

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE IN ENGLISH

Salimova Shaxzoda G'ulomjon qizi

Abdusamadova Xumora Samariddioyna

SamDChTI Narpay Faculty of Foreign Languages

Teaching philology and languages (English).

1st stage student of group 24.02

+998 94 312 84 05

+998 99 182 69 29

salimovashaxzoda970@gmail.com

Scientific supervisor: Maxanova Muhayyo Nabiyevna

Abstract: *This article examines the grammatical structures of active and passive voice in English, exploring their syntactic properties, uses, and functions within different contexts. Active voice, where the subject performs the action, is generally preferred for its clarity and directness. In contrast, passive voice emphasizes the recipient of the action, often obscuring the subject or when the doer is unknown or unimportant. This study outlines the transformations between active and passive constructions, highlighting the role of transitive verbs and the auxiliary verb "to be" in passive sentences. Additionally, the article discusses the application of both voices in academic writing, legal texts, and everyday communication, emphasizing how the choice between active and passive voice impacts readability, tone, and focus. Through examples and linguistic analysis, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these voice structures shape the expression of actions in the English language.*

Key words: *Active Voice, passive Voice, syntactic structures, transitive verbs, grammatical constructions, linguistic analysis, english grammar, voice transformation, academic writing, readability, tone, language structure.*

Introduction

In English, sentences can be constructed using two primary grammatical voices: active and passive. These voices dictate the syntactic structure of a sentence, determining how the subject, verb, and object interact. The active voice is often used to highlight the subject performing the action, while the passive voice emphasizes the action or the object receiving it. This article delves into the nature of both voices, examining their usage, transformation, and impact on written communication.

Active Voice: Structure and Use

In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action. This voice is straightforward and often preferred for its clarity and simplicity in communication. The general structure is:

Subject + Verb + Object (SVO)

Example:

The researcher conducted the experiment.

In this sentence, the subject (the researcher) is actively performing the action (conducted) on the object (the experiment). The active voice is commonly used in everyday communication, fiction, and academic writing when the doer of the action is important or central to the context.

Passive Voice: Structure and Use

In passive voice, the focus shifts from the doer of the action to the receiver of the action. The structure of a passive voice sentence typically includes the auxiliary verb to be followed by the past participle of the main verb. The agent (the doer) may or may not be included, depending on the context.

Subject (Receiver) + to be + Past Participle + (by + Agent)

Example: The experiment was conducted by the researcher.

Here, the subject (the experiment) becomes the focus, and the action (conducted) is emphasized, while the doer (the researcher) is placed in a secondary position with the preposition by. Passive constructions are especially useful when the doer is unknown, unimportant, or implied.

Syntactic Structures and the Role of Transitive Verbs

For a sentence to be transformed into the passive voice, the verb must be transitive, meaning it requires an object to complete its meaning. Intransitive verbs, on the other hand, do not take an object and cannot be used in passive constructions.

Transitive Verbs:

Examples: to write, to build, to teach, to see

Active Voice: The professor teaches the course.

Passive Voice: The course is taught by the professor.

Intransitive Verbs:

Examples: to sleep, to arrive, to cry, to fall

Active Voice: She sleeps peacefully.

Passive Voice: Not possible due to the absence of an object.

In passive voice, the object of the active sentence becomes the subject. The verb to be adapts according to the tense of the original active sentence, and the main verb appears as a past participle (V3).

Transforming Active to Passive: A Step-by-Step Approach

Converting a sentence from active to passive voice involves a few key steps:

1. Identify the subject, verb, and object in the active sentence.
2. Move the object of the action into the subject position.
3. Change the verb to a passive form, using to be in the correct tense + the past participle.
4. Reposition the original subject as the agent, if necessary, using the preposition by.

Example:

Active: Tom writes a letter.

Passive: A letter is written by Tom.

In this conversion, the object (a letter) becomes the subject in the passive sentence. The verb writes changes to is written, and the original subject (Tom) is introduced with the preposition by.

Use of Passive Voice in Academic Writing

The passive voice is commonly used in academic writing because it allows the writer to focus on the action or the result rather than the doer. In scientific papers, research articles, and reports, passive constructions help to create an objective tone, placing more emphasis on the process or outcome.

Example:

Active Voice: The researchers conducted the survey and analyzed the results.

Passive Voice: The survey was conducted, and the results were analyzed.

In academic contexts, the agent may be omitted if it is not central to the discussion or if it is implied. This impersonal approach helps to present the information as more neutral and less about the individuals involved.

Implications of Voice Choice in Communication

The choice between active and passive voice can affect both the tone and clarity of communication. Active voice tends to be more direct and concise, making it the preferred choice in most general and creative writing. Passive voice, however, is advantageous when the focus is on the action rather than the actor or when the doer is unknown or irrelevant.

In scientific writing, where precision and objectivity are critical, the passive voice allows authors to remove personal bias and focus on the processes or findings, making the text more formal and impersonal. On the other hand, in creative writing or informal communication, the active voice is often preferred because it keeps the writing engaging and dynamic.

Conclusion

Understanding when and how to use active and passive voice is crucial for effective communication. While both voices are grammatically correct, their impact on readability, tone, and clarity depends on the context. Active voice is often favored for its simplicity and directness, while passive voice plays an essential role in academic writing, scientific discourse, and situations where the action or result is more important than the agent. Through careful consideration

of voice, writers can craft sentences that best convey their intended message to their audience.

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