

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' LEARNING STRATEGIES IN OVERCOMING PASSIVE VOICE ERRORS

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Abstract

This article investigates the learning strategies employed by students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa to overcome errors in constructing passive voice sentences. The study focuses on identifying the types of errors made by students and the strategies they utilize to correct these errors. Data was collected through interviews and the analysis of students' written exercises. The results reveal that students predominantly encounter misformation and omission errors when constructing passive voice sentences. These errors often stem from a lack of understanding of verb conjugations and the omission of auxiliary verbs. The study further explores the learning strategies used by students, categorized according to Oxford's (1990) classification, including cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. It was found that students frequently employ cognitive strategies, such as seeking out resources and practicing sentence construction, as well as social strategies, including consulting peers and instructors. The findings suggest that while students are aware of the importance of using correct passive voice structures, they still struggle with certain aspects of its application. The study concludes by recommending targeted instructional strategies to improve students' understanding and use of passive voice, thereby enhancing their overall proficiency in English grammar.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is essential for communication and interaction. Among the many languages spoken globally, English stands out as the most widely used, particularly as a foreign language in countries like Indonesia. According to Munadzdzofah (2018), English serves as a global lingua franca in fields such as science, business, and diplomacy. In Indonesia, English holds a crucial position, second only to the national language (Kirkpatrick & Sussex, 2012). The Minister of Education and Culture's 1967 decree cemented English as the first foreign language due to its importance in international communication and technology.

Mastering English is critical for Indonesian students, especially in higher education, where proficiency tests like TOEFL and IELTS are often required (Hartanto & Inayati, 2016).

Alongside core language skills, grammar plays a foundational role in achieving fluency. However, students often struggle with grammar, particularly passive voice constructions. Observations at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa revealed common errors in passive voice formation, such as omitting the auxiliary verb or incorrect verb forms.

Learning strategies are essential to overcoming such challenges. Chamot (2004) defines these strategies as actions learners use to achieve their goals. At STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, students used various strategies, such as peer assistance and revisiting materials, to address their errors. These strategies align with cognitive, social, and memory approaches commonly found in language learning.

Previous studies, such as those by Gerlach and Ely (1980) and Amadi (2018), emphasize the importance of learning strategies in improving language proficiency. This study, therefore, aims to analyze the strategies students use to overcome errors in passive voice construction, contributing to a better understanding of effective grammar learning techniques.

Learning strategies are vital for effective language acquisition, categorized into cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective, and social types (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Cognitive strategies involve mental processes like memorization and problem-solving, meta-cognitive strategies focus on managing the learning process, affective strategies deal with emotional aspects, and social strategies emphasize peer collaboration. Oxford (1990) divides these into direct (memory, cognitive, compensation) and indirect (meta-cognitive, affective, social) strategies, offering a structured view of language learning approaches.

Grammar is the system for constructing and organizing words, essential for clear communication (Douglas, 2001; Suryadi & Junaida, 2007). The passive voice highlights the action rather than the actor, using the auxiliary verb "be" plus the past participle (Tiwari, 2017; Funk & Kolln, 2012). Passive voice construction includes long passives with an agent and short passives that omit the agent (Biber et al., 2003; Coetzee, 1980).

Errors in language learning can be categorized into several types: lexical, syntactic, and textual. Lexical errors involve incorrect word choice (Richards & Schmidt, 2010), such as using "affect" instead of "effect." Syntactic errors pertain to mistakes in sentence structure (Ellis, 1997), like "He going to the store" instead of "He is going to the store." Textual errors affect overall text coherence, coherence, and cohesion, disrupting readability (Johnson, 1994). These include issues with word choice, sentence structure, and logical flow.

Surface Strategy Taxonomy classifies errors into omission, addition, misformation, and disordering (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1990). Omissions involve missing elements, additions include unnecessary components, misformations are incorrect forms, and disordering refers to wrong word order. These categories help in understanding learners' grammatical challenges and guiding corrective measures (Dulay et al., 1990).

Addressing errors in passive voice and employing appropriate learning strategies is crucial for effective teaching. Error analysis provides insights into specific challenges learners face, such as lexical and syntactic issues, and helps in tailoring instructional approaches to improve understanding and application of passive voice constructions (Ellis, 1997; Oxford, 1990).

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore English language learning strategies, specifically focusing on overcoming passive voice errors among fourth-semester students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa. The study was conducted during the Odd Semester of the 2023/2024 academic year and targeted students who had completed the Pre-Intermediate Grammar Course. Five students were randomly selected to provide diverse insights based on their different levels of understanding.

Data collection involved both documentation and interviews. Documentation, as outlined by Sugiyono (2016), included reviewing student assignments and visual records, such as photos of written work, to identify common errors in passive voice usage. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted, following the guidelines of Mackey and Gass (2005), to gather detailed information on the students' strategies for overcoming these errors after completing the assigned exercises.

The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, with key steps including data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. Member checking, a method described by Mekarisce (2020), was employed to ensure the validity of the findings by having participants review and verify the results. The research process involved introducing the study to the students, collecting data through exercises and interviews, analyzing the results, and drawing final conclusions based on the data gathered.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussions based on the data collected during the study. It analyzes the types of errors and strategies used by students to overcome difficulties in constructing passive sentences. The analysis, drawn from observations and interviews, highlights the effectiveness of various learning strategies in helping students better understand and apply passive voice.

The researcher identified common errors and explored how students addressed them, aiming to provide insight into best practices for teaching and learning passive voice. Documentation focused on five fourth-semester students at STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa, with a detailed examination of their passive voice errors. The findings are presented in the tables below.

Table. 4.1 Students' error in constructing passive voice

Participant	Tense	Error Sentence	Type of Error	Correct Sentence

MA	Simple Future Tense	The report <u>will be prepare</u> by the manager tomorrow.	Misformation	The report will be prepared by the manager tomorrow.
NK	Simple Present Tense	The <u>letter is send</u> by the office staff.	Misformation	The letter is sent by the office staff.
	Simple Future Tense	The new product <u>will launched</u> by the company next month.	Omission	The new product will be launched by the company
MAS	Simple Past Tense	The movie <u>was watch</u> by them on Saturday.	Misformation	The movie was watched by them on Saturday.
HW	Simple Present Tense	The mail <u>is deliver</u> by the postman.	Misformation	The mail is delivered by the postman.
	Simple Past Tense	The <u>project completed</u> by the team on time.	Omission	The project was completed by the team on time.
	Simple Future Tense	The assignment <u>will submitted</u> by the student next week.	Omission	The assignment will be submitted by the student next week.

Misformation Errors

Misformation errors arise when words are incorrectly formed, particularly in verb conjugations within passive voice construction. According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (in James, 1990), these errors involve using incorrect verb forms that do not match the required tense or aspect. For example:

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- MA wrote "The report will be prepare by the manager tomorrow," where "prepare" should be "prepared."
 - NK used "send" instead of "sent" in "The letter is send by the office staff."

In this study, misformation errors were the most frequently observed. Students often used incorrect verb forms or auxiliary verbs, such as writing, "The project is complete by the team," instead of "The project is completed by the team." These errors typically occur when students attempt to apply passive voice rules without a full understanding of verb conjugations, especially with irregular verbs.

James (1998) notes that misformation errors disrupt grammatical structure and can reinforce incorrect patterns, potentially forming bad habits. Selinker (1972) and Ellis (1994) view these errors as part of the learner's developing language system, reflecting active hypothesis testing rather than solely hindrances to learning.

Omission Errors

Omission errors involve missing essential elements in passive voice constructions, such as auxiliary verbs. Examples include:

- NK's omission of "be" in "The new product will launched by the company next month," which should be "will be launched."
- HW's omission of "was" in "The project completed by the team on time," which should be "was completed."

Impact of Errors on Textual Quality

Misformation and omission errors affect the clarity, coherence, and fluency of a text:

- **Lexical Errors:** Errors like using "prepare" instead of "prepared" can disrupt flow and reduce readability by requiring readers to mentally correct the text.
- **Syntactic Errors:** Errors such as missing auxiliary verbs create incomplete or fragmented sentences, which impair coherence and make the text harder to understand.

Misformation and omission errors are common in passive voice constructions, highlighting the need for improved instruction on verb conjugation and auxiliary verbs. Addressing these errors can enhance grammatical accuracy and overall text quality, ensuring clearer and more coherent writing. These findings underline the importance of targeted feedback and instruction to help students master the complexities of passive voice.

These errors suggest an incomplete understanding of passive voice structures or carelessness in sentence construction. James (1998) suggests that omission errors often indicate a lack of comprehension of the passive voice's syntactic requirements.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the learning strategies employed by students for constructing passive sentences, particularly when errors occurred. This interview format allowed for in-depth exploration and flexibility, enabling students to discuss their experiences and

methods in detail. The aim was to identify specific strategies used to overcome errors both at home and on campus, and to validate and enrich the findings previously gathered through observations.

Students were encouraged to discuss their learning processes, techniques, and any tools or resources they utilized. Open-ended questions were used to elicit comprehensive responses, providing a clearer understanding of the students' approaches. A key question addressed whether participants were aware of their mistakes, helping to determine if these were "errors" (due to lack of knowledge) or "mistakes" (due to factors like fatigue or distraction).

Affective Strategies

NK's strategy of repeatedly practicing until feeling confident can be categorized as an affective strategy. This approach involves managing emotions, particularly frustration or anxiety, by persisting through difficulties. According to Oxford (1990), affective strategies are crucial for learners to handle their emotions, motivation, and self-confidence. NK's persistence exemplifies these strategies, reflecting self-encouragement and continuous effort to build a sense of achievement.

Carl James (1998) highlights that errors, including misformation errors, often arise from a lack of knowledge or incorrect application of language rules. NK's persistent effort aligns with James' approach, viewing errors as integral to the learning process. By continually working to correct errors through self-correction or feedback, learners apply James's theory in practice, recognizing errors as steps toward better understanding. James also emphasizes feedback and reflection, which align with NK's persistent practice, where repeated attempts and continuous checking help develop a deeper understanding of correct structures.

Cognitive Strategies

Method of searching Google for formulas and patterns of passive voice falls under cognitive strategies. This approach involves actively engaging with material by analyzing language structures, understanding patterns, and applying rules. AR's use of self-correction and reapplication of learned rules reflects cognitive strategies.

NK also applies cognitive strategies by directly applying what they learn during consultations with peers or instructors and redoing their work until it is correct. This use of self-correction techniques demonstrates cognitive strategies, specifically addressing obstacles through feedback and additional practice.

Several students mentioned that recognizing errors led them to practice more to avoid repeating mistakes. One student noted, "I realized I was doing it wrong, so I did more exercises on the passive voice to get better." Additional practice helps reinforce correct rules and gradually eliminate errors, illustrating the effectiveness of cognitive strategies such as repetitive practice.

Some students based their self-corrections on incorrect assumptions about passive voice rules, such as adding "was" before any verb. One student said, "I thought if I just added 'was' or 'were,' it would be correct, but then I realized I was missing something." This highlights the limitations of self-

correction when based on incomplete understanding, emphasizing the need for accurate foundational knowledge to avoid further errors (Oxford, 1990).

Metacognitive Strategies

MAS uses a metacognitive strategy by strictly following guidelines provided by their instructor. This involves planning and monitoring their learning process to ensure they stay within correct usage boundaries as taught. Metacognitive strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning process to improve accuracy and understanding (Oxford, 1990).

AR demonstrates metacognitive strategies by questioning and verifying their understanding through research. Reflecting on their learning process and taking steps to ensure correctness align with metacognitive practices of self-monitoring and evaluation.

Social Strategies

NK and AR both use social strategies by consulting peers and instructors to correct their errors. This involves seeking support and feedback from others to enhance their learning and ensure correct passive voice usage. Students who sought peer feedback reported mixed results; while it provided additional perspectives, its effectiveness depended on the peers' knowledge.

Peer feedback can be beneficial but may also perpetuate errors if peers lack accurate understanding. One student mentioned, "I ask my friends if I'm not sure because they might see something I missed." This indicates the importance of accurate feedback for effective learning.

Swain (1985) suggests that peer collaboration helps learners notice omission errors by making them aware of gaps in their language production. Through peer review and discussion, learners identify missing elements and receive constructive feedback, which aids in modifying and refining their language use.

In summary, students employed various strategies to address errors, including:

- Affective Strategies: NK's persistence in practice to manage frustration and build confidence.
- Cognitive Strategies: AR's research and application of passive voice rules; NK's use of feedback and repeated practice. Self-correction based on incorrect assumptions showed limitations.
- Metacognitive Strategies: MAS's adherence to guidelines and AR's reflective research for planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning.
- Social Strategies: NK and AR's consultations with peers and instructors, with effectiveness dependent on feedback accuracy.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research and provides suggestion for educators and learners on improving the understanding and application of passive voice constructions. The research explored the types of errors made by students in constructing passive

sentences and the strategies they used to overcome these errors, emphasizing the importance of targeted instructional approaches.

Based on the findings discussed, the research identified several key points regarding the errors made by students in constructing passive sentences and the strategies employed to address these errors:

1. Types of Errors:

The study revealed that the most common errors in passive voice constructions were misformation and omission errors.

- **Misformation Errors:** These involved incorrect verb forms, for example; using "prepare" instead of "prepared" in a future passive sentence. Misformation errors indicated that while students were somewhat familiar with passive constructions, they lacked a thorough understanding of the correct verb forms, especially in various tenses.
- **Omission Errors:** These errors involved missing essential components of the passive voice, such as auxiliary verbs. For example, students would omit "be" in sentences like "The new product will launched by the company." These omissions reflect an incomplete grasp of the passive voice structure, which often stems from inadequate instruction or practice.

2. Impact of Errors on Textual Quality

Errors in passive voice constructions not only disrupt grammatical correctness but also affect the clarity, coherence, and overall quality of a text. Misformation errors lead to lexical issues that reduce fluency and can confuse the reader. Omission errors are more severe, as they break the grammatical structure, making sentences incomplete and harder to understand.

3. Students' Strategies to Overcome Errors

This research identified several strategies that students employed to correct their errors, such as affective, social, cognitive and metacognitive strategy.

SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed for educators and learners to improve the understanding and application of passive voice constructions:

1. For Educators

- Provide explicit instruction on the passive voice, focusing on the correct use of auxiliary verbs and verb conjugations. This should include regular and irregular verbs across different tenses.
- Develop exercises that require students to convert active sentences to passive voice and vice versa. This practice can help reinforce the structural differences and correct usage.
- Offer constructive feedback on students' written work, highlighting errors and explaining the correct forms. Encouraging peer review can also help students learn from each other's mistakes.

2. For Learners

- Take advantage of online resources, such as grammar websites and interactive exercises, to understand and practice passive voice construction.
- After receiving feedback, actively revise sentences to correct errors and understand

why they occurred. Reflect on the learning process to identify areas needing improvement.

- Engage in regular practice of passive voice constructions. This can include writing exercises, language apps, or even speaking exercises that emphasize correct passive voice usage.
3. Suggestions for Further Research
- Conducting similar studies with a larger and more diverse sample of students could provide more generalized findings applicable to different educational contexts.
 - Investigating how students' understanding and use of passive voice develop over time could offer insights into the long-term effectiveness of different teaching strategies.
 - Comparing the effectiveness of various instructional methods, such as explicit grammar instruction versus communicative language teaching, could help identify the most effective approaches for teaching passive voice.

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