

OVERALL CONSIDERATION OF THE CATEGORY OF VOICE OF VERB IN
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *The article deals with the category of Voice of Verb in the English language and gives practical examples based on the theory above.*

Key words: *action, peculiarities, lexical meaning, notional verb, grammatical meaning, transitivity, intransitivity, construction, interpretation, explicit, expression, relevant, message, intentionally*

Annotatsiya: *Maqolada ingliz tilida fe'lning nisbat kategoriyasi umumiy ko'rib chiqilgan va yuqoridagi nazariyaga asoslanib amaliy misollar keltirilgan.*

Kalit so'zlar: *harakat, o'ziga xoslik, lug'aviy ma'no, shartli fe'l, grammatik ma'no, o'timlilik, o'timsizlik, yasash, izohlash, aniq, ifoda, tegishli, xabar, qasddan*

Аннотация: *В статье рассматривается категория залога глагола в английском языке и приводятся практические примеры, основанные на изложенной выше теории.*

Ключевые слова: *действие, особенности, лексическое значение, смысловой глагол, грамматическое значение, переходность, непереходность, конструкция, интерпретация, явный, выражение, актуальное, сообщение, намеренно*

The verbal category of Voice is an expression of relationship between an action and its subject and object. In other words, as a grammatical category, Voice shows the relation between the action and its subject, namely, it indicates whether the action is performed by the subject or passes on to it. As a result, Voice is connected with the sentence structure more than other verbal categories. There are two voices in English: the Active Voice and the Passive Voice. The Active Voice shows that the action is performed by its subject, i.e. that the subject is the doer of the action. The Passive Voice shows that the subject is acted upon, that it is the recipient of the action, e.g.: James sent me a letter – A letter was sent to me by James.

The opposition is based on the direction of an action. According to the traditional approach to Voice, verbal forms, among other peculiarities, indicate relations between an action and its subject, i.e. Active Voice is used to denote actions directed from the person or thing expressed by subject, whereas Passive Voice forms show that an action is directed towards the subject. It should be underlined that here grammatical direction is meant and not a direction stemming from a lexical meaning of a given verb. Thus, the categorical opposition between Passive and Active Voice is based on several factors: relationships between the subject and the predicate, "inward" or "outward" direction of a verbal action and active or inactive quality of the subject.

Passive voice is expressed by analytical combinations of the auxiliary verb to be with the Past Participle of the notional verb.

It should be noted that there is nothing more characteristic of English than the extent to which it has developed the use of passive formations. One of the most distinct features of the English language is that passive forms are possible not only for transitive verbs (like in many other languages) but also for intransitive verbs. In English, such intransitive verbs as to live, to sleep may be used in Passive, e.g. The bed was not slept in; The room is not lived in.

Mechanical transformations of Active into Passive may lead to a misleading conclusion that Passive Voice is a simple result of a reverse operation. This false impression may also become the reason for denying Passive its independence from Active. Thus, for example, Henry Sweet expands on inverted subjects and inverted objects. To regard Passive Voice as a mere syntactic transformation of Active Voice is completely incorrect, since even if both forms may reflect the same situation; they do this differently, placing emphasis according to the speaker's communicative goals. In sentences with the verb in the form of Active Voice, the doer of an action is obviously contrasted with the object of the action, whereas passive forms presuppose first of all the importance of an action and an object rather than a doer that is given less prominence or dropped altogether.

Passive Voice is used in situations when the doer is not known or is not mentioned for some reason; in other cases, Passive Voice stresses in activity of the subject, it allows to shift important information onto the semantic patient, recipient, etc., which would be totally impossible in Active.

It should also be borne in mind that some sentences (usually those containing numerals or pronouns) may be interpreted differently depending on the speaker's choice of Voice. For example:

Everyone speaks two languages in this room.

Two languages are spoken by everyone in this room.

The form of the verb may show whether the agent expressed by the subject is the doer of the action or the recipient of the action (John broke the vase – the vase was broken). The objective relations between the action and the subject or object of the action find their expression in language as the grammatical category of voice. Therefore, the category of voice reflects the objective relations between the action itself and the subject or object of the action:

The category of voice is realized through the opposition Active voice – Passive voice. The passive is marked both in meaning and in form and the active as unmarked both in meaning and in form.

The realization of the voice category is restricted because of the implicit grammatical meaning of transitivity/intransitivity. In accordance with this meaning, all English verbs should fall into transitive and intransitive. However, the classification turns out to be more complex and comprises 6 groups:

1. Verbs used only transitively: to mark, to raise;
2. Verbs with the main transitive meaning: to see, to make, to build;
3. Verbs of intransitive meaning and secondary transitive meaning. A lot of

intransitive verbs may develop a secondary transitive meaning: They laughed me into agreement; He danced the girl out of the room;

4. Verbs of a double nature, neither of the meanings are the leading one, the verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively: to drive home - to drive a car;

5. Verbs that are never used in the Passive Voice: to seem, to become;

6. Verbs that realize their passive meaning only in special contexts: to live, to sleep, to sit, to walk, to jump.

Three types of passive constructions can be differentiated: 1) direct primary passive; 2) indirect secondary passive; 3) prepositional tertiary passive. Some English verbs can admit only one object – the direct one: e.g. Mary saw him. When such an object becomes the subject of a passive construction, the

latter is called direct primary passive: e.g. He was seen by Mary.

There are many verbs in English that take two objects in the active construction (direct and indirect): e.g. I gave him a book. She told the story to her sister. These verbs admit of two passive constructions:

a) A book was given to him. The story was told to her sister. (the direct primary passive);

b) He was given a book. Her sister was told the story. (the indirect secondary passive).

The indirect (secondary) passive is not infrequent in verb-phrases with the verb to give, such as: to give credit, to give command, to give a chance, to give a choice, to give an explanation, to give an opportunity, to give orders, to give shelter, and the like.

e.g. He was given a good chance to argue.

She is given an opportunity to go to the south in summer.

Suppose, you are given a choice. What would you prefer?

However, many verbs in English may take a direct and an indirect object in the active construction but admit only one passive construction — the direct passive, e.g.: to bring, to do, to play, to telegraph and many others. The list could be extended.

Next come constructions with the so-called prepositional or tertiary passive. The subject of the passive construction corresponds to the prepositional object of the active construction. This “detached” preposition retains its place after the verb.

e.g. Everything was taken care of.

She could not bear being read to any longer.

He was constantly being laughed at.

The verbal category of voice shows the direction of the process as regards the participants of the situation reflected in the syntactic construction.

Wrote – was written

Meaning – direction of the action, whether the action is represented as issuing from its subject or as experienced by its object.

He wrote this letter yesterday. – This letter was written yesterday.

But The bells rang and The fabric washes easily. Is it the active voice? Why do we have the sentences - They rang the bells and She washed the fabric. These are causative constructions. Prof. Barkhudarov considers the middle meaning to be part of the active voice meaning. If it were part of the passive voice meaning it would be possible to use the by-phrase: *The bells rang by John; *The fabric washed by the girl.

Passive constructions:

- Direct Passive (The letter was written yesterday)
- Indirect Passive (I was given a very interesting book)
- Prepositional Passive (The doctor was sent for) ● Phraseological Passive (Care should be taken not to confuse these words)
- Adverbial Passive (The house has not been lived in for many years)

In spite of the fact that the syntactic and the semantic structures form their own categories, there must be links between the two. The basic rule says that differences in syntax indicate differences of meaning⁴. The differences may be 'mere' matters of perspective and orientation, which is my concern here; however, they exist and must be taken into account.

The notion of voice is defined variously in the literature; we have adopted the way as it is defined in A Grammar of Contemporary English: "Voice is a grammatical category which makes it possible to view the action of a sentence in two ways, without change in the facts reported"⁵, since this particular feature of the passive voice is the most useful and indeed utilized one. One and the same idea can often be expressed in two different ways, by means of an active, and by means of a passive construction. The active voice is considered as the unmarked member of the pair. The names active and passive derive from the role of subject-referent in clauses which express an action: it will standardly be the actor, or active participant in the unmarked version, and the patient, or passive participant in the marked version.

The English passive is formed with an auxiliary, generally be, but often also get or become, and the past participle of a full verb. The passive form of the verb phrase thus contains this pattern: be + past participle. Concerning the passive auxiliaries, get is a serious contender of be, however, its application is "usually restricted to constructions without an expressed animate agent":

*The boy got given a violin by his father.

Apparently well-founded, the get-passive is avoided in formal style. On the other hand, it is common as a resulting copula, in which case it is equivalent to become which is used to "express gradual change, often enhanced by modification with more and more, increasingly, etc."

Furthermore, Huddleston and Pullum refer to the agent as to an internalised complement, for they do not want to confuse the term with the name of a semantic role.⁶

⁴Miller A. The best little grammar book. 1985. - P. 185.

⁵Quirk R. The grammar of contemporary English. 1974. P. 801.

⁶Huddleston R. , Pullum G. Introduction to English Grammar. 2005. P.142.

The basic category in verb genus is the active voice. It can be formed in all verbs (there are verbs which form only the passive voice, but their number is very limited, e.g. John was said to be a nice man), and has broader range of meanings than the passive voice.

The passive voice can essentially be formed from verbs that have an object, though even these verbs do not form the passive voice in some cases which I will discuss later. In the simplest cases the relation between the structures at the pre- and post- passive levels is exemplified in:

- a) John killed Peter;
- b) Peter was killed by John.
- (ii) a) John died;
- b) *was died by John.

Special types of passive formation: Verbs can be divided into single-word verbs (e.g. John called the man) and in multiword verbs, which are phrasal verbs (e.g. John called up the man), prepositional verbs (e.g. John called on the man) or phrasal-prepositional verbs (e.g. John put up with the man).

Prepositional verbs cannot occur in the passive so freely as the in the active. The constraints can be divided into two spheres, the first being determined by abstract/concrete distinction and the second by the degree of cohesion between the verb and its preposition.⁷

According to Dušková the possibility to form the passive in verbs with preposition depends on the type of relation between the verb and the preposition.⁸ Also Quirk emphasize the degree of cohesion in relation to the formation of passive. If the government is loose and the preposition represents non-governmental addition, e.g. agree with, the passive cannot be formed: *She was agreed with. It follows that only "highly cohesive" prepositional verbs can take the passive. Namely if the free addition is of an adverbial nature, it may suggest something concrete and the passive is not formed. However, one and the same collocation can have also abstract interpretation, in which case the government is not loose and it is of objective nature. Compare:

- 1. (concrete) They went into the hall.
They arrived at the railway station.
- 2. (abstract) The matter will be gone into.
No decision has been arrived at.

Such prepositional verbs accept the passive only in the figurative use. Further, as Dušková enumerates, the passive voice cannot be formed in the following verbs: cost, last, measure, weigh, equal, mean, resemble, hold ("contain"), lack, become ("befit"), suit, fit, escape and some others in the following cases and suchlike: it cost a lot of money, the supplies will last three weeks, the room measures twenty feet, two plus two equals four, 'lucrative' means 'profitable', the hall holds two hundred people, he lacks experience, this hat does not become you, the dress does not fit me, they escaped punishment. Inanimate objects in these verbs border on adverbials (we ask: how much does it cost /measure/weigh? how long did it last?). The fact that the verbs semantically relate to copular verbs can be

⁷ Quirk R. The grammar of contemporary English. 1974. P.803.

⁸Duskova L. Studies in the English grammar. 1988. P. 251.

manifested by the possibility of use of a periphrastic construction by means of a copula, cf. it cost five pounds – the price was five pounds, it weighs two pounds – the weight is two pounds, she resembles her mother – she is like her mother, any weekday suits me equally well – any weekday is equally suitable.

Generally it is valid that the subject of the passive voice can be transformed to the object of the active voice, nevertheless, during the operation in reverse direction, there are some restrictions put into effect. In addition to the restrictions following from the verbal semantics, there are also certain restrictions as for the nature of an object is concerned. Fundamentally, for the following objects it is impossible to make them the subject of the passive voice. Such objects are reflexive object, reciprocal and possessive object: he excused himself, they don't know each other, she shrugged her shoulders.

Furthermore, the subject of the passive usually cannot be any non-finite clause, such as an infinitive object and participle object, for instance, I hate to contradict you, he admitted having acted thoughtlessly. In addition, finite clauses occur rarely in the passive, e.g. that such a possibility exists has been suggested before.

Relation of the active to the passive voice

The relation between the active and the passive voice is best visible in action verbs bearing a direct object, for example the state provides free education on all levels – free education is provided on all levels (by the state). In the active voice both participants in the action are obligatory, the agent is construed as a subject and the aim of action (patient) as an object. In the passive voice only patient is obligatory and is construed as a subject.

Dušková notes that expression of the agent is obligatory in the passive voice in situations like the following: the cart was pulled by a horse, (not *the cart was pulled), possibly the absence of an agent can compensate for other adverbial, cf. he was brought up by his aunt – he was brought up with great care but never *he was brought up.

Although the relation between the active and the passive voice can be considered as an instant of syntactic synonymy, in real language expressions of their functional differentiation occurs. This differentiation follows predominantly from the facultativity of an agent in the passive voice. Linguists agree on the assertion that in a vast majority of cases the agent is unexpressed because it is either unknown, or is not relevant to the conveyed content from the point of view of the speaker. If the agent is expressed, the passive voice enables different linear arrangement of the action's participants. As a consequence of the change of syntactic functions, the agent and the patient interchange their positions in the passive voice. The different layout of the sentence can accommodate the purposes of the functional sentence perspective.

Semantic relation of the subject to the action is unambiguously determined only in the passive voice, which explicitly communicates that the subject is not the doer. In the active voice the semantic relation of the subject to the action expressed by the verb is more varied, the subject can be not only the doer of the action but also its bearer or can be somehow affected by the action. Such cases are similar to the passive constructions and we speak about an active with a passive meaning or about an unmarked passive voice.

The type of the passive voice that implies a general human doer is used above all in professional jargon, for example several systems have been devised and tested, it is believed

that the method yields safe results. In colloquial style the passive voice very often alternates with the active formulation, cf. that sort of man cannot be trusted/ you can't trust that sort of man.

Quite frequent type of the passive with unexpressed doer is the so called authorial passive, i.e. the actor is an author of an article, book, described work etc. The use of authorial passive is also characteristic of the professional jargon, since in this jargon the attention is turned to the subject of the message whereas the author's personality is backgrounded. For instance: As has already been stated, the present study was originally undertaken in the hope of finding a satisfactory explanation for the difference between the uses of the expanded and non-expanded verb-clusters in English.

The implied doer can be other identifiable or unidentifiable person or entity, the explicit expression of which is not relevant to the conveyed message or the speaker intentionally avoids its expressing; sometimes the implied doer is indefinite (somebody, something). For example, our team was beaten, the connection has been cut off. As some examples show, the originator of an action of a verb is not always known. This is often the case with natural sciences, e.g. genes are arranged in fixed positions (Dušková 1988: 260).

Verbs which do not imply a human agentive at a deeper level present more of a problem in the passive. In some cases the only plausible explanation for the absence of an agent is that there is no corresponding participant involved in the process, i.e. there is no agent understood. For example His eyes were firmly imbedded in his face. Huddleston considers helpful to consider such constructions with regard to ergative verbs:

- a) They quickly sold the book;
- b) The book sold quickly.
- (ii) a) He opened the door;
- b) The door opened.
- (iii) a) He marched the prisoners;
- b) The prisoners marched.

Huddleston calls such verbs as 'ergative' verbs, since they suggest an ergative organization of the clause (one where a one-place verb, i.e. a verb combining with a single noun phrase, takes an 'affected' element as subject, while a two-place verb takes a 'causer' as subject and an affected element as object) rather than a transitive organization (one where a one-place verb takes an 'actor' as subject and a two-place verb an actor as subject and a 'goal' as object).

According to the V.L. Kaushanskaya the Passive Voice is formed by means of the auxiliary verb to be in the required form and Participle II of the notional verb⁹.

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⁹ Kaushanskaya V.L. A grammar of the English language. 1963. P.111.

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