A Descriptive Study of Passive Constructions in English

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This Study attempts to shed light on a syntactic phenomenon that are used by many speakers which is called passive voice. The aim of this study is to show the construction varieties of this phenomenon in order to be easier for learners of a foreign language. It is argued that passive construction has a variety of construction. To examine this, different kinds of constructions with different tenses have been introduced. The paper concludes with some valuable remarks and suggestions that can be helpful for linguists, instructors and learners of English as a foreign language.

Introduction

An active verb is a verb that the doer of an action (the agent/ subject) is known. This subject is either a proper noun, common noun, pronoun (this pronoun is either overtly or implicit or PRO). A passive verb which is our study is based on is a verb in which the doer of an action is unknown or it is outside of the head of the sentence structure. In English for example, a verb in passive is introduced with different forms and this form is depending on the tense of a sentence that are used by the speaker of English.

Literature Review

Voice is defined as "the grammatical category expressing the relationship between, on the one hand, the participant roles of the NP argument of a verb and, on the other hand, the grammatical relations born by those same NPs" (Trask: 2008: 299). Two sentences can be different in voice and yet convey the same basic meaning. In many languages the most familiar voice contrast is that between active and passive constructions. Passive, by definition, is "a construction in which an intrinsically transitive verb is construed in such a way that its underlying object appears as its surface subject" (Trask: 2008: 201). (See Jabbari & Kafipour, 2011). An active verb is that verb which occurs in a structure that the doer of an action is known. Consider the following Arabic example:

Akala alwaladu tufahatan

Ate 3rd sing. the boy N. Sing apple N. Sing Indefinite "The boy ate an apple."

The passive verb is one whose doer of the action is unknown. Hence, the passive construction of the active sentence is:

Aukilat al tufahatu "The apple was eaten".

The current study gives valuable remarks to those who are interested in a foreign language. In his study (Hazem: 2015: 3-4) mentions that "students might be interrupted by interference of their native language (Arabic). It is worth mentioning here that in study that examines the problems and strategies should not be neglected, for example: Hazem(2017:91 a)

discovered in his study by stating that there are students inadequate in using the part of some quantifiers in their written performance. Another study that are done by (Kamil and Hazem: 2019 a) was about negative particles in Arabic which concludes that Arabic and English differ in using negative particles. (P: 340). They also made another study to examine student's performance in translating alternative questions from Arabic to English and concludes that their hypothesis was approved when they hypothesized that the students translate this phenomenon arbitrary. (Kamil and Hazem: 2019 b).

Methodology
The current study is a descriptive, it adopts the linguistics authors of three authentic books of English Grammar.

Data Collection and Procedures
The data of a current article are collected from authentic books of English grammar that are taught in university levels, such as: (English Grammar in Use by Murphy.2012, An Introductory to English Grammar by C. Norman.1965 and A university Grammar of English by Randolph Quirk & Sidney Greenbaum.1973). The analysis of these data adopted by the above authors descriptively.

The Aim of the Study
The aim of this study is to introduce the information regarding passive construction is easier way in order to be more understandable and more comprehendible for learners of English as a foreign language.

Hypothesis
It is stated that a foreigner student of English is not understood the constructions and uses of passive forms in the correct positions and texts during their study. This means that they have lack in information of passive constructions in English.

How to Transform Active Structures to Passive
There are general rules that are used in transforming an active sentence to passive one. The following are based on Quirk et al 1973 Model. According to this model. The rules are as the following:

1. The object of an active sentences becomes the subject of a passive construction
2. A suitable auxiliary verb is introduced according to the tense, mood, number
3. The lexical verb of an active sentences is changed to past participle form
4. The subject of an active sentence becomes a complement of a prepositional phrase with 'by-phrase construction'

It is worth mentioning to clarify the whole above rules with examples in each tense and aspect.

1. Passive with past tense
   a. Simple past: with simple past tense, two auxiliaries (was, were) are introduced to accompany a verb: John
      cleaned the room.   (Active)
      The room was cleaned.   (Passive)
   b. Past continuous
      Suha was writing a letter.   (Active)
      A letter was being written.   (Passive)
   c. Past perfect
      Someone had broken the window.   (Active)
      The window had been broken.   (Passive)
   d. They had been learning English   (Active)
      English had been being learned.   (Passive)
2. Passive with present tense
   a. Simple present tense
      My friend invite me.   (Active)
      I am invited.   (Passive)
      Careless driving causes many accidents.   (Active)
      Many accidents are caused careless driving. (Passive)
      Many accidents are caused by careless driving. (Passive)

      b.   Present continuous
          We are listening to the lesson.   (Active)
          The lesson is being listened.   (Passive)

      c.   Present perfect
           Mary has bought three books.   (Active)
           Three books have bought.   (Passive)

      d. Present perfect continuous
          This teacher has been teaching syntax since 2012. (Active)
           Syntax has been being taught since 2012.   (Passive)

3. Future Time

      i.   Near Future
          The students are going to use this lab.   (Active)
          This lab is going to be used.   (Passive)
          They are going to see me.   (Active)
          I am going to be seen.   (Passive)

      ii.   Far future
          We shall deal with this matter carefully.   (Active)
          This matter shall be dealt carefully.   (Passive)

Characteristics of Passives

The subject of a sentence can be realized whether it is doer of the action or the recipient of the action according to the form of the verb. Consider the following sentence:

    Our teacher knew the students. (Active)
    The students were known.   (Passive)

Three types of passive constructions can be differentiated:

1) Direct primary passive;

2) Indirect secondary passive;

3) Prepositional tertiary passive.

In accordance with the transitives, (Quirk et al 1973) points out that there are three types of transitive verbs: (Mono transitive, ditransitive and complex transitive).

1.   Mono-transitive verb

This type refers to a verb that takes only one direct object. For example:

 John writes a letter.

When such an object becomes the subject of a passive construction, the latter is called direct primary passive. So, in "John writes a letter", the passive counterpart of it is as the following:

    A letter is written by John.

2.   Ditransitive Verb

This type refers to a verb that takes two objects: direct and indirect. The following example illustrates:

 I gave my friend a gift.
    My students asked me questions.

These verbs allow to form two passive constructions; i.e. when such construction needs a passive, two forms are used. Look at the following constructions:

    I gave my friend a gift.   (Active)

    My friend was given a gift.   (Passive1)

    A gift was given to my friend.   (Passive2)

2. My students asked me questions.   (Active)

3. I was asked questions.   (Passive1)
       Questions were asked to me.   (Passive2)

Yet, many English verbs may take a direct and an indirect object in the active construction but admit only one passive construction. For example:

4.   Complex transitive

This type refers to a verb that takes a direct object and a complement. The complement is either noun or an adjective.

They made me very happy.   (Active)

I was made very happy.   (Passive)

I found their excuses acceptable. (Active)

Their excuses were found acceptable. (Passive)

Reflexive Voice:

The subject is both the agent and the recipient of the action at the same time.

A Reflexive verb is a verb whose subject is its direct object. Thus, the action of the verb is both dedicated and received by the same person or thing. Reflexive verbs are sometimes recognized as being in the "middle voice" (as opposed to the active voice or the passive voice).

The following structures illustrate:

- "They loved themselves." (*themselves* refers to the subject, *They*)

- "The baby is **smiling at *himself*** in the mirror." (*himself* refers to the subject, *the baby*.)

The meaning of a verb is not essentially different when it becomes reflexive. However, there are some cases in which reflexive verbs have marginally different meanings from transitive verbs. Consider the following example:

> She decided to **apply *herself*** to the work at hand. (reflexive verb, meaning "to engage in something with great diligence and persistence")
> They **found *themselves*** without a leader." (reflexive verb, meaning "to perceive oneself to be in a specific place or condition")
> "Please, **help *yourself*** to the food." (reflexive verb, meaning "to serve or provide oneself with") Please
> **help *your brother*** with his homework." (non-reflexive verb, meaning "to give assistance to")

Consequently, the use of a reciprocal pronoun is possible:

They loved each other.

It should be noticed that not all voice meanings are expressed morphologically.

The following table summarizes the basic rules of the processes of Passive voice in English

Active voice	Passive Voice
Simple present	am/ is/ are + past participle
Present continuous	am/ is/ are being + past participle
Present perfect	has/ have been + past participle
Present perfect continuous	has/ have being+ past participle
Simple past	was/ were + past participle
Past continuous	was/ were being + past participle
Past perfect	had been + past participle
Past perfect continuous	Had been being + past participle

Table (1) rules of forming passive voice

Passive Voice in Arabic

The aim of this short part section is to introduce the structure of some constructions of passive that are used popularly by Arabic speaker cross linguistically.

1 - The past tense of the passive is constructed through the inflectional processes. So, the diacritic / althama/ is put on the first letter and the diacritic /al kasra/ is put before the last letter:

Kataba al walad-u al dars-a   (/Maalum/ Active)

Wrote. 3rd sing the boy N. sing. Masc. Nom. The lesson N. sing. Masc. –Acc. "The boy wrote the lesson".

Kutiba al dars-u   (/Majhul/ Passive)

Wrote. Past participle the lesson N. sing. Masc.- Nom "The lesson was written".

2- The present tense of the passive is constructed through the inflectional processesin which the fist diacritic / fatha/ is inverted to /althama/ and the diacritic /althama/ before the last letter is invested to / fatha/:

Yaktubu Amjed risalat-an

Write 3rd sing Amjed letter. Indefinite N. Sing. "Amjed writes a letter"

Yuktabu risalatun Write 3rd sing. Letter "A letter is written".

Unlike English, the passive construction in Arabic is not formed with passive auxiliary and passive participle but it is formed by altering the vowels of the active verb:

Kataba al walad-u al dars-a

Wrote. 3rd sing the boy N. sing. Masc. Nom. The lesson N. sing. Masc. –Acc. "The boy wrote the lesson"

The passive construction of the above sentence is as the following:

Kutiba al dars-u

Wrote. Past participle the lesson N. sing. Masc.- Nom "The lesson was written"

It is worth mentioning here that Arabic differs semantically in aspect of noun morphology. (Hazem and Meteab: 2019: 97). Trask (1993:12) defines Agreement as ''grammatical phenomenon by which the appearance of one item in a sentence termed 'the controller', in a particular form requires a second item termed 'the agreeing element or the controlee'', which is grammatically linked with it to appear in a particular form". When the subject precedes the verb, the verb agrees with it in gender and in number (Hazem:2017: 368 b).

Results and Discussion

Through the above explanation, it can be seen obviously that the active sentences have transitive verbs and take objects. Otherwise when the verb is intransitive, the passive transformation cannot be done. Consider the following examples:

Rami went quickly.

The verbs 'went' is intransitive and hence it cannot have an object. The passivized forms of the verbs are also like intransitive verbs as they also cannot have an object. This shows that when a verb is passivized, it becomes intransitive and the subject of the passive verb corresponds to the object of the active verb.

* Careless driving is caused (by many accident).

A subject in active sentence is optionally comprehended in the passive one in a by-phrase, which can also keep on unrealized. The above sentence is ungrammatical because of the selectional restriction of the verb.

Conclusion

The study pf passive is very important because this construction is introduced in many languages. So, this study has arrived to a conclusion that passive constructions are used by English speakers according to different situation and different time with different aspects. The reason of using this phenomenon is to say that the doer of an action is unknown or the speakers do not show the doer of the action or he/she does not who did this action. Structurally, different forms are appeared with the uses of passive constructions. The study introduced the past, present and future with different aspects. The descriptive analysis method that I used offers a novel understanding of how passivization works in English. The contribution of the current paper is to cast the passive phenomenon in this way. Some Arabic dialects are very interesting to be studied contrastively with English Passive voice for further studies.

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