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Investigating the Difficulties Faced by Iraqi EFL Learners in Using Passivization

A Graduation Paper Submitted to the Department of English /College of
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BY

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(يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ
دَرَجَاتٍ)

صدق الله العلي العظيم

المجادلة الآية ١٤

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

(Allah will raise up to (suitable) ranks (and degrees) those of you who believe and who have been granted Knowledge: and Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do.)

"Allah, the Most High, has spoken the truth."

Surah Al-Mujadila Verse (11)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Dedication

To My Family: To those who stood beside me, to the hands that never stopped giving hope, and to my mother and father, no words of thanks are enough for their guidance and support.

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learners in utilizing passivization. It comprises five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic. The second chapter delves into the theoretical background, while the third chapter focuses on the test. The fourth chapter analyzes the test results, and the final chapter presents the conclusions of the research paper.

Section One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Concerning passivization Alexander (1988:243- 4) explains that when the focus is on the person or thing that is affected by an action, passive constructs are used. They are employed in sentences where the action's target is given more emphasis than the actors themselves. Lester and Besson (2019:103) assert that passives have a distinctive structure that makes them obvious (once you know what to look for). The auxiliary verb be (in some form), followed by a past participle, must be used in passives. The following is the formula for all passive voice sentences: passive voice = be(in some form) + past participle. This paper will discuss the topic of passive voice and will discuss the tenses and forms of passive voice , as well as finding the difficulties that learners faced in identifying the passive voice. Based on the background above the researcher formulates the following : -

1- What are the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learners regarding the use of passive voice?

2_ Do Iraqi EFL Learners face some difficulties in using passive voice sentences?

1.2 The Aims

The research paper aims to achieve the following :

- 1- Investigating the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learners in recognizing the Passive voice.

- 2- Evaluating the students performance in using passive voice and analyzing these errors.

1.3 The Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that :

- 1- Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing passive voice sentences.

- 2_ Iraqi EFL learners are unable to distinguish between types of passive voice.

- 3_ Most Iraqi EFL learners are not so familiar with passive voice sentences.

1.4 Procedures

The research follows these steps:

- 1_Presenting a theoretical framework about passive voice and the tenses of the passive voice with some examples.

- 2_Testing students from the Department of English / College of Education for Human Sciences University of Babylon, the third stage in the academic year 2022-2023.because they have studied passive voice in their university level as well as secondary one.

3_Analyzing the test results to see the students' performance .

4_Giving conclusions of the study.

1.5 Limits

The research will be limited to study the passive voice , and the types of passive voice. The test will be applied to 30 Iraqi EFL learners , from University of Babylon / College of Education for Human Sciences / Department of English / during the academic Third year 2022-2023.because they have studied passive voice in their university level as well as secondary one.

1.6 Value

It is hoped that the present study will be of some theoretical and practical value to those who are interested in passive voice.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background

2.1 Definitions of Passivization

Grammar is a study of the structure of sentences and texts and it deals with the arrangement of them. Grammar is the vital element of any language, and it is very important for the learner. For Garrett Wignell (2011:14) state that grammar is a theory of a language, of how language is put together and how it works. It means that the grammar is to construct the idea and put it there together and it will have a meaning. The English language has two voices: active and passive. Sandi (2016:4) illustrates that “the passive voice is a verb form that indicates that the subject of a sentence suffered as a result of an action or work”. The crucial elements of the English passive forms are verb to be and the main verbs which are regular and irregular. Passive voice is used less than the active voice, in spite of several worthy reasons for using them. Crystal (2003:339) states that grammar uses the word 'voice' to describe whether a sentence is active or passive. While the patient is the subject of a sentence in passive voice constructions. The Action-taker is the subject of a sentence in active voice formulations. The past participle of a verb creates a passive verb, and the object of a passive verb is typically the person or thing that the word affects. Swan (2005: 68) states that the verbs' act is transferred to the subject in passive sentences. When a sentence is passive, the immediate object of the active sentence becomes the subject. Passive sentences can only be produced from transitive verbs since they can take a direct object, which is a requirement for every sentence in English.. Thomson and Martinet (1996: 266) write that it is usually better to utter texts with active verbs because active verbs are more direct. Murphy (2015:135) states that passive voice is a grammatical structure in which

the subject of a sentence is the recipient of the action, rather than the doer of the action. In other words, the focus is on what is being done to the subject, rather than who is doing it. The passive voice is formed using a form of the verb "to be" followed by the past participle of the main verb. For example, "The cake was baked by my sister" is in the passive voice, with "cake" as the subject and "baked" as the main verb. Wang (2010 : 945) distinguishes between active and passive sentences. The passive voice adds an auxiliary verb form and the main verb's past participle to the verb phrase, which distinguishes it from the active voice. Passivization at the clause level entails moving two clause parts around and adding one. (A) The active subject becomes the passive agent, (B) the active object becomes the passive subject, and (C) the preposition "by" is placed before the agent. The prepositional agent phrase of passive sentences is an optional sentence element.

2.2 Passive Voice Tenses

Murphy(2012:84) states that the passive voice is formed by using a form of the auxiliary verb "be" (be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been) followed by the past participle of the main verb. We can still add secondary information to our passive form (if we want to), by adding by.

2.2.1 Passive Voice in the Past Simple

Murphy(2012: 84) states that passive is made by the object (noun or pronoun) of the active sentence at the beginning of the passive sentence, then we put auxiliary verbs of past tense, after that we put past participle form of the verb.

The object + was / were + past participle (by + subject) .

- 1 _ A letter was written.
- 2 _ The money was stolen.

2.2.2 Passive Voice in the Present Simple

Leech and Svartivk(1994:329) point out the construction of the passive sentence in the following points:

- 1- The object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive one.
- 2- The auxiliary verb should precede the main verb which is in its past participle form.
- 3- The subject of the active sentence becomes the object of the passive one (or is dropped).

The Object + is /are/am + past participle

- 3 _The house is cleaned.
- 4_ The lesson is explained to the students by the teacher.

2.2.3 / Passive Voice in the Present Continuous Tense

For Murphy (2012:85) the sentence begins with an object then verb to **be** and being then past participle verb .For example

- 5_The room is being cleaned.
- 6_The meal is being cooked by the chef.

2.2.4 Passive Voice in Past Continuous Tense

Parrot (2000:341)writes that the sentence of the passive voice starts with the object after that verb to **be (was /were)** ,after that we put past participle verbs.

The Object + was / were + being + past participle

- 7 _The cakes were being eaten when I entered the room.
- 8_ The road was being repaired by the workers.

2.2.5 Passive Voice in Present Perfect Tense

According to Murphy (2012: 88) ‘the sentence begins with an object plus auxiliary verbs (**have/has**) plus **been** and the past participle verb.

The Object + have /has + been + past participle

9_ The clinic has been cleaned by them.

10_ A book has been written by her.

2.2.6 Passive Voice in Past Perfect Tense

Parrot (2000:340) states that the sentence starts with an object plus had, then **been** and past participle verb.

The Object had + been + past participle verb

11 _The city had been defended by the brave men.

12_ The window had been broken by the little girl.

2.2.7 Passive Voice in Future Simple Tense

For Murphy(2012:87) states that the passive verb form in the simple future tense is made by putting the modals such as :

will/ shall + be before the past participle form of the verb.

The Object + will + be + past participle

13_The horses will be taken to the stable.

14_ A new product will be launched by the company next month.

2.2.8 Passive Voice in Modals Verbs

According to Murphy(2012:89) ,we can use modals verbs in passive voice form by followed the rule

The Object + modal verbs(can,may,should,could ..etc) + be + past participle

15_ Some information can be given about the job by Juan.

16_ The traffic rules must be obeyed.

Section Three

The Test

3.1 Definitions of the Test

According to Al- Juboury (1999 : 1),the test includes any means of checking what students can do with language and what they can not do with it .For Brown (2006: 384) a test is a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in a given domain. Heaton (1988: 5) describes tests as a means of assessing the students' performance in the language.

3.2 Features of a Good Test

3.2.1 Validity

According to Al- Juboury (1999 :24), validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure or can be used successfully for the purpose for which it is intended .

3.2.2 Reliability

Reliability the test must be practicable in- time required for completion, the length, number of items or questions, scoring, etc. The test should not be too lengthy and difficult to answer as well as scoring.(ibid)

3.2.3 Practicality

Practicality refers to the ease and efficiency with which an assessment can be administered, scored, and interpreted. It involves considerations such as the time and resources required to administer the assessment.(ibid)

3.3 The design of the Test

The test consists of two questions .Question one includes the measures of the students' response on the production level and has 10 items .The testes have to write sentences in passive forms .While question two represents the recognition level, and has 10 items .The testees have to choose the correct option of the item

Section Four

The Result of the Test

4.1 Data Analysis

In this section, the researcher analyzes the results of the test after testing Third year university students at the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon for the academic year 2022-2023.

The test consists of two questions , question one consists of ten items which are designed to check the students' performance at the production level. While the second question consists of ten items which are designed to measure the students' performance at the recognition level .The researcher collects the correct and incorrect responses , also provides the percentages of each correct and incorrect response by using the following tables:The number of the total correct and incorrect responses mutilated by 100 and divided on the total number of the students (30 students)

Table (1) The Correct and Incorrect Answers and their Percentages

No of items	No of correct responses	Percentage%	No of incorrect responses	Percentage%
1	7	23.33%	23	76.66%
2	22	73.33%	8	26.66%
3	5	16.66%	25	83.33%
4	5	16.66%	25	83.33%

5	4	13.33%	26	86.66%
6	11	36.33%	19	63.33%
7	2	6.66%	28	93.33%
8	5	16.66%	25	83.33%
9	5	16.66%	25	83.33%
10	Zero	0%	30	100%
Total	66	22%	234	78%

In item (1) seven students (23.33%) respond correctly. Twenty_three students (76.66%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly know the correct answer because they study this topic well. The students who respond incorrectly face difficulty because the level of the students is weak.

In item (2) twenty_two students (73.33) respond correctly. Eight students (26.66) respond incorrectly. This sentence in the past simple tense, the students who respond correctly are familiar with this type of passive sentence. The students who respond incorrectly lack knowledge about this type of sentence and which auxiliary verb to use in the sentence.

In item (3), five students(16.66) respond correctly. The students respond correctly because this sentence is easy for them. The students who respond incorrectly find this type of sentence difficult for them..

In items (4) five students (16.66) respond correctly. Twenty five students (83.33) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly because they are familiar with this type of sentences, the students who respond incorrectly because their level is very weak.

In item (5) four students(13.33%) respond correctly. Twenty six students (86.66%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly because They study about this kind of passive voice which is passive past continuous. The students who respond incorrectly because this sentence is difficult for these students.

In item (6) eleven students (36.33%) respond correctly. Nineteen students(63.33%)respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly find this sentence easy for them. The students who respond incorrectly because the level of these students is weak.

In item (7) two students (6.33%) respond correctly. Twenty eight students(93.33%)respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly because they are familiar with this type of sentences. The students who respond incorrectly because the level of students is weak.

In item (8), five students(16.66%) respond correctly. Twenty five students (83.33%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly study this topic well, the students who respond incorrectly this sentence difficult for them.

In item (9), five students(16.66%) respond correctly.Twenty five students (83.33%) respond incorrectly.The students who respond correctly study this topic well, the students who respond incorrectly this sentence difficult for them.

In item (10) Zero students (0%) respond correctly.This sentence is difficult for those students therefore thirty students (100%) respond incorrectly.No one of the students answer this point correctly because the level of the students is weak, also they do not study this topic well.

Table (2) The Correct and Incorrect Answers and their Percentages

No of the items	No of correct responses	Percentage%	No of incorrect responses	Percentage%
1	17	56.66%	13	43.33%
2	20	66.66%	10	33.33%
3	19	63.33%	11	36.33%
4	26	86.66%	4	13.33%
5	22	73.33%	8	43.33%
6	16	53.33%	14	46.66%
7	18	60%	12	40%
8	13	43.33%	17	56.66%

9	18	60%	12	40%
10	24	80%	6	20%
Total	193	64.3%	107	35.5%

In item (1) seventeen students (56.66%) respond correctly. Thirteen students (43.33%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly because the level of these students is good. The students who respond incorrectly do not study this topic so they are not familiar with it.

In item (2), twenty students (66.66%) respond correctly. Ten students (33.33%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly are familiar with this type of sentences. The students who respond incorrectly find this sentence difficult for them.

In item (3), nineteen students (63.33%) respond correctly. Eleven students (35.33%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly are familiar with this type of sentences. The students who respond incorrectly do not study this topic well.

In item (4), twenty students (86.66%) respond correctly. Four students (13.33%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly study about this topic well. The students who respond incorrectly are weak.

In item (5) twenty-two students (73.33%) respond correctly. Eight students (43.33%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly find this

sentence easy for them. The students who respond incorrectly do not study this topic in third year.

In item (6) sixteen students (53.33%) respond correctly. Fourteen students (46.66%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly because this sentence is easy for those students. The students who respond incorrectly because the level of the students is very weak.

In item (7) eighteen students (60%) respond correctly. Twelve students (40%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly are familiar with this type of sentences. The students who respond incorrectly are not familiar with these items..

In item (8) thirteen students (43.33%) respond correctly. Seventeen students (56.66%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly find this sentence easy for them. The students who respond incorrectly are not familiar with these sentences.

In item (9) eighteen students (60%) respond correctly. Twelve students (40%) respond incorrectly. The students who respond correctly are familiar with this item. The students who respond incorrectly are weak.

In item (10) twenty-four students (80%) respond correctly. Six students (20%) respond incorrectly. Many students respond correctly because they study this type of sentence. The students who respond incorrectly are weak.

Section Five

Conclusion

According to the results of the test , the number and percentage of the incorrect responses of the whole test (341 , 113.6%) are more than those of the correct respond (259 , 86.3).According to the preceding analysis , the following conclusions have been drawn:

1-Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in recognizing passive voice sentences.

This validates hypothesis number one which states they face difficulty in producing sentences in a passive voice.

2_Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty in distinguishing between types of passive voice. This validates hypothesis number two which states that most of them face difficulty distinguishing passive voice types.

3_Iraqi EFL learners face difficulty with passive voice sentences .This validates hypothesis number three which states that they are not familiar with passive voice sentences.

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Appendix

The Test

Q1/ Change the active sentences into passive :

1_ The mechanic repairs cars.

2_ John cleaned the bathroom.

3_ The girls can play handball.

4_ Ali takes a picture.

5_ They were interviewing her for the job.

6_ An unknown author wrote the book.

7_ Our neighbors have invited us to dinner.

8_ I must do my homework.

9_ My parents will take us to the park.

10_ The police had arrested him.

Q2/ Choose the correct answer :

1_ Mona lisa_____ by Leonardo da Vinci.

(a.will paint, b. paints, c. was painted).

2_ Dinner_____ at 9 pm by him.

(a.was being eaten , b.were being eaten , c.is eating).

3_ The room looked nice, it _____ .

(a.had been cleaned , b.cleaned , c.was cleaning).

4_ The traffic rules_____

(a. obeyed b.must obeyed c. must be obeyed).

5_ The car looks nice , it_____ .

(a.has been washed , b.washed , c.had been washed).

6_ The house_____ at the moment.

(a.cleans , b.has cleaned , c. is being cleaned).

7_Thousands of cars_____ every year.

(a.produced , b.are produced , c. were producing).

8_ My car _____ before I reached home.

(a. had stolen , b.stole , c. had been stolen).

9_ The work_____ by 8:00 pm.

(a.finish, b .will be finished , c.will finished).

10_ Many accidents_____ by careless drivers.

(a.was caused , b.are caused , c.is caused).