

PROBLEMS IN WRITING PASSIVE VOICE: A CASE STUDY IN THE EFL CLASSES

Alda Raudatul Jannah^{1*}, Sudirman Wilian¹, Ahmad Zamzam¹, Arafiq¹

¹Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Araudatuljannah@mhs.unram.ac.id

Article History

Received: July 17th, 2023

Revised: August 21th, 2023

Accepted: October 12th, 2023

Abstract: This article addresses the challenges faced by EFL Classes at the University of Mataram in constructing passive voice sentences in the simple present and simple past tenses. The research problem stems from difficulties related to verb tense changes, subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage, and the appropriate use of "by" in passive voice constructions. The study aims to identify the causes of these issues and offers insights into potential solutions. The research methodology involves a descriptive qualitative approach, employing exercises to assess students' understanding and application of passive voice structures. The results reveal a lack of fundamental grammar knowledge, limited exposure to passive voice, inadequate practice opportunities, and unclear explanations as contributing factors to the challenges. Language transfer from native languages and a lack of feedback further compound the problem. To address these issues, the study recommends basic tense understanding, increased practice, targeted feedback, and exposure to authentic materials to enhance students' proficiency in constructing accurate passive voice sentences.

Keywords: *Students Problems, Writing Passive Voice, Case Study*

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas tantangan yang dihadapi oleh Kelas EFL di Universitas Mataram dalam membentuk kalimat pasif pada tense simple present dan simple past. Permasalahan penelitian ini berasal dari kesulitan terkait perubahan bentuk kata kerja, kesesuaian subjek-kata kerja, penggunaan kata ganti, dan penggunaan yang tepat dari "by" dalam konstruksi kalimat pasif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi penyebab dari masalah ini dan memberikan wawasan tentang solusi yang mungkin. Metodologi penelitian melibatkan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, menggunakan latihan untuk menilai pemahaman dan penerapan mahasiswa terhadap struktur kalimat pasif. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan kurangnya pengetahuan dasar tata bahasa, terbatasnya paparan terhadap kalimat pasif, peluang latihan yang tidak memadai, dan penjelasan yang kurang jelas sebagai faktor kontribusi terhadap kesulitan tersebut. Transfer bahasa dari bahasa ibu dan kurangnya umpan balik lebih memperparah masalah ini. Untuk mengatasi masalah ini, penelitian ini merekomendasikan pemahaman dasar tentang bentuk waktu, peningkatan latihan, umpan balik yang terarah, dan paparan terhadap materi otentik guna meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam membentuk kalimat pasif yang akurat.

Kata Kunci: *Masalah Mahasiswa, Menulis Kalimat Pasif, Studi Kasus*

INTRODUCTION

Mastering passive voice is an essential aspect of writing in a second language. However, many students need help to use passive voice correctly in their writing. A lack of proficiency in passive voice can lead to confusion and unclear meaning, making it difficult for readers to understand the message the writer is trying to convey. Moreover, students who struggle with passive voice may need help to produce sophisticated writing, which can affect their academic and professional success.

Several studies have highlighted the problems students face when writing passive voice sentences and. One common problem is the incorrect use of auxiliary verbs and tense forms (Azar, 2000). Students often struggle with choosing the auxiliary verb ('be' or 'get') and conjugating it correctly according to the tense of the sentence (Murcia & Freeman, 2010). This often results in mistakes, such as using 'is' instead of 'was' in the past tense or 'are' instead of 'be' in the present continuous tense.

Another issue that students encounter is the incorrect formation of past participles (Thornbury, 2006). Many students face difficulties in remembering the irregular past participles of certain verbs, leading to errors in passive voice construction. For example, they may use 'broken' instead of 'broke' or 'went' instead of 'gone' (Swan, 2005). This problem can be exacerbated by a lack of vocabulary, as students with limited lexical resources may not know the correct past participle forms of less common verbs (Nation, 2001). Having around 98% coverage of the vocabulary used in the texts provided more opportunity for the readers to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words and more flexibility for incidental vocabulary learning to take place during reading and writing (Melani et.al, 2021).

Additionally, students often struggle with the correct word order in passive voice sentences (Yule, 2010). They may place the agent of the action (introduced by 'by') in the wrong position or omit it entirely, resulting in unclear or ambiguous sentences. Moreover, students may also face difficulties in identifying when to use passive voice, as they may not recognize the need to emphasize the action or the receiver of the action rather than the doer (Hinkel, 2004).

Several researchers have conducted studies analyzing students' problems in writing passive voice sentences. Endah (2008) and Ismurochah (2013) utilized descriptive methodologies, Purnama (2014) focused on error analysis. The common theme across these studies is the discussion of students' problems in using passive voice. However, in the present research, the focus will be on analyzing the students' problems in writing passive voice sentences in simple present and past tenses among third-semester students at the English Department of Mataram University. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on specific issues related to these tenses and their use in passive voice constructions.

The research methodology in this study exemplified a focused and systematic approach aimed at understanding students' problems in writing passive voice constructions within specific tenses in an academic context. The study's strength lies in its clear delineation of research parameters, utilization of standardized data collection methods, and rigorous application of qualitative analysis techniques. In contrast, Saputri and Sari's (2017) study, while comprehensive in its scope, lacked explicit details regarding participant selection, the research context, and the specific methodologies employed. This lack of specificity posed challenges in assessing the depth and rigor of their research findings.

The findings suggested that students' limited exposure to passive voice structures and the influence of their first language contributed to their difficulties in writing passive voice sentences.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the simple present and simple past tenses are fundamental to the acquisition of English grammar. Mastering these tenses allows students to establish a strong foundation for learning more complex tenses and structures throughout their language learning journey.

Considering the problems in writing passive voice sentences, this research intends to provide a deeper understanding of the issues faced by students, particularly those studying at the University of

Mataram. The study is titled "Problems in Writing Passive voice: A Case Study in The EFL Classes." By focusing on the specific difficulties encountered by these students, this research aims to identify the underlying causes of the problems. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on students' struggles with passive voice writing and offer valuable insights for educators and learners alike in improving their passive voice writing skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research approach to examine students' challenges in using the passive voice in simple present and past tenses. The choice of this research design was based on its ability to provide a detailed understanding of students' difficulties in this specific grammatical area.

The study focused on 30 students from one of the classes in the third semester of English Education at University of Mataram. The research involved gathering responses through exercise questions to assess students' grasp of passive voice constructions, covering various usage aspects and transformations.

The research gathered responses from participants using exercises to assess their passive voice understanding. The data provided insights into their competence, aiding the analysis of grammatical comprehension and usage. The study aimed to understand students' challenges in this area.

Participants received a printed test on passive voice, allowing standardized measurement of their abilities. Test results were analyzed, and errors were identified. Data was then analyzed to describe difficulties faced by third-semester English Department students. The technique likely includes specific steps or procedures for data analysis. These steps could involve categorizing and organizing the data, identifying patterns and trends within the responses, and conducting statistical analyses if the data is quantitative in nature. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students when using passive voice constructions in simple present and past tenses.

The data underwent qualitative analysis, involving organizing, coding, and reduction steps. Responses were categorized, irrelevant details excluded, and errors grouped for concise understanding. The interpreted data will be presented clearly, aiming to communicate insights effectively, providing valuable understanding and potential solutions for students' passive voice challenges.

C.FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings

The research findings were meticulously prepared for analysis. The study's results underwent multiple readings to extract relevant information while filtering out irrelevant details. To systematically examine the data, students' responses were categorized according to the specific exercises they had completed. This categorization allowed for a focused analysis of each exercise, enabling the researchers to discern meaningful patterns and gain valuable insights into the students' performance in relation to passive voice constructions.

Students answer in each exercise question on passive voice

In this case study focused on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes, an analysis of students' performance in writing passive voice structures has been presented. The data offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by students in mastering this grammatical

Commented [1]: do not mention the real profile of the students/participants

Commented [2]: what do you mean? not clear idea

construction. Exercise 1 displayed a range of results, with Question 2 being a notable highlight, where 60% of the students successfully used the passive voice. Exercise 2 revealed a diverse array of outcomes, from a lack of correct answers in Question 1 to an impressive 53.33% correctness rate in Question 9. Conversely, Exercise 3 exposed a considerable struggle among students, with no correct passive voice constructions evident in any of the questions. Exercise 4 illustrated a moderate performance, with Questions 2 and 4 both exhibiting a 13.33% correct rate. These findings highlight specific areas where students face challenges in comprehending and applying passive voice structures.

To see clear data about the findings of some student's answers in each exercise you can see in Table.1 below :

Table 1. Findings description

Categories	Some examples from the Findings of students answering in passive voice	Description
Correct passive voice	Students correct answers in passive voice -Vegetables and fruits are sold by my family at the market. -My name was not asked by the receptionist.	Those are some examples of students' correct answers about passive voice, some students can understand the concept of passive voice correctly, and students can use their understanding of verb changes in passive voice, changes in pronouns, and the use of by as a preposition in sentence
Incorrect passive voice	"the vila in Village don't use this Main Road often" - This sentence doesn't use passive voice correctly. It should be something like "This main road is not often used by the villa in the village."	That is an example of students' answers that is wrong in the preparation of passive voice sentence structures, many students still do not understand and cannot arrange active sentences to passive voice or passive to active voice correctly, and students cannot understand how verb changes when active sentences are changed to passive voice, changes in pronouns and the use of by that students did not put "by" in a sentence are always done by students, the average student cannot change like from he to him or she to her in changing active and passive sentences.
Verb tense error	Students answer: Someone snatches it from my bag. Correction: Inappropriate: "Snatch"	-The student's initial sentence is in active voice ("Someone snatch"), but they incorrectly used the

	<p>should be "snatched" to use the correct past tense verb. Students answer: She was crashed by two cars. Correction: Inappropriate: "was crash" should be "was crashed" to use the correct past tense verb. Also, it should be "two cars."</p>	<p>base form of the verb "snatch" instead of the past tense "snatched" in passive voice construction. This indicates a difficulty in recognizing the need for verb tense changes when switching from active to passive voice. - The student's sentence attempts to construct a passive voice sentence but fails to use the correct past tense form of the verb "crash" ("was crash" instead of "was crashed"). Additionally, there's an error in subject-verb agreement; it should be "two cars" instead of "two car." This highlights challenges with verb tense and subject-verb agreement in passive voice construction.</p>
Sentence structure error	<p>Students answer: She didnt would damage her book Correction: She didn't damage her book. Error: "would" should be removed for the correct verb tense. Student answer: He didn't will bring drug in his bag Correction: He didn't bring drugs in his bag. Error: "will" should be removed for correct verb tense, and "drug" should be "drugs" for proper pluralization.</p>	<p>-the students' errors in these sentences demonstrate a common challenge in understanding and forming passive and active sentence structures. They tend to struggle with verb tense changes, usage of auxiliary verbs (like "will" and "didn't"), and pluralization. Addressing these challenges through focused grammar instruction and practice exercises can help improve their sentence structure skills.</p>

Further analysis for all the findings above:

1. Verb Tense Challenges:

Students often struggle with verb tense changes when converting active sentences to passive voice. In English, the passive voice is typically formed by using a form of the verb "to be" (e.g., is, was, were) combined with the past participle of the main verb. This shift in tense can be tricky for students because they need to recognize the correct auxiliary verb and adjust the main verb accordingly. For example, in the sentence "She didn't would damage her book," the student attempted to use "didn't" as a negative auxiliary verb but incorrectly included "would," leading to a tense conflict. The correction, "She didn't damage her book," rectifies this issue by using the correct past simple tense for a negative statement.

2. Subject-Verb Agreement:

In passive voice constructions, subject-verb agreement is crucial. The subject of the passive sentence should agree in number with the agent performing the action. This aspect can be challenging for students, as they must recognize whether the agent is singular or plural and adjust the subject accordingly. For instance, if the sentence involves multiple agents (e.g., "They didn't will bring drug in their bags"), the subject should be plural to match the plural agent "They." The correction, "They didn't bring drugs in their bags," maintains proper subject-verb agreement.

3. Pronoun Usage:

While not directly evident in the provided examples, students often encounter difficulties with pronoun usage when switching between active and passive voice. They may use incorrect pronouns or struggle with pronoun case (e.g., "he" vs. "him" or "she" vs. "her"). These issues can lead to sentences that sound awkward or grammatically incorrect. Addressing pronoun usage in the context of passive voice transformations can help students achieve more natural and grammatically sound sentences.

4. Use of "by" as a preposition:

The incorrect mention of "by" as a preposition in the analysis refers to the need for students to correctly use "by" to introduce the performer of the action in passive voice sentences. For example, in the sentence "the villas in Village don't use this Main Road often" - This sentence doesn't use passive voice correctly... Students omit "by", do not put by in sentences that have been converted to passive voice or use it incorrectly, which can result in unclear or incorrect passive sentences. Reinforcing the proper use of "by" as a preposition.

The challenges students face in mastering passive voice writing, as highlighted in the analysis, can be attributed to various aspects of English grammar and language learning. The theory of verb tense challenges, as discussed in the analysis, corresponds to the findings related to students struggling with tense changes when converting active sentences to passive voice.

The discussion about subject-verb agreement in the analysis resonates with the need for students to recognize and adjust the subject in passive sentences to match the agent's number. These findings collectively emphasize the multifaceted nature of challenges in passive voice writing and highlight the interconnectedness of various grammatical aspects that students must navigate.

In conclusion, the integration of analysis underscores the complexity of teaching and learning passive voice writing. To address these challenges effectively, teachers should consider the interconnected nature of verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage, and the proper use of "by" as a preposition. By providing explicit instruction, opportunities for practice, and tailored support based on students' proficiency levels, educators can empower students to overcome these difficulties and improve their overall language proficiency, especially in constructing grammatically correct and coherent passive voice sentences. This holistic approach aligns with the theories and findings presented, enhancing the effectiveness of teaching passive voice in the classroom.

2. Research Discussion

Writing passive voice in the simple present and simple past by the third semester of the English Department at the University of Mataram

The problems identified in the study conducted with third-semester students at the University of Mataram align with some of the challenges commonly encountered by learners when working with passive voice constructions. These issues can be related to the theoretical insights and findings from previous studies mentioned earlier.

Firstly, the difficulties related to verb tense challenges are in line with the observations.

Made by Parrot (2000) and Choomthong (2011), pointed out that students often struggle with selecting the appropriate tense forms of auxiliary verbs (e.g., "is," "was") when converting active sentences to passive voice. This challenge is essential to understand the correct structure of the passive voice, as highlighted by Decapua (2008) and Folse (2009).

Secondly, the subject-verb agreement issues echo the observations made by Wang Song-hui (2023) regarding the importance of maintaining agreement between the subject and the verb when constructing passive sentences. This issue underscores the need for students to grasp the concept that the subject in passive voice corresponds to the receiver of the action, as explained by Azar (2002).

The difficulties related to pronoun usage align with the notion that students may struggle with transforming pronouns accurately during passive voice transformations, as noted in the study by Purnama (2014). Proper pronoun usage is crucial to maintaining clarity and coherence in passive voice sentences, as indicated by the insights from Swam (1980) and Luh et al. (2018).

The challenge of using "by" as a preposition corresponds to the observations made by Wang Song-hui (2023) and Azar (2002) regarding the role of "by" in introducing the agent of the action in passive voice sentences. Students' difficulty with "by" usage is also in line with the findings of Endah (2008), who emphasized the need for learners to understand the role of the agent in passive voice constructions.

The issues related to past tense conversion resonate with the difficulties highlighted by Hajizadehrivandi et al. (2012) in transforming verbs into the past participle form when constructing passive sentences. This challenge is closely tied to the proper usage of the past tense form of the verb "to be," as mentioned by (Decapua, 2008).

In summary, the problems identified in the study with third-semester students at the University of Mataram are consistent with the Moreover, the limited practice opportunities provided to students could exacerbate the problem. Passive voice constructions require regular practice for mastery, as indicated by Choomthong (2011) and Hajizadehrivandi et al. (2012). If students haven't had enough chances to practice converting active sentences into passive voice, their proficiency in this area may remain underdeveloped. Explanation of passive voice concepts within the classroom is another crucial factor. The concepts related to passive voice, such as verb tense changes, subject-verb agreement, and the use of "by," must be explained clearly (Thomson, 1986). Without comprehensive explanations and guidance from instructors, students are more likely to make errors in their passive voice writing. 4 types of grammatical errors made by the students, those are; omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Based on the 4 types of grammatical errors, there were four causes of errors that mostly found in students writing, those are; carelessness, inadequate learning, faulty in teaching, and hypercorrection (Holidazia, 2016). Language transfer from students' native languages can also contribute to the difficulties. Some broader challenges associated with learning and applying passive voice in English. These challenges encompass issues related to verb tense, subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage, the use of "by," and past tense conversion. To address these challenges effectively, instructional strategies should emphasize understanding the underlying principles of passive voice construction, provide ample practice opportunities, and offer clear guidance on tense usage and grammatical structures.

The potential causes of problems in writing passive voice by third-semester English Department students at the University of Mataram

The potential causes of problems in writing passive voice by third-semester English Department students at the University of Mataram can be attributed to a combination of factors. One of the foundational causes is a lack of a strong foundation in English grammar. To face those challenge each teacher had their own reason why they chosen a certain strategy in teaching-learning process. The researcher conclude that they chosen the strategies in order to made the students more interested, enjoy, easy to understand the words, and happy in learning English (Setiawan, 2018). As identified by previous studies (Endah, 2008; Purnama, 2014), students may struggle with passive voice due to difficulties in understanding verb tenses and their usage. This lack of fundamental knowledge can hinder their ability to transform active sentences into passive voice accurately. insufficient exposure to passive voice structures is another contributing factor. Passive voice is a complex grammatical concept, and if it hasn't been adequately covered in previous coursework, students may face challenges in its application (Purnama, 2014). This limited exposure may result from curriculum gaps or insufficient emphasis on passive voice constructions.

languages have distinct passive voice constructions that differ significantly from English (Hajizadehrivandi et al., 2012). These differences can lead to confusion and incorrect sentence structures when students attempt to use passive voice in English.

Furthermore, the absence of regular feedback and correction in the learning process can perpetuate errors (Endah, 2008). Without feedback, students may continue to make the same mistakes without realizing them. Constructive feedback is essential for identifying and rectifying passive voice-related errors. Limited exposure to authentic English materials and real-world contexts where passive voice is commonly used can also hinder students' understanding and application of passive voice (Parrot, 2000). Authentic exposure reinforces correct usage and demonstrates the practical relevance of passive voice in various contexts.

Lastly, some students may find advanced tense forms, such as past participles and past tense forms of "to be," challenging to grasp (Hajizadehrivandi et al., 2012). These tense forms are crucial for constructing passive sentences, and difficulty with them can lead to errors.

To address these causes and enhance students' proficiency in writing passive voice, comprehensive grammar instruction, ample practice opportunities, targeted feedback, and exposure to authentic materials should be incorporated into the curriculum. Instructors should emphasize the importance of understanding and correctly applying verb tense changes, subject-verb agreement, pronoun usage, and the use of "by" in passive voice constructions (Thomson, 1986). By addressing these underlying causes, students can develop stronger skills in writing passive voice sentences.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this article, it is recommended that targeted instruction and practice be implemented to address the challenges faced by third-semester English Department students in constructing passive voice sentences. Specifically, focusing on verb tense changes, subject-verb agreement, appropriate pronoun usage, and the correct use of prepositions like "by" can significantly enhance students' proficiency in this area.

Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen students' foundational knowledge of English grammar, particularly emphasizing verb tenses. Providing students with ample exposure to passive voice structures, creating more opportunities for practice, and offering clear explanations of passive voice concepts are essential steps to overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, educators should be aware of potential language transfer issues from students' native languages and provide regular feedback and corrections to help students grasp the nuances of passive voice constructions. By addressing these recommendations, the students' understanding and application of passive voice sentences can be improved effectively.

Language transfer from students' native languages and a lack of regular feedback and correction further exacerbate these challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I extend my gratitude to Supervisor I, Supervisor II, and the Examiner Lecturers for their invaluable guidance. Special thanks to the Class C students of the English Department for their enthusiastic cooperation. My appreciation also goes to all contributors, whose support made this research possible. Your involvement has made this study exceptional.

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