

Abstract

This thesis analyses the distribution of the different functions of the subject *it* in two text types: academic prose and fiction. The objective of the thesis is to discover to what extent and in which aspects the two examined text types differ. The analysis is based on two hundred examples of *it* in the subject function obtained from the British National Corpus (BNC), one half of them drawn from academic prose, the other from fiction. The functions of *it* analysed include anaphoric *it*, anticipatory *it*, empty *it* and *it* as the subject in a cleft sentence (focusing *it*). The discussion of anaphoric *it* focuses on the distance of the referent from the pronoun, the realisation form and semantic role of the referent; in the case of anticipatory *it*, attention is paid to the type of subordinate clause realising the extraposed subject and the realisation form and semantics of the predicate in the superordinate clause; for the cleft sentence, the analysis deals mainly with the realisation form and underlying syntactic function of the focused element. Additionally, the instances of *it* that did not fit into any of the four main categories are also examined. The two text types are first discussed separately, and the findings are then compared in the final part of the thesis.

Key words: anaphoric *it*, anticipatory *it*, empty *it*, cleft sentence, extraposition