

Article

Difficulties in Teaching Active and Passive Voice to Learners

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Abstract: This study examines the main difficulties in teaching active and passive voice to Grade 7 students. Learners often struggle with sentence transformation, auxiliary verbs, past participle forms, and subject-verb agreement. Uzbek language interference and limited understanding of the communicative function of passive voice also affect learning. The study highlights the importance of systematic and communicative teaching methods to improve grammatical accuracy and language use.

Keywords: Active Voice, Passive Voice, Grammar Teaching, Grade 7 Learners, Methodological Difficulties, Auxiliary Verbs, Cross-Linguistic Interference, Communicative Competence

1. Introduction

The category of voice is an important grammatical feature in English that allows speakers to present actions from different perspectives. The distinction between active and passive voice plays a significant role in both spoken and written communication, particularly in academic and formal contexts [1]. For learners of English as a foreign language, understanding how and when to use these structures is essential for developing grammatical accuracy and communicative competence. In secondary school education, especially at the Grade 7 level, students begin to encounter more complex grammatical structures as they move beyond basic sentence patterns [2]. At this stage, learning the passive voice often becomes challenging because it requires structural transformation, correct use of auxiliary verbs, and knowledge of past participle forms. In addition, differences between English and Uzbek grammatical systems may cause cross-linguistic interference, which can further complicate the learning process [3]. Teaching the category of voice therefore, requires careful methodological planning and effective instructional strategies. Students must not only learn the grammatical rules of passive construction but also understand its communicative function in real language use. This study aims to analyze the main methodological difficulties in teaching active and passive voice to Grade 7 students and to highlight factors that influence their comprehension and production of these grammatical forms. Understanding these challenges can help teachers select more effective teaching methods and improve the overall process of grammar instruction [4, 5].

2. Methodology

Teaching the category of voice in English creates considerable methodological challenges in secondary school classrooms, especially in Grade 7, when students move from basic grammar to more complex sentence structures. While the rules for forming

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passive constructions appear clear in theory, the actual teaching process reveals many structural, cognitive, communicative, and psychological difficulties that affect students' ability to understand and produce both active and passive forms.

One major challenge is the structural complexity of passive constructions. Active sentences normally follow the Subject–Verb–Object order, whereas passive sentences require a transformation of this structure. Learners must understand that the object of an active sentence becomes the subject of the passive sentence and that the predicate is formed with the auxiliary verb *to be* and the past participle. According to Jamol Jalolov, grammatical transformations that involve changes in sentence structure often confuse learners because they require attention to several elements at the same time, such as word order, verb form, and grammatical agreement. For many students who are used to the direct relationship between subject and verb, such transformations are not always easy to understand.

Another difficulty concerns the correct use of auxiliary verbs. Passive constructions require the auxiliary verb *to be*, which must correspond to the new grammatical subject and reflect the correct tense. Students often leave out the auxiliary or choose an incorrect tense form. For instance, they may say “The homework finished” instead of “The homework was finished.” As Saydaliyev points out, mistakes in selecting auxiliaries frequently occur because learners do not fully understand the English verb system. Therefore, teaching the passive voice should also include systematic revision of tense forms and subject–verb agreement.

Learners also face problems distinguishing between past tense and past participle forms. Since many English verbs have irregular participles, students often confuse them with simple past forms. For example, they may say “The letter was wrote” instead of “The letter was written.” Jalolov states that irregular verb forms are among the most persistent difficulties in grammar learning, particularly when they appear in complex structures like the passive voice. Without a clear understanding of participle forms, students cannot form passive constructions correctly.

Cognitive factors also contribute to learning difficulties. In active sentences, the subject performs the action, which follows a logical and familiar pattern. Passive sentences, however, reverse this order by presenting the affected participant as the subject. Tolipov notes that grammatical structures that deviate from the typical sentence pattern increase cognitive load for learners at intermediate stages. Consequently, when students encounter passive constructions in reading texts, they may need more time to understand the relationship between actions and participants, which can slow comprehension and reduce their confidence.

Motivation also affects the learning process. Grammar lessons that focus only on written drills and transformation exercises can reduce students' interest. According to Tolipov, modern teaching approaches should include interactive and learner-centered activities that encourage participation. If passive voice is introduced only through rule explanation and mechanical practice, students may develop negative attitudes toward complex grammar structures. Therefore, teaching strategies should also consider students' psychological engagement.

Another challenge involves distinguishing between dynamic and stative passive constructions. For instance, the sentence “The door is closed” may describe either the action of closing the door or the state of the door being closed. Without clear context, students may misunderstand the meaning. Irisqulov highlights the importance of explaining the difference between actional and descriptive passive forms, especially in reading tasks where accurate interpretation is essential.

Students also encounter difficulties when passive voice appears in complex tense–aspect forms such as “has been written,” “is being prepared,” or “will have been completed.” These structures require knowledge of both passive formation and aspectual grammar. Swan observes that learners often avoid or simplify such constructions because they find them too complicated. For this reason, teachers working with Grade 7 students

should introduce passive structures gradually, starting with present and past simple forms before moving to more complex tenses.

3. Result and Discussion

Classroom observations also show that students sometimes have difficulty identifying when passive voice should be used. They may transform sentences unnecessarily or fail to recognize contexts where passive constructions are more appropriate. For example, passive voice is frequently used in scientific writing or news reports to focus on events rather than on the person acting. Quirk notes that passive constructions are commonly associated with formal written style. If students are not exposed to authentic texts, they may not develop an understanding of these stylistic features [6, 7].

Assessment methods also influence the teaching of passive voice. Traditional tests often emphasize mechanical exercises such as converting active sentences into passive ones. Although these tasks help students practice structure, they do not fully evaluate communicative competence. Muslimov argues that effective assessment should measure not only grammatical correctness but also the appropriate use of structures in context. Therefore, teachers should include activities that require students to apply passive constructions in meaningful spoken or written communication [8].

When teaching Grade 7 learners, developmental factors must also be considered. At this stage, students can understand abstract grammar rules, but they still benefit from visual aids, clear examples, and guided practice. Although their vocabulary is expanding, they may not yet have enough lexical knowledge to produce complex sentences independently [9, 10]. As a result, passive voice should be taught progressively, moving from simple to more advanced structures [11]. Overall, the analysis of these methodological challenges shows that teaching active and passive voice requires careful planning and systematic support. Structural complexity, language interference, cognitive demands, communicative misunderstanding, and motivational issues all affect students' learning [12, 13]. Understanding these challenges allows teachers to choose appropriate teaching strategies that promote both grammatical accuracy and functional language use. This analysis provides the foundation for selecting effective teaching methods and techniques, which will be discussed in the following subsection [14, 15].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, teaching the category of voice in English, particularly the active and passive forms, presents a variety of methodological challenges for Grade 7 students in secondary schools. These difficulties arise from several factors, including the structural complexity of passive constructions, the correct use of auxiliary verbs, confusion between past tense and past participle forms, and subject-verb agreement. In addition, cross-linguistic interference from Uzbek, cognitive processing demands, and limited understanding of the communicative function of passive voice further complicate the learning process. The analysis also shows that motivational and psychological aspects play an important role in grammar learning. If passive voice is taught only through mechanical exercises, students may lose interest and fail to understand its practical value in communication. Overall, recognizing the methodological difficulties in teaching active and passive voice allows teachers to design more effective instructional strategies. Such approaches can improve students' grammatical accuracy, comprehension, and ability to use passive structures appropriately in real communicative situations.

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