

## **“THE DIFFICULTIES OF LEARNING PASSIVE VOICE”**

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### **Abstract**

Understanding about passive voice could be a challenge for many English learners. This is due to the lack of understanding about the formulas of passive voice as well as because it is not commonly used in daily life. Passive voice is the form of a sentence in which subject is affected by the action of the verb (Joshi, 2014: 4). The challenge we faced as English learners depends on not only the basic understanding of the formulas to make passive voice but also how to use it daily. We cannot deny the fact that passive voice is not really common to use rather than active voice. This article describes about the difficulties of learning passive voice. The aim of this article is to make these problems occur to the top in order to make the readers understand about them and try to find the way to make passive voice appealing to be more fun. This article could be the starting point to identify the challenges that the learners

have when they study about passive voice with the hope that teachers or people who read this article could make further steps in improving how to teach passive voice.

**Keywords:** Difficulties, learning, passive voice

## **A. Introduction**

English is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt, and Brazil, and in most of these countries it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in school, often displacing another language in the process (Crystal, 2003: 5). English also used in many other countries around the world. Because of the popularity of English language among society throughout the world, people are considering English as a global language that can be used easily to communicate with people all across the world.

This is true that English becomes so popular compared to other international languages that people are considering them as an important languages such as France, Arabic, China and many more. Among these languages, English is on the top level of most used language throughout the world. We have already known about the popularity of English language. The most challenging work to do now is how English learners can understand many concepts of English grammar that do not appear in their first or mother tongue.

One of the most challenging works is to learn Passive voice. Passive voice is the form of a sentence in which subject is affected by the action of the verb (Joshi, 2014: 4). Passive voice is not a common thing that we use in daily life. Learning

and practicing passive voice is pretty hard. There are many people who are still confused about the form of Passive voice.

In this article, the writer would like to describe about the difficulties of learning passive voice. There are points that will be presented. The aim of this article is to make these problems occur to the top in order to make teachers and other people can understand about them and try to find the way to make passive voice appealing to be more fun.

## **B. Discussion**

It will be discussed further about the definition of passive voice, how to change active into passive voice, and the difficulties of learning passive voice.

### **1. The Definition of Passive Voice**

In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence no longer acts but rather has something done to it.

*Active:*

JK Rowling wrote “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix”

*Passive:*

“Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” was written by JK Rowling.

### **2. How to Change Active into Passive Voice**

Firstly, the subject in active voice becomes the object of passive voice.

*Active:*

You study English.

*Passive:*

English is studied by you.

Furthermore, we can omit the subject of active voice in passive voice if it gives enough meaning.

*Active:*

We should respect our elders.

*Passive:*

Elder should be respected by us.

*Passive:*

Elder should be respected.

Moreover, the verb of active voice is always changed into past participles (third form of verb) in different ways. Auxiliary verbs in passive voice are used according to the tense of the sentence.

is/am/are/was/were + past participle

is/am/are/was/were + being + past participle

have/has/had + been + past participle

will/shall/can /may/must + be + past participle

would/should/could/might + be + past participle

Finally, preposition ‘by’ is used to introduce the passive complement (the work was finished **by** me). However, sometimes other preposition are used “at, in, with, for”, instead of by.

### **3. The Difficulties of Learning Passive Voice**

There are two common difficulties of learning passive voice. The first difficulty is due

to the fact that passive voice is less common rather than active. Learning about passive voice in a country where English is not the first language is pretty challenging. In fact, active voice is more often used than passive voice in English language. Many people learn English by listening or watching daily conversation, and many of words spoken by people are in active voice. People who want to learn about passive voice have to learn about the rule first. Passive voice is not really common to use in daily conversation. People usually prefer using active voice because it is more common.

Besides, passive voice seemed more of written than spoken language. When people rarely use passive voice in daily conversation, it will make it a difficult task for non-English speakers to understand it when they first encounter it. It is easier to make active sentences than passive for spoken language, for example active voice “I ate rice” rather than passive voice “Rice was eaten by me”.

The second difficulty in learning passive voice is that we need to pay attention to tenses. When we want to change active voice to passive voice we need to pay attention to the tenses in the active voice. The followings are just some examples:

#### Present Simple

*Active:*

John delivers the mail.

*Passive:*

The mail is delivered by John.

### Present Continuous

*Active:*

He is writing a letter.

*Passive:*

The letter is being written by him.

### Present Perfect

*Active:*

He has written a letter.

*Passive:*

The letter has been written by him.

### Past Simple

*Active:*

John delivered the mail.

*Passive:*

The mail was delivered by John.

### Past Continuous

*Active:*

He was writing a letter.

*Passive:*

A letter was being written by him.

### Past Perfect

*Active:*

He had written a letter.

*Passive:*

A letter had been written by him.

For English learners it is pretty challenging to change active form to passive because they have to pay attention not only on the basic change they have to make from active

form to passive form but also the passive voice will be different if it is applied to different tenses.

### **C. Conclusion**

English learners consider passive voice to be hard to learn. It is a big task for many English teachers to make effective way in order to deliver the material so that it can be easily understood by English learners. This article could be the starting point to identify the challenges that the learners have when they study passive voice with the hope that teachers or people who read this article could make further steps in improving the teaching of passive voice.

### **Acknowledgement**

Thanks to Allah, the God of Mercy who has given us blessing. In this amazing opportunity I would like to thank for the Head of English Education Study Program who has given me the chance to write this paper. The aim of this paper is to inform the reader, especially in our subject to broaden our knowledge and realize what is the next challenge that we will face as educators and the institution itself in for the 21st century. I really hope that you can find a good information through this paper and I encourage to do more research on the topic.

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