

DINAMICHE DI SPECIALIZZAZIONE NEL DOMINIO
DELLA DIATESI IN ITALIANO

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Abstract

The two most frequent passive constructions of present-day Italian – the so-called periphrastic passive formed by the auxiliary *essere* ‘be’ + the past participle and the so-called *si passivante* or reflexive passive – differ from one another in both structural and semantic properties. However, if we look at the form and distribution of these two constructions in Old Italian, these differences appear to be much less pronounced. The aim of this article is to describe these differences and to sketch a reconstruction of the mechanisms that have led to the increasing differentiation between the two constructions throughout the history of Italian. We will show that this process can be described as a process of reinforcement of two prototypical associations between content and form (i.e., between a given configuration of semantic traits and a given construction) driven and determined by frequency.