentence pattern; active voice; passive voice; news discourse

1. Introduction

Syntax is one of the fundamental branches of linguistics that examines how words are organized into phrases, clauses, and sentences to convey meaning effectively. Understanding syntactic structure is essential in written communication because sentence construction influences clarity, coherence, and the delivery of information (Fadhilah et al., 2024; Nainggolan & Simanjuntak, 2025). In written discourse, syntactic choices help writers arrange information logically and guide readers in interpreting messages (Lestari et al., 2025). Effective sentence construction therefore plays a significant role in ensuring that communication is clear, concise, and meaningful (Nababan, 2021).

In syntactic studies, one of the most influential theoretical frameworks is Transformational-Generative Grammar proposed by Noam Chomsky. This theory explains that language is generated from a finite set of rules that can produce an infinite number of sentences. According to Chomsky, sentences consist of deep structure, which represents the underlying meaning, and surface structure, which represents the actual form realized in speech or writing (Chomsky, 1964). These two structures are connected through transformational rules that allow variations such as active and passive

constructions to emerge from the same basic structure (Chomsky, 1956; Harris, 2021). This concept provides an important foundation for analyzing sentence patterns in linguistic research.

Syntax is also closely related to communicative purposes in discourse. Sentence patterns are not only grammatical structures but also functional tools used to emphasize information and shape interpretation (Sharandin, 2023). In discourse analysis, grammatical structures are often used as analytical units to understand how meaning is constructed and represented in texts (Megawati, 2021). Structural organization, including the arrangement of old and new information, significantly affects how readers process written content (Sajarwa, 2022). Therefore, syntactic analysis is essential for understanding how linguistic structures support communication goals.

In news discourse, syntactic structure plays an important role in presenting factual and objective information. News texts are expected to deliver events clearly, concisely, and accurately. Journalists commonly use active constructions to highlight actions and agents, while passive constructions are used to emphasize results, impacts, or affected participants (Almahameed et al., 2022). The use of grammatical patterns in news writing is closely related to journalistic strategies in shaping meaning and reader perception (Barkho, 2023). Previous studies also indicate that sentence patterns in news articles often follow systematic structures such as Subject-Verb-Object to maintain clarity and readability (Andriani & Bram, 2021).

Transformational-Generative Grammar is a linguistic theory introduced by Noam Chomsky that focuses on the formal structure of language and the rules that generate sentences. According to Chomsky, language is not merely a collection of words but a system of rules that enables speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences from a finite set of elements. This theory emphasizes the concept of linguistic competence, which refers to the speaker's internalized knowledge of language structure (Chomsky, 1964).

Chomsky explains that grammar consists of several components, with syntax functioning as the central component that determines sentence structure. In transformational-generative grammar, sentences are generated through phrase structure rules and transformational rules. Phrase structure rules produce the basic structure of a sentence, while transformational rules modify this structure into different surface forms (Chomsky, 1965).

A key concept in this theory is the distinction between *deep structure* and *surface structure*. Deep structure represents the underlying meaning relationships in a sentence, whereas surface structure represents the actual arrangement of words in spoken or written form. Transformational processes connect these two levels by allowing structural variations such as active and passive constructions without changing the core meaning (Chomsky, 1965).

Furthermore, Chomsky states that generative grammar aims to describe the mental system that enables speakers to produce grammatically correct sentences. This framework provides an important theoretical foundation for syntactic analysis because it explains how sentence patterns are systematically formed through rule-based transformations. Therefore, transformational-generative grammar is widely used in syntactic research, particularly in analyzing sentence structure variations such as active and passive constructions.

Meanwhile, active and passive constructions are fundamental grammatical patterns in English syntax that describe different ways of organizing sentence elements. In an active sentence, the subject performs the action expressed by the verb, whereas in a passive sentence, the subject receives the action. These constructions allow speakers or writers to shift focus depending on communicative purposes.

According to (Conrad et al., 1999), passive constructions are formed by combining the auxiliary verb *be* with the past participle of the main verb. The object of the active sentence becomes the subject in the passive form, while the agent may be included using a *by-phrase* or omitted when it is unknown or less important. This structural variation enables writers to emphasize either the actor or the result of an action.

Active constructions are generally more direct and frequently used in spoken and informal written discourse because they clearly identify the agent of the action. In contrast, passive constructions are

commonly used in formal and informational texts such as academic writing and news reports, where the focus is often placed on events or outcomes rather than on the actors (Conrad et al., 1999).

From a syntactic perspective, the relationship between active and passive sentences can also be explained through transformational processes. Within transformational-generative grammar, passive sentences are derived from active structures through movement and restructuring operations that change grammatical roles while maintaining semantic relationships. This transformation demonstrates how different surface forms may originate from the same deep structure. Therefore, the analysis of active and passive constructions is essential in syntactic studies because it reveals how grammatical structure functions to organize information and shape discourse meaning.

Several previous studies have examined syntactic patterns in news discourse. Research by Nurafifah & Wiyanti (2024) shows that both active and passive constructions frequently appear in online news texts with different functional roles. Similarly, Sulisyana & Muhaimi (2025) found that active constructions tend to dominate disaster news reporting to convey direct and urgent information, while passive constructions are used to highlight impacts or outcomes. These studies indicate that syntactic patterns contribute significantly to how information is structured in news discourse.

However, previous research has mostly focused on general sentence effectiveness or grammatical patterns without specifically applying Transformational-Generative Grammar to analyze active and passive constructions in disaster news texts. Studies that examine sentence pattern distribution using transformational syntax frameworks are still limited. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how deep and surface structures are reflected in actual news writing through active and passive constructions.

Based on this background, this study analyzes sentence patterns of active and passive constructions in a news article entitled “*Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600.*” Using the framework of Transformational-Generative Grammar, this research aims to classify sentence forms, identify syntactic patterns, and determine the distribution of active and passive constructions in the news text. The findings of this study are expected to provide a clearer understanding of how syntactic structures function in organizing information and supporting communicative purposes in news discourse.

2. Methods

2.1 Data Source

The data of this study were taken from an online news article entitled “*Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600 with Hundreds Missing*” written by (Sharman, 2025). The news article reports extreme weather events affecting several Asian countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia.

The data consisted of sentences containing active and passive constructions found in the news text. The researcher selected clauses and sentences that represent syntactic patterns relevant to the analysis of sentence structure, particularly those involving Subject-Verb-Object patterns and passive voice formations. The news article was chosen because news discourse commonly applies various syntactic patterns to present factual and objective information.

2.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method. According to (Creswell, 2013), qualitative research focuses on interpreting textual data and understanding patterns within naturally occurring language. This method is appropriate because the objective of this study is to analyze sentence structures rather than to measure statistical relationships.

The study applied a syntactic approach using Transformational-Generative Grammar to examine how active and passive constructions are formed. The analysis emphasizes surface structure patterns found in the news text while referring to transformational concepts that explain structural variations between sentence forms.

Qualitative descriptive analysis was used to classify sentence patterns and interpret how grammatical structures function in news discourse. This approach allows the researcher to describe linguistic phenomena systematically based on actual language use in written texts.

2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

To ensure accuracy, consistency, and theoretical relevance, the data analysis in this study was conducted through several systematic steps. The procedures were designed based on Transformational–Generative Grammar to examine sentence patterns at the surface structure level, with particular emphasis on the distribution of active and passive constructions in news discourse.

First, all sentences in the selected news article published by CNN entitled “*Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600 with Hundreds Missing*” were carefully identified and segmented. A sentence was defined as a complete syntactic unit consisting of at least a subject and a predicate in the form of an independent clause. This process resulted in a number of analyzable sentences which served as the primary data of the study. Sentence segmentation was conducted to ensure that each unit could be analyzed independently in terms of syntactic structure (Conrad et al., 1999).

Second, each identified sentence was classified into active or passive constructions. The classification was based on the grammatical role of the subject in relation to the verb. Sentences in which the subject functions as the agent performing the action were categorized as active, whereas sentences in which the subject receives the action were categorized as passive. Passive constructions were recognized through the use of the auxiliary verb *be* followed by a past participle, with an optional *by-phrase* indicating the actor (Conrad et al., 1999).

Third, after the classification of sentence voice, each sentence was analyzed to determine its sentence pattern based on surface structure. Active sentences were classified into patterns such as Subject-Verb (S-V), Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O), Subject-Verb-Complement (S-V-C), and Subject-Verb-Object-Complement (S-V-O-C). Passive constructions were analyzed using the same structural approach, focusing on how grammatical elements are arranged in surface form. Each syntactic element, including subject, verb, object, and complement, was carefully identified to ensure accurate structural classification. This analysis follows the surface structure perspective proposed in Transformational–Generative Grammar (Chomsky, 1964).

Fourth, the frequency of each sentence pattern was calculated to identify dominant and less frequent structures. Quantitative frequency was used to support qualitative interpretation by presenting the distribution of active and passive constructions within the news text. This combination of qualitative description and simple quantitative support is consistent with descriptive linguistic research methods (Creswell, 2013).

Finally, the findings were interpreted using the framework of Transformational-Generative Grammar to explain how syntactic structures function in organizing information in news discourse. The analysis focused on how active and passive constructions contribute to clarity, emphasis, and objectivity in reporting disaster events. This procedure ensures systematic syntactic analysis based on both grammatical theory and actual language use.

3. Results

3.1 Distribution of Active Sentence and Passive Sentence Patterns

Based on the analysis of the news article entitled “*Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600 with Hundreds Missing*” published by CNN, a total of forty sentences were identified and analyzed. The findings show that twenty-eight sentences (70%) are classified as active constructions, while twelve sentences (30%) are classified as passive constructions. This indicates that active sentence patterns are more frequently used than passive ones in the news text.

Active constructions were categorized into three main patterns: Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O), Subject-Verb-Complement (S-V-C), and Subject-Verb-Object-Complement (S-V-O-C). Passive constructions were analyzed using the same structural approach, particularly focusing on Subject-Verb

(S-V) and Subject-Verb-Complement (S-V-C) patterns, with optional *by-phrases* indicating the agent. The distribution of sentence patterns is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 1. Distribution of Sentence Patterns in the News Article

Media	Title	S-V- O	S-V-O- C	S-V- C	Passive (S-V/S- V-C)	Total
CNN	Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600	14	2	12	12	40

The table shows that the S–V–O pattern is the most frequently used structure, with fourteen occurrences. This pattern is commonly used in news discourse to present actions clearly and directly. For example:

Example 1

“Cyclone-fueled downpours battered parts of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia this week.”

S: Cyclone-fueled downpours

V: battered

O: parts of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia

Example 2

“Local media footage shows people using rubber boats to evacuate those trapped.”

S: Local media footage

V: shows

O: people using rubber boats to evacuate those trapped

These examples demonstrate how the S–V–O pattern emphasizes actions and their direct objects, which supports clarity in reporting events.

The S–V–C pattern appears twelve times and is mainly used to describe conditions or states rather than actions. For instance:

Example

“Hat Yai city was Thailand’s hardest-hit region.”

S: Hat Yai city

V: was

C: Thailand’s hardest-hit region

This pattern helps provide descriptive and evaluative information about disaster impacts.

The S-V-O-C pattern occurs twice and functions to provide additional information about the results or consequences of actions. One example is:

“Heavy rainfall has unleashed widespread flooding and landslides across Asia, killing more than 600 people.”

The participial clause *killing more than 600 people* functions as an additional complement that elaborates the impact of the event.

Passive constructions appear twelve times and are primarily used to emphasize affected participants rather than agents. For example:

Example 1

“Sri Lanka was struck by a separate storm.”

Example 2

“Two people were confirmed dead by local authorities.”

In these sentences, the focus is placed on the affected entities (*Sri Lanka* and *Two people*), while the agents are less prominent. This reflects the communicative purpose of disaster reporting, which often emphasizes impact rather than responsibility.

According to the discourse perspective proposed in *News as Discourse*, syntactic structures in news texts function to organize information and guide reader interpretation. The dominance of active constructions in this article indicates that journalists prioritize clarity and direct event reporting, while passive constructions are used selectively to highlight victims or results.

From a syntactic perspective, the relationship between active and passive constructions also reflects the transformational concept introduced by Noam Chomsky, in which different surface structures may originate from similar underlying structures. Therefore, the distribution of sentence patterns in this study demonstrates how grammatical structure supports communicative functions in news discourse.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that active sentence constructions are more dominant than passive constructions in the news article analyzed from CNN. Out of the total forty sentences identified, active patterns—particularly Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O) and Subject-Verb-Complement (S-V-C)—appear more frequently than passive constructions. This dominance suggests that the news text prioritizes clarity, directness, and explicit representation of events, which are essential characteristics of disaster reporting.

The predominance of the S-V-O pattern demonstrates that the article consistently presents information by positioning the subject as the agent performing an action and the object as the recipient of that action. This structure enables readers to easily identify events and participants, which supports efficient information delivery. Similarly, the frequent use of the S-V-C pattern reflects the descriptive function of the news text, particularly in describing conditions, statuses, and impacts experienced by affected regions and populations.

These findings are consistent with discourse studies which state that syntactic structures in news texts are used to organize information systematically and guide reader interpretation. According to *Teun A. van Dijk* in *News as Discourse*, grammatical patterns in news reporting are not only structural but also functional, as they help determine how events and participants are emphasized.

In contrast, passive constructions appear less frequently and are used selectively to emphasize affected participants rather than agents. Passive structures are commonly used when the focus is placed on victims, impacts, or results of events, while the agent may be omitted or considered less important. This usage reflects common journalistic practices in disaster reporting, where outcomes often receive more attention than actors.

From the perspective of *Noam Chomsky*'s Transformational–Generative Grammar, the relationship between active and passive constructions can be explained through transformational processes in which different surface structures may originate from similar underlying structures. Although both forms are grammatically possible, the selection of surface structures in news discourse is influenced by communicative purposes such as clarity, emphasis, and information focus.

Overall, the findings confirm that active sentence constructions play a central role in organizing information in news discourse. The dominance of active patterns demonstrates how syntactic structure supports effective communication by presenting actions directly, while passive constructions function to highlight impacts and affected entities. These results show that grammatical structure and communicative purpose work together in shaping how disaster events are reported.

4.1 Overall Distribution of Sentence Patterns

Table 4.2 presents the overall distribution of sentence patterns identified in the CNN news article entitled “*Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600 with Hundreds Missing.*” A total of 40 sentences were analyzed and classified into active and passive constructions based on surface structure analysis within the framework of Noam Chomsky’s Transformational-Generative Grammar.

Table 2. Distribution of Active and Passive Sentence Patterns

Sentence Type	Pattern	Frequency
Active	.V-O	14
	.V-C	12
	.V-O-C	
Passive	.V-O-Actor	
	.V-C-Actor	
Total		40

The overall distribution of sentence patterns in the analyzed news article clearly shows that active constructions are more dominant than passive constructions. Out of the forty sentences analyzed, twenty-eight sentences (70%) are active constructions, while twelve sentences (30%) are passive constructions. This result indicates that the news text primarily employs active sentence patterns to present actions, events, and developments related to the reported natural disaster.

Among the active constructions, the S-V-O pattern appears most frequently with 14 occurrences, followed by the S-V-C pattern with 12 occurrences. These two patterns dominate the structure of the article, suggesting that the news text emphasizes both actions and descriptive conditions to deliver information clearly and efficiently. Meanwhile, the S-V-O-C pattern appears only twice, indicating that extended complements are used selectively to elaborate the results or impacts of specific events.

In contrast, passive constructions occur less frequently and mainly appear in the S-V-C-Actor pattern (7 occurrences) and the S-V-O-Actor pattern (5 occurrences). These passive patterns tend to highlight affected participants such as victims or impacted areas rather than the agents performing the actions. This structure supports the objective tone commonly found in disaster news reporting, where outcomes and impacts are often emphasized.

Overall, the distribution of sentence patterns shows that active constructions dominate the surface structure of the news article, while passive constructions are used strategically for emphasis and informational balance. From the perspective of Transformational-Generative Grammar, this distribution reflects how different surface structures are selected to fulfill communicative purposes such as clarity, focus, and effectiveness in presenting news events.

5. Conclusions

This study analyzed sentence patterns in the CNN news article “*Deadly Storms Ravage Asia, Killing More Than 600 with Hundreds Missing*” by focusing on the surface structure realization and the distribution of active and passive constructions using the framework of *Noam Chomsky’s* Transformational-Generative Grammar. Based on the analysis of forty sentences, the results show that active sentence constructions are more dominant than passive constructions.

The most frequent active patterns are Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O) and Subject-Verb-Complement (S-V-C), indicating that the news text prioritizes direct presentation of actions and descriptive information to ensure clarity and effectiveness in delivering disaster-related events. This dominance reflects the communicative function of active constructions in news discourse, where clarity and immediacy are essential.

Passive constructions appear less frequently and are used selectively to emphasize affected participants, impacts, or outcomes rather than agents. Such usage aligns with journalistic conventions in disaster reporting, where the focus is often placed on victims and consequences while maintaining an objective tone.

From the perspective of Transformational-Generative Grammar, both active and passive constructions can originate from similar underlying structures but appear in different surface forms. The findings therefore suggest that the selection of sentence patterns in the analyzed news article is functionally motivated by communicative purposes, particularly clarity, emphasis, and information focus. Overall, this study confirms that syntactic structures play an important role in organizing information and shaping how events are presented in news discourse.

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