Problems of Active and Passive Construction in English and Indonesian

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Abstract

This research aims to compare the differences between active and passive constructions in English and Indonesian and identify the difficulties experienced by learners in understanding and using both constructions. This research uses qualitative method with contrastive analysis technique in comparing the grammatical forms of English and Indonesian sentences as well as the pragmatic value between active and passive constructions. Data collection is done through literature review of related academic sources such as textbooks, journals, as well as previous studies. The following research shows that English directs in using the active structure in the struggle for openness and clarity, even Indonesian directs in using the passive structure in contemplating for polite or rational context. The fundamental difference is how to form passive sentences: English uses the auxiliary verb 'to be' and the past participle, and Indonesian uses prefixes such as 'di-' and 'ter-'. The findings have pedagogical implications in grammar teaching, especially in facilitating students to overcome first language interference. The research provides suggestions for contextualised and step-by-step teaching for active and passive constructions.

Keywords: *Active Voice; Passive Voice; English; Indonesian*

Introduction

Understanding grammar is a very important aspect of learning a language, and for students, it should be a top priority. Grammar is considered a core element of meaning, because without proper use of grammar, the information, message, idea, or notion that one wants to convey to the listener may not be understood as intended. Therefore, understanding and using grammar well will help one understand how language functions as a whole.

One of the grammatical structures in English is active and passive which occurs when the object of the active sentence structure is changed to the subject of the passive sentence. The application of passive and active sentences is a primary need in writing discourse and scientific papers. However, the use of active and passive sentences by students and even writers often have difficulties. This is due to the sentence structure in English which is different from Indonesian. the problem of active and passive constructions in English and Indonesian writing stems from the differences in how each language uses these structures. According to Nurenzia & Ida, (2014), English tends to favor active sentences, where the subject performs the action. In contrast, Indonesian often prefers the passive voice, which makes it

challenging for Indonesian speakers to adjust to English writing. This leads to mistakes and sentences that may sound unnatural.

1. Importance of the Study

Active and passive contraction is not simply a grammatical change, it shows how speakers speaking different languages conceptualize and communicate agency, action, and relationships between people involved in a discourse. In English passive sentences are made with auxiliary verbs and preceding participle, where in Indonesian, passive sentences are made with affixes and some morphological changes. These structural differences affect the meaning conveyed and pragmatic decisions made by speakers in various communication context. For several reasons, understanding of active and passive constructions is crucial. First, mastery of these constructions is essential for language learners to produce natural and contextually appropriate expressions. Second, for the translator must face the complex challenge of preserving meaning while recognizing that active and passive contractions can have different discourse functions in each language. And the last, for linguistic researchers, conducting a comparison of these constructions offers a useful understanding of how different languages encode voice, agency, and information structure.

Literature Review

1. Active and Passive Voice

Active and passive sentences are two different sentence structures that are very important in the context of language learning both in English and Indonesian. These two sentences have different functions and help the speaker or writer convey information effectively with a different focus. The active sentence puts the focus on the action. While the passive sentence moves the focus from the subject to the object receiving the action. According to (Hidayati and rizka,2015) that the passive voice is used to show that the subject is the recipient of the activity rather than the actor, the active voice is used to show that the subject is performing an activity and is therefore the author of that activity.

In academic and non-academic writing, active and passive sentence constructions are used for various reasons. For example, passive sentence constructions are used to perform certain discourse functions because the sentences are marked (Biber et al., 2003), or to create distance between the writer and the text, which is often seen in scientific papers (Baratta, 2009). However, in order to gain a better understanding of passive and active sentence construction, various studies on the active and passive have been conducted from various contexts. First, by (Batubara and Mahardhika 2020) with the titled *an analysis on students' difficulties in changing active to passive voice form at fourth semester students' of English department of stain Gajah putih takengon aceh..* In their research finding that students' have a fairly good in understanding passive voice form, but some of the others students' must also improve their understanding in English grammar expecially in active and passive construction. Secondly, Puspitasari with his study entitled *Comprehending Agent and Agentless Types of English Active and Passive Voice by Indonesian Learners of English"* English passive is difficult to teach and to learn; the study reveals that the difficulty confronted by second language learners of English is caused by the different instruction of their languages; meaning that first language interferes with second language. And the other previous study done by (Safarova 2023) *the dynamic of active and passive voice in English grammar.* The study aims to provide linguists, educators, and learners with deeper insights into the dynamic interplay between grammatical form and communicative function, thereby enhancing both the understanding and teaching of these fundamental concepts in English grammar.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a contrastive analysis method to examine the differences in the active and passive constructions of English and Indonesian **Creswell, J. W. (2014).** Data were collected through literature research on academic sources such as textbooks, journals, and relevant research related to the material. Analyses were conducted through the placement between grammatical structures, functions, and uses of the two constructions in several types of communication contexts. In addition, examples of active and passive sentences in both languages were compared in depth to look for similarities, differences, as well as difficulties commonly faced by learners (**Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J., 2014).** The results of the comparison are then synthesised to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges in understanding and using active and passive constructions, especially for Indonesian speakers teaching English.

Finding and Discussion

1. **Active and Passive Voice in English**

In English, the active voice is a grammatical structure where the verb expresses an action through the subject of the sentence. In this structure, the focus is on the doer of the action (the subject). Active voice sentences are generally more direct, clear, and concise, making them preferable in many types of writing. According to Radford (2020), there are four main characteristics of the passive sentence, namely; the first is that the passive sentence requires the auxiliary verb 'to be'; second, the passive sentence must be in the past tense; third, at the end of the clause ends with the word 'by' which functions the same as the subject role in the active sentence; and the fourth is complement.

2. **Usage of Active and Passive Voice in English**

The literature on linguistics has covered the usage of active and passive voice in English grammar in great detail. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), voice describes the interaction between a sentence's subject and verb. The subject of an active voice phrase carries out the verb's specified activity. Sentences in the passive voice, on the other hand, give the action to the subject. For instance: Active voice: "The storm damaged many houses". The passive voice: "many houses were damaged by the storm". The difference between active and passive in the doer of the action. In the active voice, the doer (the storm) comes before the verb (damaged). In the passive voice, the receiver of the action (many houses) comes before the verb (were damaged) and the doer (the storm) follows as a prepositional phrase (by the storm).

2. **Common Issue of Active and Passive in English**

Batubara and Mahardika (2020) discovered that the three main challenges students faced while switching from active to passive sentences were: figuring out the subject, utilizing the auxiliary verb be, and using the past participle in passive sentences. They struggle mainly with the past continuous form, which they find difficult to comprehend due to the use of tools (dictionaries).

A. **Active and Passive Construction in Indonesian**

1. **Active and Passive Voice in Indonesian**

In Indonesian, active sentences can be formed into passive sentences by changing the object to active and this causes changes in predicate verbs that begin with me- to di-. Passive sentences in Indonesian have characteristics that reflect a focus on the recipient of the action, not the perpetrator. The

use of the prefixes **"di-"** and **"ter-"**, the position of the subject as the recipient of the action, as well as the possibility of omitting the perpetrator. In Indonesian, active sentences place emphasis on the subject performing the action. The structure of an active sentence adheres to the following general pattern: subject + predicate + object in Indonesia namely SPOK (Subjek, predikat, objek, and keterangan), where the predicate is typically an active verb often preceded by "me-". Active sentences are employed with greater frequency due to their direct and clear nature, which facilitates comprehension in everyday communication.

2. Usage of Active and Passive Voice in Indonesia

The use of voice system in Indonesia that differs significantly from English. In active voice constructions, the language primarily relies on the prefix me- and its variations (mem-, men-, meng-). For example, "Saya membaca buku" (I read a book) or "Dia mengirim surat" (He/she sends a letter), using the active voice where the subject performs the action directly on the object. Meanwhile, the passive construction occurs at the beginning of the verb (adding the prefix "di-" or "ter-"), without altering the base form of the verb and the adversative ke-an. The di-passive, considered the most formal passive construction. It is formed by adding the prefix di- to the verb base, optionally followed by suffix -kan or -i. for example, buku itu dibaca" in English "the book was read". The te-passive, formed by adding the prefix ter- to the verb base, often indicates either an unplanned occorence or a resultant state. Example. pintu itu terbuka" in English "the door come/got open". a distinctive feature of Indonesian is the ke-an passive construction. This form, created by adding the circumfix ke-an to the verb base, is commonly used to express situation where the subject is adversely afficted by circumtances beyond their control. Example of this construction "dia kehujanan" in English "he/she got caught in the rain".

3. Common Issue of Active and Passive in Indonesian

In active sentences, both Indonesian and English have the same rules in converting active sentences to passive, namely the subject in the active sentence becomes the object in the passive sentence and the object in the active sentence becomes the subject in the passive sentence. Students have no difficulty in learning Indonesian passive sentences because there is no time change like in English passive sentences when making sentences. However, Indonesian passive sentences have the affixes di, ke-, and ter-. The learners have some difficulties in learning English passive voice because they must learn different verbs in passive sentence. Verbs of passive sentence have many tenses, so that is why the learners have to know the kinds of tenses and the use of those tenses.

B. Comparison between English and Indonesian

In English, the active construction follows a **subject-verb-object** pattern, where the subject performs a direct action on the object. For example, "The cat chased the mouse." Meanwhile, the passive construction in English reverses this order, placing the object at the beginning of the sentence and using the "to be" form followed by the past participle of the verb (**to be** + **past participle**), as in "The mouse was chased by the cat." If the active senstence uses modal auxiliary verb, the passive form become **S + modal auxiliary + be + past participle.** For example: active "she will write the letter tomorrow" in passive "the letter will be written by him tomorrow". The structure of passive voice is according to 16 tense. On the other hand, Indonesian also recognizes active construction with a similar pattern, for example, "Kucing itu mengejar tikus" (The cat chased the mouse). However, for passive construction, Indonesian uses the prefix "di-" on the verb, as in the sentence "Tikus itu dikejar oleh kucing" (The mouse was chased by the cat). The main difference lies in the way passive sentences are formed, where English uses a more complex structure with "to be" and the past participle, while Indonesian relies on changes to the verb by adding the prefix "di-".

C. Solution and Pedagogical Implication

1. For language learners, mastering active and passive constructions requires a step-by-step approach tailored to their native language background. In Indonesian should start with the basic 'di-' passive form before moving to the personal passive, as this progression allows them to grasp the fundamental difference in structure. In English need to focus first on understanding the auxiliary verb system, particularly the various forms of "to be" combined with past participles, which doesn't exist in their native language.

2. For teachers recognizing the importance of context in voice choice is essential for teaching grammar effectively. teachers should emphasize the communicative purpose of active and passive voice, moving beyond the mere form to the function and rationale behind their use. This approach aligns with contemporary pedagogical theories that advocate for context-based grammar.

Conclusion

Construction Active and passive structures are very important in the structure of Indonesian and English; each has a different function and purpose. Both languages use these constructions differently, showing their cultural and linguistic traits. While passive constructions are usually used in formal or scientific contexts, active constructions are usually used in English for clarity and assertiveness. However, in everyday conversation, Indonesian uses passive constructions which are often used as a way to express politeness. Their grammatical structure and the way they are used are different. While Indonesian uses the prefix "di-" on verbs, English uses "to be" and the past participle to create passive sentences. In terms of emphasis, formality, and cultural nuances, the use of these constructions in both languages is different. While each construction has its advantages, they also have problems. In English, the use of passive constructions can make sentences unclear or too formal, while in Indonesian, incorrect use can obscure meaning or weaken the message. For foreign language learners, an understanding of active and passive constructions, as well as the context in which they are used, is essential for language acquisition. Second language learners and speakers must consider the social and cultural context when using these constructions. They can express themselves more accurately, politely and according to the context of communication.

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