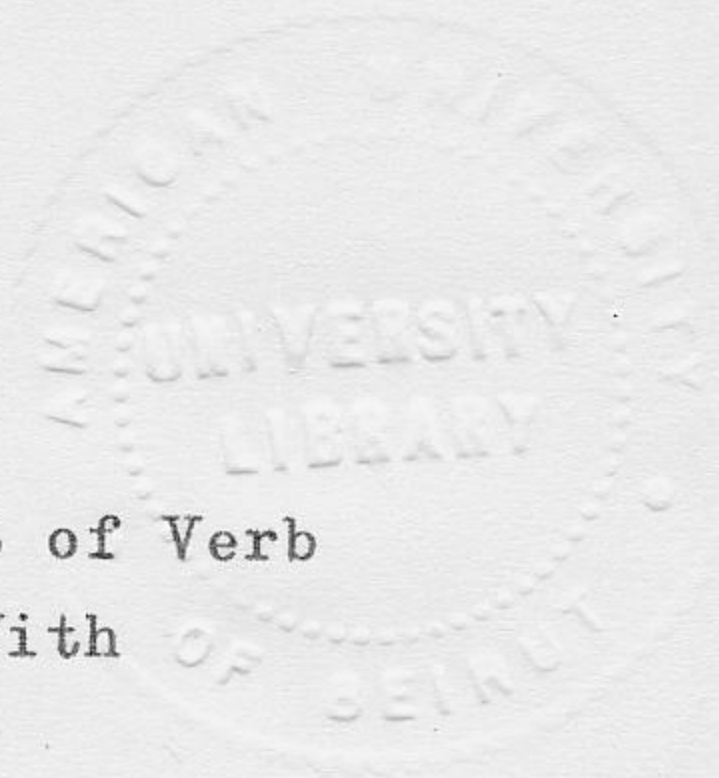


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The Passive Voice: A Frequency Count of Verb
Tenses In Modern Written English With
Pedagogical Implications

By

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A Thesis

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my dear mother who was my first teacher of English, to my dear father who struggled hard for my schooling, and to Amal with my deepest love and affection.

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I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness and gratitude to Dr. Daniel Cook, the chairman of this thesis committee, for his guidance and invaluable help.

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ABSTRACT

Most grammar textbooks for students of English as a foreign language give definite rules for converting active sentences into passive ones. This causes teachers of English to overload their students with many rules for converting transitive verb tenses from the active into the passive. However, the application of these rules does not always agree with actual usage. Moreover, there are some passive verb tenses such as the passive future perfect and the progressive perfect forms which are rarely used in written or spoken English. The writer, therefore, finds that it is a waste of time and effort to teach the students such infrequent passive forms.

The purpose of this study is to make a frequency count of passive verb tenses in modern literary and journalistic English in order to suggest proper emphasis on the most frequent passive verb forms and the elimination of infrequent ones from grammar textbooks and teaching programmes for students of English as a foreign language.

The writer selected two plays, two novels, and two journals - respectively one British and one American - as a representative sample of modern British and American English.

He then recorded all instances of the passive occurring in his sample and made the necessary statistical operations.

The first chapter of this thesis states the nature and objectives of the study, its significance, limitations and methodology. The second chapter gives a brief review of the literature and the historical background of the study. The third chapter attempts to set criteria for classifying passive sentences and discriminating them from other similar structures. Thus, the third chapter explains the various approaches to the passive - how do the traditionalists, the structuralists, and the transformationalists view the passive and deal with it? On the basis of the criteria presented in chapter three, passive sentences were counted and statistically analysed. The fourth chapter reports the findings of this study. The results show that passive simple verb tenses are the most frequent in the count. The fifth chapter utilizes the collected data and the findings of this study to suggest proper emphasis on the simple present and the simple past. Certain conclusions are drawn as regards the elimination of infrequent passive verb tenses and where to place other passive verb forms in the English language courses of students of English as a foreign language.

The writer hopes that more studies on the same line of this thesis will follow. Then a general service list of

verb forms will be available for English language students
and teachers.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY, ITS PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem

The passive voice is inadequately taught in our schools. This is probably due to the fact that most grammar textbooks give definite rules for transforming active sentences into passive ones. This causes teachers of English to overload their students with many rules for transforming transitive verb tenses from the active into the passive. For instance, the Harbrace College Handbook gives eighteen passive conjugations of the verb "to see" in the indicative mood only.¹ As a matter of fact, the application of these rules does not always agree with actual usage. There are some verb tenses which are rarely used in written or spoken English. For example, the passive future perfect tense is seldom found in modern written English. Therefore, it is a waste of time and effort to teach students a pattern such as, "we shall have been seen" because they will seldom come across it or use it.

Grammar textbooks which are used in the Arab World are no exception. The writer has examined four texts which are in

¹John C. Hodges, Harbrace College Handbook (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 18.

current use in various Arab countries and commented on the approach adopted in dealing with the passive voice. These books are:

W. Stannard Allen, Living English Structure (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952).

Cyril Miller, A Grammar of Modern English For Foreign Students (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952).

S. Pit Corder, An Intermediate English Practice Book (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1960).

C.W.E. Addington, Introductory English Grammar For High Schools (Beirut: Khayats, 1964).

There are certain points which are worth mentioning as regards the approach to the passive voice in these textbooks:

1. Most grammarians believe that any sentence whose finite verb is transitive can be expressed in two ways - either in the active or in the passive. Jespersen says, "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."² Roberts believes that any active base string with a transitive verb can be transformed into the passive. "The passive transformation applies to all (and only) base strings with Vt's."³ These

²Otto Jespersen, Essentials of English Grammar (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933), p. 120.

³Paul Roberts, English Syntax (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 187.

interpretations of the passive are logically false because not all the active sentences with transitive verbs can yield acceptable English sentences when they are transformed into the passive. Although the agnate passive transforms of some active sentences are grammatically correct, they do not seem to be accepted by the native speaker of English as regards their meaning and semantic reference. Many sentences seem ridiculous when they are transformed into the passive voice. For instance, let us look at the following sentences from an English textbook: Exercise 45⁴

Give the passive construction of the following:

I will lend you ten shillings.

Did you tell him everything?

I know where you lost it.

All people think the same.

Who are you thinking of?

He put on his hat.

Such sentences lead the students astray and make the process of learning the passive difficult and ineffective. These sentences do not provide the students with a contextual frame which helps them in understanding and using the passive in a

⁴Cyril Miller, A Grammar of Modern English For Foreign Students (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1960), pp. 161-162.

way that is actually used by native speakers of English. Sentences such as those of exercise 45 and similar ones should be eliminated from English grammars and textbooks.

2. The four grammar textbooks give examples and exercises of almost all verb tenses to be transformed into the passive. Allen presents four or five verb tenses in one single exercise—simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect—mixing statements with interrogatives and negatives. Here are some of the examples which are copied exactly from Allen's book: Exercise 243.⁵

Turn the following sentences into the passive voice:

People always admire this picture.

They fought a big battle here two hundred years ago.

Somebody has invited you to lunch tomorrow.

People will forget it in a few years' time.

Did anyone ask any questions about me?

You must write the answers on one side of the paper only.

People mustn't take these books away.

They punished me for something I didn't do.

What have people done about this?

Has somebody done all the work?

⁵W. Stannard Allen, Living English Structure (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952), pp. 275-276.

Corder's presentation of the passive is not much better than Allen's. The following examples are directly taken from Corder's book: Exercise No. 22.⁶

Change these sentences into a passive form as in the examples given. The words in italics will be the subjects of the passive sentences:

You cannot expect children to understand these problems.

They announced the arrival of the next plane over the loudspeakers.

People have expressed hopes that the government will act.

Did you grow these vegetables in your own garden?

You should have checked this exercise before you handed it in.

Pedagogically speaking, each exercise should be centered around one specific point, for instance, conversion from simple present active into simple present passive. "'One step at a time' may be the crude basic principle of grading ...⁷ Grammar textbook writers and teachers of English must not introduce to the students two difficulties at the same time. "If it is desirable not to present two difficulties at the same time, except when there is a special reason for doing so, how much more desirable

⁶S. Pit Corder, An Intermediate English Practice Book (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1960), p. 24.

⁷W.R. Lee "Grading," English Language Teaching, Vol. XVII (July, 1963), p. 177.

it is not to present two types of difficulty."⁸ In other words, each exercise must concentrate on a single verb tense, either in the affirmative or in the negative, while teaching the passive. This will facilitate learning and help the students in understanding the passive verb tenses.

3. The exercises in the textbooks under study are not graded except for a few exercises in Addington's book. They are not presented in a logical way. That is, there is no hierarchy of presentation: from the easy to the difficult.

4. Most of the exercises do not represent the actual speech habits of native speakers of English, so that they cause misunderstanding rather than understanding. Many of the sentences in each exercise are too long and complicated to be used for teaching purposes. Here are some examples taken from Allen's and Corder's textbooks respectively:

Exercise 246.⁹

Put the following sentences into the passive voice:

When women have crossed you in love as many times as they have him, you can truly say (that) bad luck has dogged you. (Three passives).

Nobody would have stared at him if they had told him

⁸Ibid.

⁹Allen, p. 283.

beforehand what clothes one had to wear in such a place. (Three passives).

Exercise No. 25.¹⁰

Change these sentences into the passive in the same way:

Now that someone has pointed out my mistakes to me, I hope to do better.

Be careful what you say, as they will take down all your words.

Such instances and similar ones are mere intellectual exercises meant to sharpen the mind rather than to teach new language habits.

5. In the four grammar textbooks there is no specific emphasis on the most frequent patterns of the passive. Nearly all the verb tenses are given equal emphasis when they are being presented in the textbooks and taught by the teachers.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to make a frequency count of passive verb tenses in modern literary and journalistic English in order to throw more light on the use of the passive voice and to know where to place the various passive verb tenses in a grammar textbook or a teaching programme for students of English as a foreign language. More specifically, the purposes

¹⁰Corder, p. 27.

of this study are:

1. To find out the frequency and percentages of the verb tenses which are used in the passive voice in modern literary and journalistic British and American English.
2. To find out the frequency and percentage of passive sentences where the actor is suppressed in modern literary and journalistic English.
3. To find out the frequency and percentage of the passive sentences where the actor is not suppressed, i.e., is expressed in an adverbial adjunct (by+actor)
4. To draw some conclusions regarding the priority of some passive verb tenses in teaching and the elimination of infrequent ones.

Method of Research:

Having surveyed the literature relevant to this study and stated the historical background in Chapter II, the writer has selected the following books and journals as a representative sample of modern British and American English:

1. Virginia Woolf, The Waves (London: Hogarth, 1931).
A British Novel. Number of pages: 325.
2. William Faulkner, The Sound And Fury (New York: Random House, 1952).
An American Novel. Number of pages: 314.

3. John Osborne, Look Back in Anger (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).

A British Play. Number of pages: 96.

4. Eugene O'Neil, Long Day's Journey into Night (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956).

An American Play. Number of pages: 156.

5. The Sunday Times, March 13, 1966. No. 7451.

A British Weekly Journal. Number of pages: 64.

6. Time: The Weekly News Magazine, March 13, 1966, Vol. 87, No. 11.

An American Magazine. Number of pages: 80.

The data of this study is selected on the basis of the following criteria:¹¹

1. To represent British and American contemporary English as manifested in two novels, two plays, and two journals - one British and one American respectively.

2. To represent a diversity of prose diction and the various stylistic levels of creative English writing and expository prose. Hence, each pair in the sample has its own stylistic features. Woolf's novel represents the poetic and figurative prose. Faulkner's novel in its unique style provides a variety of prose diction - the descriptive, symbolic and imaginative writing

¹¹The sample of this study was approved by Dr. David Curnow, the former chairman of the English Department, and by Dr. Raja T. Nasr, the former Director of the Centre for English Language Research and Teaching, American University of Beirut.

including the conversational parts of the novel which represent the southern American English dialect. The two plays are supposed to be representative of spoken English. The two journals are an example of modern British and American English expository prose.

The writer has recorded all the passive instances occurring in his sample as defined by the criteria in Chapter III which deals with the nature of the passive voice and expounds the viewpoints of the traditionalists, the structuralists, and the transformationalists.

Consequently, the writer has classified the passive instances and interpreted the results of this study in Chapter IV.

Limitations of The Study:

Some of the passive instances of The Sound and Fury represent the Southern American English dialect. All such instances occurring anywhere in the sample were counted and classified as standard English.

The serious problem which faced the writer was to distinguish between adjectives which have the form of past participles themselves in passive sentences. For instance, in the following sentence:

The door is closed

we may regard "closed" as either an adjective or a past participle

because we can add the "by phrase" freely to this sentence; then it reads, "The door is closed by John."

However, the writer has tried, in Chapter III, to overcome this problem by using various tests and setting an operational definition to distinguish between adjectives and past participles.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The traditional approach to language teaching has been affected by the prevailing theories about the nature of language in general and grammar in particular. The conservative attitude of the public had caused the fixing of teaching methods as regards grammar. Grammar was regarded as an absolute set of rules which are not breakable or subject to change. "Coupled with the notion that the body of grammatical knowledge is complete and definitive has been the belief that there exists an absolute standard of correctness."¹ Hence prescriptivism in grammar textbooks was the dominant feature of the English curricula in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and even in the early decades of the twentieth century.

However, the early decades of the twentieth century witnessed a revolution in grammar and grammatical analysis. This was due to the attempt to apply what were considered to be scientific methods to the study of language.

The National Council of Teachers of English has advocated

¹H.A. Gleason, Jr., Linguistics and English Grammar (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 8.

the descriptive approach to collecting, analyzing and interpreting linguistic phenomena. The leading members of the National Council have been active in developing new linguistically oriented materials for the purposes of teaching English. Besides, there have been many linguists who have worked either alone or in collaboration with linguistic societies to develop descriptive grammars of the English language.

Three varieties of language study are worth mentioning here because they may form part of the historical background of this study. These are: "Word Counts," "The Survey of Errors," and "The Usage Movement."

The making of "Word Counts" began in the second decade of the twentieth century. The rationale behind vocabulary selection is that the most frequent items are more useful than infrequent ones for the purposes of teaching. The aim of this endeavor is to control the vocabulary which is used in textbooks. The pioneers of this movement were Thorndike, Dewey, and Horn. Thorndike's Teachers' Word Book was published in 1921, Dewey's Relative Frequency of English Speech Sounds in 1923, and Horn's Basic Writing Vocabulary in 1926. In 1936 the Carnegie Corporation published the results of a project for considering the problem of vocabulary selection in the teaching of English as a foreign language under the title The Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection. This report was republished in a revised and enlarged

edition in 1953 under the title A General Service List of English Words.

A second kind of study the "Survey of Errors," became popular in the twenties and the thirties. The focus was centered on specific grammatical problems which were especially difficult for the students and on certain items which were commonly misused. Mistakes in children's writing were collected and interpreted statistically in order to help textbook writers and classroom teachers in placing proper emphasis on the most frequent mistakes. Hence came what was to be known as "functional grammar" designed to help in eliminating errors from the writings of students. This kind of study paved the way for "The Usage Movement."

The Usage Movement was primarily concerned with recording the actual usage of native speakers of English. The leaders of this movement accepted the key principles of descriptive linguistics. Some of these can be summarized as follows:²

1. A language is a structural system.
2. The facts of a language can be objectively described and then statistically interpreted.
3. Speech is primary; writing is secondary. The graphic symbols are imperfect representations of the spoken

²Jean Malmstorm, "Linguistic Atlas Findings Versus Textbook Pronouncements on Current American Usage," Readings In Applied Linguistics, ed. Harold B. Allen (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), pp. 316-317.

language. These symbols can not indicate the supra-segmental patterns of a language.

Although speech is regarded as the primary source of data for linguistic analysis, it has been found very difficult to record the actual speech of native speakers in informal situations. Due to the lack of experienced field workers in linguistic research, most linguists have shifted their attention to examining large quantities of printed text in order to test the validity of preselected grammatical rules. The observable facts of usage have been regarded as norms on the basis of which the grammaticality of any item can be judged as established or unestablished. The linguistic study of usage has led to the recognition of various levels of language, such as formal and informal written and spoken English. However, these levels are not considered as absolute categories. The classification of language into various levels depends on the social, cultural, and geographical environments of the native speakers of English.

The leaders of the usage movement adopted different research techniques in conducting their usage studies. Among the earliest studies was that of Sterling A. Leonard. His book, Current English Usage, published in 1932, laid the foundations of the movement. Leonard states the purpose of his study as follows: "This study was an attempt to find out what various judges have observed about the actual use or non-use by cultivated persons of a large number of expressions usually condemned

in English textbooks and classes."³ Leonard's study, as a matter of fact, does not deal primarily with usage but with opinions about the usage of certain disputable and questionable expressions. Exactly 230 items were submitted to 229 judges. They were asked to rate the items as: formally correct English, fully accepted English for informal conversation, popular or illiterate speech. One hundred and seven of the items were generally agreed upon by the judges as established usages. The remainder were marked as disputable because the judges had disagreed about them.

A.H. Marchwardt and E.G. Walcott conducted a study to supplement that of Leonard. They examined the same 230 items and compared the findings of Leonard with recorded usage gathered in the great dictionaries and scholarly grammars. The main sources of evidence were: The Oxford English Dictionary, the second edition of Webster's New International Dictionary, and the fuller grammars of Jespersen and Curme. The results of this investigation supported the results of Leonard's study in many cases. On the other hand, in certain cases the difference between Leonard's results and actual recorded usage was sharp.

³Albert H. Marckwardt and Fred G. Walcott, Facts About Current English Usage (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938), p. 2.

The findings of Marckwardt and Walcott were published in 1938. Their book, Facts About Current English Usage, met a great deal of criticism by the conservative grammarians. However, it was welcomed in professional circles. Both studies have contributed significantly in changing the dogmatic attitudes of some teachers of English. Furthermore, they affected grammar textbooks and the popular notions about language in general. One of these major contributions, as stated by Leonard is:

In the first place, grammar is seen to be not something final and static but merely the organized description or codification of the actual speech habits of educated men. If these habits change, grammar itself changes, and textbooks must follow suit. To preserve in our textbooks requirements no longer followed by the best current speakers is not grammatical but ungrammatical. It makes of grammar not a science but a dogma.⁴

Some school textbooks followed suit and many grammatical details were modified or changed. The National Council of Teachers of English was active in disseminating the findings of usage studies through its publications. It also financed and encouraged other usage studies. Charles Fries was asked by the Council to conduct a study to determine what grammatical material should be included in school textbooks. His research was different from all other usage studies. Fries' study was based on letters addressed to the War Department in 1914-1916.

⁴Ibid., pp. 133-134.

These letters were written by ordinary Americans of various backgrounds. Fries recorded whatever he found in the letters as regards grammar and usage, related them to the social and educational level of the writers, and interpreted his results statistically. He published his book, American English Grammar, in 1940.

Since Fries had recorded significant grammatical facts found in his sample of both standard and vulgar English, it would be of great help for the purpose of this study to report his findings about the passive voice or the "second construction" as it is called by him.

The passive of the function word "be + past participle" was found more frequent in standard English than in vulgar English: 712 in the former against 117 in the latter.⁵

The perfect tenses of the form "have + been + past participle" were shown less frequent than simple passive verb tenses. Only 88 instances appeared in standard English against 16 in vulgar English.⁶

Only 15 passive instances appeared in the progressive form in standard English letters as against none in vulgar English letters.⁷

⁵Charles Carpenter Fries, American English Grammar (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1940), Table XXVII, p.192.

⁶Ibid., Table XXVIII, p. 195.

⁷Ibid., Table XXVI, p. 186.

As regards the infinitive (the to-infinitive depending upon a main verb in passive form, as "I was directed to return") 24 instances appeared in Standard English whereas only 7 instances appeared in Vulgar English.⁸

Only ten instances of the form "get + past participle" were found in the sample, three of which are from standard English and seven from Vulgar English.⁹

No single instance of the following forms was found:¹⁰

have + been + being + past participle

had + been + being + past participle

Fries pointed out that many items which were being taught in schools should be omitted because teaching them is a waste of time. "From the point of view of grammar many items appeared with considerable frequency and furnish sufficient evidence from which to conclude that many matters to which our teaching now gives time can be safely omitted from our programs."¹¹

Usage studies have continued since Fries' grammar, but in a new perspective. Most researchers have begun to examine

⁸Ibid., Table XIV, p. 144.

⁹Fries, p. 193.

¹⁰Ibid., Table XXVIII, p. 195.

¹¹Ibid., p. 291.

large quantities of text in search of preselected grammatical details. They have counted the occurrence of certain grammatical items to find out their frequency. Margaret Bryant has collected and summarized most of these studies in her book, Current American Usage. This book furnishes the reader with recent information about debatable points of usage. "It presents the dependable evidence - not only that from the various scholarly dictionaries, from the treatises of linguists, and from articles in magazines featuring English usage, but also that from some 900 fresh investigations undertaken especially for use in this book."¹²

Three studies of the passive voice are reported by Bryant.¹³ One, a study of the New York Times, found that the passive was used 13% of the time, the active 87%. The second, a study of The Harvard Business Review, showed only 8% of the instances in the passive against 92% in the active. The third, a study of a variety of material, showed, among other things, that the passive occurred 4.8% of the time in advertising, 1.8% in short stories and 9% in a novel. The results of the three studies showed that the passive voice is more frequent in expository prose than in narrative writing. It occurs about 10% of

¹²Margaret M. Bryant, Current American Usage (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, Inc., n.d.), p. XIX.

¹³Ibid., p. 160.

the time in the former against less than 2% in the latter.¹⁴

The writer believes that the present study has a direct bearing on this tradition of frequency counting which aims at determining usage. It is a usage study in the sense that it tries to give a statistical description of passive verb tenses based on actual written usage. In order to count passive sentences, it is necessary to define the passive and discriminate it from other similar constructions. We will examine briefly in the next chapter how traditional, structural, and transformational grammarians define and handle the passive.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 159.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF THE PASSIVE VOICE

Since there is still uncertainty on how passive sentences should be analysed and classified, the writer feels that it is imperative to give a brief sketch of the approach of traditional, structural, and transformational grammarians to the passive. How do they define the passive? How do they deal with it?

The Traditional Approach:

H. Sweet, one of the leading traditional grammarians, speaks about the nature of the passive voice as follows: "The passive voice is ... a grammatical device for (a) bringing the object of a transitive verb into prominence by making it the subject of the sentence, and (b) getting rid of the necessity of naming the subject of a transitive verb."¹ O. Jespersen holds the same view about the passive. "We use the active or passive turn² according as we shift our point of view from one to the other of the primaries contained in the sentence."³ "As a rule the person or thing that is the center of interest at the moment

¹H. Sweet, A New English Grammar, Part I (London: Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 113.

²Jespersen prefers the word "turn" to "voice" because of the ambiguity and confusion which may be caused by the latter.

³O. Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1951), p. 167.

is made the subject of the sentences and therefore the verb must in some cases be put in the active, in others in the passive."⁴ Ralph B. Long, a contemporary traditional grammarian, has the same point of view about the passive. "The use of passive-voice forms ordinarily indicates an awareness that the basic direction of predication has been reversed, and a feeling that responsibility for what is predicated is assignable to someone or something distinct from the subject."⁵ These three definitions are based on meaning and semantic inferences rather than on formal and structural criteria.

Some writers do not accept such interpretations of the passive voice. They believe that shifting the object of an active sentence to a subject of a passive sentence does not imply any prominence or emphasis because the normal word order in the English language is subject - predicate. For example, Mihailović says: "The shift of the object which has post-verbal position in an active verbal phrase, to the position of subject in a passive verbal phrase is not a device for giving prominence to the object of the active verb."⁶ In her

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ralph B. Long, The Sentence And Its Parts (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 115-116.

⁶L. Mihailović, "Some observations on the Use of The Passive Voice," English Language Teaching, Vol. XVII (January, 1963), pp. 78-79.

opinion the syntactic and semantic requirements which determine the use of the passive in preference to the active are:⁷

1. To get rid of the active subject which adds no significant information to the sentence.

2. The desire for objectivity of attitude. However, sometimes the agent is indispensable because it adds significant information to the passive sentence. Mihailović cites the following examples.⁸

(41) Unworthy motives actuated him. He was actuated
by unworthy motives.
but not (42) * He was actuated.

(43) On his death his daughter succeeded him. On
his death he was succeeded by his daughter.
but not (44) * On his death he was succeeded.

(45) Shakespeare wrote this sonnet. This sonnet
was written by Shakespeare.
but not (46) * This sonnet was written.

In such cases where the agent is not deleted at will, Mihailović considers the choice of the passive construction as a device for giving prominence to the subject of the active verb because when the actor is shifted to final position, primary stress falls on it.⁹

⁷Ibid., p. 81.

⁸L. Mihailović, "The Agent in the Passive Construction," English Language Teaching, Vol. XX (January, 1966), p. 126.

⁹Mihailović, "Some Observations ..." p. 81.

As regards the formation of the passive, Sweet states: "In English the passive is formed by combining the finite forms of the auxiliary verb to be with the preterite participle of the verb." There is no mention in Sweet's book of other passives with get and become.

Jespersen says that the English passive is formed with an auxiliary, generally be, but often also get or become and the past participle. He gives five reasons for the use of the passive rather than the active. These are:¹¹

1. When the active subject is unknown or cannot be easily stated.
2. When the active subject is self-evident from the context.
3. There may be a special reason (tact or delicacy of sentiment) for not mentioning the active subject, thus the mention of the first person is often avoided, in writing more frequently than in speaking.
4. When the active subject is retained ("converted subject") the passive is generally preferred because of the greater interest in the passive than in the active subject.
5. Or the passive may facilitate the connexion of one sentence with another.

¹⁰Sweet, p. 112.

¹¹Otto Jespersen, Essential of English Grammar (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933), pp. 120-121.

According to Jespersen, if an active sentence has two objects, only one of them can be made the subject of a single passive sentence. He indicates that there is a tendency nowadays to make the indirect object the subject of a passive sentence rather than the direct object.

Moreover, Jespersen speaks of a passive of being and that of becoming as, "he is admired" and "when is he to be buried?" The following sentence is also cited by Jespersen to indicate two meanings:¹²

His bills are paid

This sentence means either "his bills are paid regularly every month" = he pays, or "his bills are paid, so he owes nothing now" = 'he has paid.' So, the first sense indicates habitual action, while the second indicates the resulting state rather than the action.

Long differentiates between notional and true passive. He gives examples of the former such as, "The bells ring at six," and "My shoes are wearing out." These sentences are active in form but passive in meaning. Moreover, what is predicated in such sentences is a state of affairs rather than actions. "Events are predicated, not actions, subjects are

¹²Ibid., pp. 252-253.

thought of not as responsible but as merely involved."¹³

Furthermore, Long tries to set a borderline between true passives and constructions that resemble passives. For instance, the following sentences are considered as identical in form with passives but are not true passives:¹⁴

John's copy is bound in leather.
The old Mormon houses are very solidly built.
Apparently the lock is broken.
Are you married?

Long regards the words "bound," "built," "broken," and "married" in the above sentences as participial - objective complements. In the four sentences the predicates are "is" and "are" and not the combination of verb "to be" + participial-adjective complements. According to Long such sentences express a state of affairs rather than present actions. Therefore, the sentence "John's copy is bound in leather" is not a reversal of "The publisher binds John's copy in leather."

As regards the combinations of the verb "get" + past participle, Long considers their resemblance to true passives as something superficial. He prefers to regard "get" as a full predicator which expresses attainment or arrival. However, Phrasings with "get" as a full predicator are more preferable than combinations of verb "to be + past participle" in such instances

¹³Long, p. 119.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 121-122.

where it is difficult to distinguish the latter from combinations of the full predicator "be" and participial-adjective complements.

Long cites the following example to prove his viewpoint:

Thus 'he was married a year ago' can mean either (1) someone authorized to perform the ceremony did so a year ago, or (2) he was in possession of a wife a year ago, having gone through the ceremony, before that time. 'He got married a year ago' is unambiguous: It can mean only that he arrived at the married state a year ago.

It seems from these discussions of the passive voice and the points of view about its nature, formation, and usefulness that meaning rather than form is the key principle of all the interpretations. This leads us to another school of grammar which emphasises form, namely, the structural approach.

The Structural Approach:

The structuralists emphasize form rather than meaning in their grammatical analysis of a language. According to the structuralists, there are two kinds of meaning: the lexical meaning of single words and the structural meaning. Meaning is always signalled by form, and there are four major devices of form which signal structural meanings:¹⁵

¹⁵W. Nelson Francis, "Revolution in Grammar," Readings in Applied English Linguistics, ed. Harold B. Allen (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), p. 78.

1. Word-order-the sequence in which words and word-groups are arranged.
2. Function words-words devoid of lexical meaning which indicate relationships among the meaningful words with which they appear.
3. Inflections - alterations in the forms of words themselves to signal change in meaning and relationship.
4. Formal contrasts - contrasts in the forms of words signaling differences in function and meaning.

These devices can be described and analysed objectively without resorting to implied meanings and semantic inferences.

The structuralists assume that there is a limited number of basic sentences and the longer ones are mere expansions of the former. Each sentence is structured into successive components which consist of groups of words and of single words. The syntactic relations between the components of the sentence can be revealed by the process of IC (immediate constituents) cuts. The first cut divides the sentence into two parts and then each part is divided into two more until indivisible units are reached.

Using the IC technique, some of the structuralists set up frames for the passive sentences. For instance, Archibald A. Hill says that passive verb phrases fit into the following frame:¹⁶

¹⁶Archibald A. Hill, Introduction to Linguistic Structures: From Sound to Sentence in English (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), p. 211.

John _____ by Mary.

In this frame, only phrases such as, 'is scolded,' 'was scolded,' 'gets scolded,' 'get scolded,' will fill the blank.

However, the various semantic differences of 'by' have caused the structuralists serious problems. The following example is cited by R.H. Robins:¹⁷

	1939
The war was started by	Germany

Although 'by' has two different meanings, the two sentences yield the same immediate constituent analysis. But one is a passive transform of "Germany started the war;" the other of "Somebody started the war by 1939." Thus they are profoundly different but the difference is not shown by IC analysis.

Hill observes that in order to discriminate between 'be + past participle' and 'be + adjectival participle,' we must give priority to the test of expandability by 'very' which marks adjectives. He cites the following examples:¹⁸

He is tired of it.
He is spanked by his father.

¹⁷R.H. Robins, General Linguistics: An Introductory Survey (London: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd., 1964), p. 243.

¹⁸Hill, p. 203.

In the first sentence 'tired' is an adjective because we can precede it by 'very'. In the second sentence 'spanked' is a past participle because it is not expandable by adding 'very'. In 'He is tired of it,' Hill says that 'has' may be substituted for is, producing an active sentence with 'tired' as a past participle, yet we must decide that 'tired' is an adjective after 'is.' However, Hill admits that making decisions on this problem belongs to the analysis of complete sentences rather than verb phrases.

Such problems which have faced the structuralists in dealing with the passive voice and many other problems of grammatical analysis have paved the way to a better handling of the passive, namely, the transformational approach.

The Transformational Approach:

The transformationalists are concerned mainly with describing a general formal theory of grammar. In other words, they want to describe a grammar which can generate all the grammatical sentences of any given language and no ungrammatical ones.¹⁹ Moreover, the transformationalists aim at developing a criterion and providing a procedure for evaluating

¹⁹Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures ('S - Gravenhage, Mouton and Co., 1957), p. 13

grammars to determine which one offers the best description of a particular language.

Since transformational grammar is still undergoing change and it is still in the process of developing the theory of grammar, the following sketch of the transformational approach will not cover its latest theoretical developments. This description will be limited to the earlier notations of Chomsky as used in his Syntactic Structures, 1957, and to the interpretations of transformational theory as expounded by Bach in his An Introduction to Transformational Grammars, 1964. More specifically, the following sketch will be based on the pedagogical applications of transformational grammar as contained in Roberts' English Syntax, 1964, and Thomas' Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English, 1965.

The basic premise of the transformationalists is that there are two kinds of sentences: kernel sentences and transforms. Kernel sentences are limited and basic in a language while transforms are all the sentences and structures which are derived from the kernel sentences. A kernel sentence is simple, declarative, active, with no complex verb or complex noun phrase, i.e. no modified verbs or nouns.

A kernel sentence consists of two main parts: a noun

phrase and a verb phrase. Using symbols we may say:²⁰

$$S \longrightarrow NP + VP$$

According to the transformationalists, a model grammar has the following shape:²¹

- A. Base Rules
 - 1. Phrase-Structure Rules
 - 2. Lexicon
- B. Transformational Rules
- C. Morphographemic Rules

Phrase-structure rules are used to generate the deep structure of the sentence. We keep on in our application of these rules until we get a terminal string. Transformational rules are applied to produce non-kernel strings such as passives, negatives and interrogatives. Then we substitute words from the lexicon for the symbols in the terminal string. The function of morphographemic rules is to combine the various morphemes of the derived string into the form of written words.

For the purposes of this study, the writer wants to deal with the part of transformational grammar relating to the passive voice.

The passive transformation is optional in transformational grammar. It may apply to all base strings with

²⁰S = sentence
 = 'rewrite as' or 'consists of'
 → NP = noun phrase
 VP = verb phrase

²¹Owen Thomas, Transformational Grammar and The Teacher of English (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 59.

transitive verbs. This transformation does not apply to any of the following verb types:

VI → intransitive verbs: laugh, wait, remain ...
 VS → seem, look, taste
 Vh → have, cost, weigh

To derive a passive string, we need a kernel string which contains the following elements.²²

NP₁ → a first noun phrase
 Aux → an auxiliary
 Vt → a transitive verb: eat, see, write ...
 NP₂ → a second noun phrase

These elements might be represented in a formula:

NP₁ + Aux + Vt + NP₂, e.g.:
 The girl + pas + eat + the apple
 The girl ate the apple.

We may add another element from the Aux and we get:²³

NP₁ + pres + have + en + Vt + NP₂
 The girl has eaten the apple.

These two examples are active strings. To transform either of the sentences into the passive, we apply the passive transformational rule (TR).

The passive transformation operates in four steps:
 structural description:

²² Aux → tense + (M) + (aspect)
 tense → (present) = (Pres)
 → (past) = (Pas)
 M → can, may, shall, will, must
 aspect → (have + part) + (be + ing)

²³ en = the past participle morpheme.

$NP_1 + Aux + Vt + NP_2$

1. $NP_2 + NP_1 + Aux + Vt$

It moves the direct object (NP_2) into the position of the subject (NP_1).

2. $NP_2 + Aux + Vt + by + NP_1$

It replaces the direct object with the combination of 'by + the subject'.

3. $NP_2 + Aux + be + en + Vt + by + NP_1$

It introduces 'be + en' after the auxiliary and before the main verb.

4. Optionally, we may delete the combination of 'by + the subject' and we get:

$NP_2 + Aux + be + en + Vt$

Besides these steps and in the process of transforming active sentences into their agnate passives there are some obligatory transformational rules which should be applied to generate the surface structure of the passive sentence. These rules are:²⁴

²⁴ \longrightarrow The double arrow indicates that the rule is a TR and not a PS (phrase structure) rule,
 NP_s = Noun phrase singular,
 NP_p = Noun phrase plural,
 Z_1 = Agreement morpheme (third person singular),
 \emptyset_1 = Agreement morpheme (null).
 Af = any tense, participle, or 'ing'
 V = any modal, 'have', 'be', or verb
 The Af -transformation is obligatory and applies after all other transformations.

$$\begin{array}{lcl}
 \text{NP}_s + \text{Pres} & \Longrightarrow & \text{NP}_s + \text{Z}_1 \\
 \text{NP}_p + \text{Pres} & \Longrightarrow & \text{NP}_p + \emptyset_1 \\
 \text{Af} + \text{V} & \Longrightarrow & \text{V} + \text{Af}
 \end{array}$$

If we apply the passive TR to any kernel sentence with a Vt we will get a passive sentence. Here are some examples to illustrate the passive transformation:

1. The girl ate the apple
 $\text{NP}_1 + \text{Aux} + \text{Vt} + \text{NP}_2$

To derive a passive string from this kernel we proceed in steps:

- a. The apple + the girl + Pas + eat
- b. The apple + Pas + eat + by + the girl
- c. The apple + Pas + be + en + eat + by + the girl

We apply the affix transformation, then we get the passive string:

- The apple was eaten by the girl.
- d. We may delete 'by + the girl' and the sentence becomes:

The apple was eaten.

Here is another example to show how the passive transformation applies to a verb phrase that contains an auxiliary element:

2. The girl has eaten the apple.
 $\text{NP}_1 + \text{Pres} + \text{have} + \text{en} + \text{Vt} + \text{NP}_2$

To transform this kernel into the passive, again we proceed in steps:

- a. the apple + the girl + Pres + have + en + eat
- b. the apple + Pres + have + en + eat + by + the girl
- c. the apple + Pres + have + en + be + en + eat + by + the girl

After applying the affix and agreement transformations and the relevant morphographemic rules, we have:

The apple has been eaten by the girl.

d. We may delete the combination of 'by + the girl' and this would give:

The apple has been eaten.

So far, the passive transformation might be stated as follows:

$$NP_1 + Aux + Vt + NP_2 \implies NP_2 + Aux + be + en + Vt + (by + NP_1)$$

3. The passive transformation can apply to either the indirect object (I.O.) or the direct object (D.O.). Thus, from an active string such as: 'The teacher gave a book to the pupil', we can produce the following passives:

- a. A book was given to the pupil by the teacher.
- b. A book was given to the pupil.
- c. The pupil was given a book by the teacher.
- d. The pupil was given a book.

However, before the indirect object can become available for the passive transformation it must undergo a transformation which puts it in the object position, where it loses its function marker (the preposition 'to') e.g.:

- a. The teacher gave a book to the pupil.
- b. The teacher gave the pupil a book.
- c. The pupil was given a book (by the teacher).

The rule for this transformation might be stated as follows:

$$NP_{agent} + Aux + Vt + NP_{goal} + to NP_{I.O.} \implies NP_{agent} + Aux + Vt + NP_{I.O.} + NP_{goal}.$$

How do transformationalists discriminate between 'be + past participle' and 'be + adjectival participle'?

In fact, the transformationalists have been investigating this problem, among other things, for several years, but they have not been able to find formal properties and relations to define their classes and to set a borderline between two overlapping grammatical categories. They have used (-er) and (-est) as markers of adjectives. Then they found that this definition of adjectives is circular in the sense that it defines the meanings of positive, comparative, and superlative on the basis of 'adjective' and 'adjective on the basis of these meanings. "Hence, others attempt to avoid these difficulties by recourse to the notion of distribution The distribution of any given form is the class of environments in which the form occurs. Environment means whatever is left when we extract the form from the sequence ..." ²⁵. However, distribution was also found to be inadequate as a basis for marking adjectives.

Chomsky, in his reformation of the phrase structure grammar for English, gives the following rule: ²⁶

²⁵Emmon Bach, An Introduction to Transformational Grammars (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 152.

²⁶Noam Chomsky, "A Transformational Approach to Syntax," The Structure of Language: Readings in The Philosophy of Language, eds. Jerry A. Fodor, Jerrold A. Katz (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 225.

9. Adj \longrightarrow very + Adj

However, a restriction on the phrase structure rules of English in general and on rule number 9 in particular is footnoted: "Obviously, this sketch is not intended to be definitive. It is just an example of what a part of English phrase structure grammar might look like. This grammar is to be used to generate sentences in the manner described in Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*, Appendices 1, 2. That is, the rules are to be applied in the order given, each rule is applied an arbitrary number of times before going on to the next - this comment applies significantly only to 9, in the present case".²⁷ This footnote indicates Chomsky's awareness that rule 9 does not apply to all adjectives. Therefore, 'very' cannot be generalized as a test of adjectives.

Thus, the word-sharing characteristic of various grammatical categories is not readily solvable without resorting to contextual and semantic inferences.

Some Debatable Points in the Transformational Approach:

1. The transformationalists depend heavily in many cases, among other things, on the passive TR in testing the grammaticality of certain sentences. They assume that every passive

²⁷Ibid., p. 224.

string has an underlying active kernel string. But there are many passive sentences which have no active equivalents. Here are some transforms which have no underlying agnate kernels:²⁸

He was born in Germany.

The only acceptable active string which can be cited as agnate to this passive sentence is:

His mother gave birth to him in Germany.

Here is another activeless example:²⁹

We are not supposed to smoke here.

The transformationalists classify these instances and similar ones as pseudopassives. They are trying to account for pseudopassivization by formulating new rules and by altering their earlier notations.

2. The transformationalists have also faced the problem of transitive/intransitive overlapping of English verbs. There are many verbs that have both transitive and intransitive forms such as: ring, blow, eat, and sing. Such verbs can occur with or without an object:³⁰

²⁸Werner Winter, "Transforms Without Kernels?," *Language*, Vol. XLI, No. 3 (1965), p. 488.

²⁹L. Mihailović, "Passive and Pseudopassive Verbal Groups in English," *English Studies*, Vol. XLVIII (1967), p. 326.

³⁰F.R. Palmer, *A Linguistic Study of The English Verb* (London: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd., 1965), p. 68.

They rang the bell.
 The bell rang.
 The bell was rung (by them).

3. Finally, the transformationalists state that the adverbial adjunct (by + actor) is an optional element in the passive TR. It has been shown earlier in this chapter (p.24) that the combination of (by + actor) is not deletable in certain contexts. Sometimes, it is obligatory to retain the adverbial adjunct in order not to distort the meaning of the passive sentence.

It would seem from the previous discussion in this chapter that the passive is not a mere transposition of the active and active and passive sentences are not interchangeable. These conclusions about the passive raise the following question: What are the semantic, psycholinguistic, and stylistic factors which condition the use of the passive rather than the active? As long as this question is not answered, hair-splitting will never stop among linguists. Unless the passive is thoroughly investigated, no formal linguistic theory can pretend to be exhaustive. A formal theory of English grammar must have answers to all the questions which are raised and might rise in the process of analysing the grammatical structure of passive sentences.

Evaluation and Criteria:

It is obvious from the foregoing discussion in this chapter that linguists have not agreed yet on a formal criterion which can be used to discriminate between 'be + past participle' and 'be + adjectival participle'. The following sentences show the ambiguity of the two homonymous verbal groups:

The glass was broken.
The glass was broken by John.

While the traditionalists resort to meaning - which can no longer be depended on in formal analysis of sentence structure - to discriminate between these two sentences, the structuralists and the transformationalists use 'very' and other intensifiers as markers of adjectives. However, there are many adjectival participles which could not be preceded by 'very' and this consequently would distort the testability of 'very' as a formal marker of adjectives. Here are some examples:

We can say:

- A. He was very irritated.
- He was very annoyed.
- He was very astonished.
- He was very confused.

By contrast, we can not say:

- B.* The glass was very broken.
- * The door was very closed.
- * They were very married.
- * The child was very lost in the woods.

Since 'very' is not such a good test of the adjectivality of participles, the writer is inclined to regard the verbal groups in "A" and "B" as combinations of 'be + past participle' on the basis of the following formal criteria:

1. All the so-called adjectival participles in groups "A" and "B" and similar ones have the past participle morpheme (-en) suffixed to them. Hence, the adjectival participles can function also as the past participle of a finite verb:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
A.	irritate annoy astonish confuse	irritated annoyed astonished confused	irritated annoyed astonished confused
B.	break close marry lose	broke closed married lost	broken closed married lost

Therefore, adjectival participles have more affiliation to the class of past participles rather than to the class of adjectives.

2. The adverbial adjunct (by + actor) which mark passive strings can be added freely to the sentences of both group "A" and "B":

- A. He was irritated (by my remark).
 He was annoyed (by my answer).
 He was astonished (by her indifference).
 He was confused (by the lecture).
- B. The glass was broken (by John).
 The door was closed (by Mary).
 They were married (by the Rev. Paul).
 The child was lost in the woods (by his mother).

3. The 'be' element of the verbal groups in "A" and "B" is substitutable by 'got' which then turns the sentences into passives:

- A. He got irritated.
He got annoyed.
He got astonished.
He got confused.
- B. The glass got broken.
The door got closed.
They got married.
The child got lost in the woods.

However, the final clue discriminating between the two homonymous verbal groups 'be + past participle' and 'be + adjectival participle' is to be found in their context. Discourse analysis of long sentences and paragraphs gives contextual clues which can help in classifying passive sentences and discriminating them from similar ones. Here are some examples taken from the count to show the importance of context as an indispensable criterion for classifying passive instances:

The Sunday Times, p. 37, Cols. 3 and 4.

The "ideal" and the "Gro-Thro" plant supports are based on similar principles.

Both are made of galvanised non-rust wire ...

As shown in the drawing the support is fixed above the plant ...

... on the stakes which are driven securely into the ground.

... as the plants grow through the wires and are held firmly in place.

... and some of the finest borders I know are staked entirely in this manner.

The stakes are looped at the top ...

They are divided into compartments and area ideal for plants in rows.

The life of the legs can be prolonged if the threaded top is inverted in light oil.

Discourse analysis of the article from which these sentences are culled indicates that the underlined verbal groups are passives. The writer of the article is describing actions rather than a state of affairs. He is trying to tell people how they can grow plants in their houses. He uses an objective style, an air of impersonality which he achieves by the use of the passive voice. In other words, the writer is interested in the way of growing plants and not in the actors who are going to utilize the advocated principles.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Notes on Recording The Passive Instances:

On the basis of the criteria presented in Chapter III and in the process of reading the sample data of this count, the writer underlined the following forms of the passive as identified by context, if any of them occurred:

1. (am, is, are) + past participle.
2. (was, were) + past participle.
3. (am, is, are) + being + past participle.
4. (was, were) + being + past participle.
5. (have, has) + been + past participle.
6. (had + been + past participle.
7. (have, has, had) + been + being + past participle.
8. (shall, will) + be + past participle.
9. (shall, will) + be + being + past participle.
10. (shall, will) + have + been + past participle.
11. (shall, will) + have + been + being + past participle.
12. to + be + past participle.
13. (am, is, are, was, were) + to + be + past participle.
14. (have, has, had) + to + be + past participle.
15. (may, might, can, could, must, should, would) + be + past participle.

16. (may, might, can, could, must, should, would) + have + been + past participle.
17. be + past participle.
18. (get, got) + past participle.
19. (become, became) + past participle.

Each passive instance was recorded on a separate card with all the information about the source from which it was taken.

Passive participles and gerundials were not included in this study. Besides, the study was limited to "real" or "actual" passives. Thus, "notional" or "false" passive was not taken into account; for instance, such sentences as "The shop closes at nine," were not recorded at all. The writer did not record the passive instances in the prefaces and introductions to novels and plays because he was here after literary and expository prose. Alternatively, since the writer was after what is supposed to be the spoken language in the plays, so introductory notes to the acts and stage directions were overlooked. The advertisements in the journals were also not marked. The issue of Time magazine had a supplement which was also not included in this research.

Having typed all the passive instances which were found in the sample, the writer made the following statistical operations:

- A. He classified the instances into two categories:
1. Passive sentences where the actor is suppressed.
 2. Passive sentences where the actor is expressed in an adverbial adjunct (by + actor).
- B. The percentages of these categories were calculated.
- C. Then all the instances were reclassified on the basis of verb forms with actor suppressed or with actor expressed.
- D. The percentages of the various verb tenses were calculated.

The classification of the instances into categories with respect to the presence or absence of the actor is meant to investigate statistically whether the combination of (by + actor) is deleted at will, as the transformationalists say, or it is an indispensable element in certain contexts.

Reporting the Results

The results of this study revealed that simple passive verb tenses were the most frequent (66.20%) in a frequency count of passive verb tenses in modern literary and journalistic English. Passive perfect verb tenses occurred infrequently in the data of this study (10.26%). Modals and infinitives had about equal ranking in their frequency, 10% of the former as against 9.45% of the latter. Imperative passives showed a low frequency 1.94%. Passives with 'get' and 'become' had the lowest frequency. Table I shows the number of passive verb forms and their percentages:

Table I

Frequency of Passive Verb Forms

Verb Form	No.	%
Simple Verb Tenses	1736	66.20
Perfect Verb Tenses	270	10.26
Modals	262	10.00
Infinitives	248	9.45
Imperatives	51	1.94
Get, Got	48	1.85
Become, Became	8	0.30
Total	2623	100.00

The results showed that most of the passive instances occurred with actor suppressed rather than with actor expressed. Only 372 instances out of 2623 occurred with actor expressed. Table II shows the percentages.

Table II

Frequency of Passive Sentences as Regards
The Agent

Type of Sentence	No.	%
Actor Suppressed	2251	85.82
Actor Expressed	372	14.18
Total	2623	100.00

There is no great difference between these percentages and Jespersen's results. He reported: "over 70 per cent of passive sentences found in English literature contain no mention of the active subject."¹ Mihailovic reported similar results, "In L. Strachey's Queen Victoria, out of a total number of some 860 finite passive verbal phrases, 710 are passive utterances where the actor is suppressed and 150 are utterances where the actor is indicated in the adverbial adjunct."²

Simple verb tenses had the highest frequency with actor expressed: 259 instances out of 372. Table III shows the frequency of passive verb forms in relation to the presence of the actor.

Table III

Frequency of Passive Verb Forms as Regards
The Agent

Verb Form	Actor Suppressed		Actor Expressed	
	No.	%	No.	%
Simple Verb Tenses	1477	65.64	259	69.62
Perfect Verb Tenses	222	9.85	48	12.90
Modals	236	10.50	26	7.00
Infinitives	214	9.50	34	9.12
Imperatives	47	2.08	4	1.07
Get, Got	47	2.08	1	0.29
Become, Became	8	0.35	-	-
Total	2251	100.00	372	100.00

¹Jespersen, *The Philosophy ...*, p. 121.

²Mihailovic, "Some Observations ...", p. 81.

Further statistical analysis of simple verb tenses revealed that the simple present had the highest frequency, 855 instances. The simple past had the second rank in the count, 731 instances. Only 103 instances were found in the simple future. Simple continuous verb tenses, on the other hand, had the lowest frequency: 38 in the simple present continuous as against 9 in the simple past continuous. No single instance was found in the simple future continuous. Simple verb tenses occurred six times more than the perfect tenses. Only 270 instances of the latter were found in the sample: 174 in the present perfect as against 96 in the past perfect. Table IV reveals the distribution of simple and perfect verb tenses.

Table IV

Distribution of Simple and Perfect Verb
Tenses

Tense Form	No.	%
Simple Present	855	42.62
Simple Past	731	36.45
Simple Future	103	5.15
Simple Present Continuous	38	1.90
Simple Past Continuous	9	0.40
Present Perfect	174	8.70
Past Perfect	96	4.78
Total	2006	100.00

No instances of the future perfect and the progressive perfect tenses were found in the count.

Table V gives more details about the data of Table IV as regards the presence of the actor. Table V indicates that the simple present and the simple past have the highest frequency with actor expressed.

Table V

Frequency of Simple and Perfect Verb
Tenses as Regards The Agent

Tense Form	Actor Suppressed		Actor Expressed	
	No.	%	No.	%
Simple Present	736	43.31	119	38.76
Simple Past	615	36.20	116	37.68
Simple Future	88	5.18	15	4.90
Simple Present Continuous	31	1.82	7	2.30
Simple Past Continuous	7	0.41	2	0.66
Present Perfect	146	8.60	28	9.15
Past Perfect	76	4.48	20	6.55
Total	1699	100.00	307	100.00

Modals and infinitives had about equal number of instances: 262 of the former as against 248 of the latter. 'Can' had the highest frequency among the modals 74 whereas 'may' had the lowest 10. Table VI shows the distribution of the modals in relation to the presence of the agent.

Table VI

The Distribution of The Modals as
Regards The Agent

Type of Modal	Actor Suppressed		Actor Expressed	
	No.	%	No.	%
Can + be + p.p.	65	27.55	9	34.60
Could + be + p.p.	24	10.17	4	15.38
Could + have + been + p.p.	9	3.80	2	7.70
Must + be + p.p.	29	12.30	2	7.70
Must + have + been + p.p.	2	0.85	-	-
Should + be + p.p.	33	14.00	2	7.70
Would + be + p.p.	48	20.30	2	7.70
Should + have + been + p.p.	2	0.85	-	-
Would + have + been + p.p.	2	0.85	-	-
May + be + p.p.	8	3.40	2	7.70
Might + be + p.p.	12	5.08	3	11.52
Might + have + been + p.p.	2	0.85	-	-
Total	236	100.00	26	100.00

Table VI shows that perfect modals are very rare either with actor suppressed or with actor expressed. 'Should' and 'would' have about equal occurrence.

Concerning infinitives, 214 instances were found with actor suppressed as against 34 with actor expressed. The simple form of infinitive (to + be + past participle) had the highest number of instances in contrast with other forms of

infinitives: 111 with actor suppressed and 25 with actor expressed. Infinitives preceded by the various forms of verb "to be" had the second rank of frequency: 44 with actor suppressed and 5 with actor expressed. Table VII shows the frequency of the various forms of infinitives as regards the agent.

Table VII

Frequency of The Various Forms of
Infinitives as Regards The Agent

Type of Infinitive	Actor Suppressed		Actor Expressed	
	No.	%	No.	%
to + be + p.p.	111	51.90	25	73.53
to + have + been + p.p.	11	5.15	1	2.95
(am, is, are, was, were)+ to + be + p.p.	44	20.55	5	14.70
(have, has, had)+ to + be +p.p.	28	13.00	3	8.82
(would, might)+ have + to + be+ p.p.	14	6.55	-	-
ought + to + be + p.p.	6	2.85	-	-
Total	214	100.00	34	100.00

Imperatives of the form 'be + past participle' have about equal occurrence as the form 'get + past participle': 51 instances of the former as against 48 of the latter. Only

4 instances of the imperative form occurred with actor expressed as against one instance of the 'get' form. 'Become + past participle' had the lowest occurrence among the other passive forms, 8 instances only.

CHAPTER V

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS

The findings of this study have their most obvious application in showing which passive verb forms require persistent attention, and which can be omitted from early courses. The pedagogical implications of the results depend, among other things, on the following principles: "Since the items occurring the most frequently are those which the learner is most likely to meet, they are the ones selected for teaching. Moreover, since frequent items are more readily recognized than infrequent ones, fluency in a language depends on the frequency of what is taught."¹

The count showed that the simple present was the most frequent tense and the simple past had the second rank. These two tenses should therefore be presented before all other passive forms in early courses of teaching English as a foreign language. The simple present and the simple past may be introduced for the first time in the second year preparatory. The simple future, simple present continuous may

¹William Francis Mackey, Language Teaching Analysis (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1965), p. 177.

be postponed to a later stage because they have a low frequency in the count. The simple future may be presented in the third year preparatory, and the simple present continuous and the simple past continuous in the first year secondary. The simple future continuous may be omitted completely from the preparatory and secondary² stages because no single instance occurred in the count.

Of the passive perfect tenses, only two verb tenses appeared with a substantial frequency: the present perfect and the past perfect. They must be presented in the third year secondary. On the other hand, the passive future perfect, present perfect continuous and past perfect continuous should be omitted from preparatory and secondary school English courses because no single instance of the former verb forms occurred in the count.

'Can + be + past participle' as an example of the modals may be introduced in the first year of a secondary English course whereas the other forms of modals such as, (could, must, may, might, should, would) + be + past participle may be presented in the second year secondary. Modals of the form 'could + have + been + past participle' may be omitted

²The words 'preparatory' and 'secondary' refer to the educational system in Syria where English is first taught in the first year of a preparatory stage and not in the elementary stage.

from preparatory and secondary school courses.

Infinitives come after modals in frequency. The simple form of infinitive, 'to + be + past participle' is the most frequent in contrast with other forms of infinitive. So, it is advisable to introduce the simple infinitive in the first year secondary. All other forms of infinitive may be omitted from preparatory and secondary school English curricula because such forms have a low frequency in the count.

Although 'get' passives are infrequent, they must be introduced in the third year of a preparatory English course because most of these instances occurred in the plays rather than in the novels or the journals. In other words, the 'get' passives seem to be used in spoken English more than in written English. It would be helpful to teach students the difference between 'get + past participle' and 'verb to be + past participle'.

Imperative passives are infrequent in the count. Thus, they may be omitted from the grammar textbooks of preparatory and secondary schools.

In general, the findings of this study may be used as a guide for English curriculum planners and grammar textbooks writers as where to place the various passive verb forms in preparatory and secondary school English courses.

Moreover, the results of this count may help the writers of simplified and abridged stories to select the passive verb forms and structures in preparing outside reading English books for the various grades.

The findings of this study may be included in inventories and indexes to act as a reference for English language students and teachers.

Although most of the instances which were found in the count appeared with actor suppressed, it is preferable, as a first stage, to introduce the passive instances with actor expressed because the adverbial adjunct 'by + actor' will help the students to understand the meaning of passive. Then, as a second stage, the teacher of English may present to his students sentences with actor suppressed.

However, teachers of English ought to present the passive verb forms orally using individual and unison drills in the classroom. In the light of the structural approach, teachers of English may prepare substitution drills and question-answer drills which will help the students in mastering the passive voice. These drills should be based on contexts and situations suited to the age and background of the learner. When the passive is mastered orally by the students, teachers of English should prepare written exercises to be practised by the students in order to reinforce the oral drills.

The transformational approach, on the other hand, would be of a great help to teachers of English in explaining the concept of the passive voice. Conversion drills which are based on the transformational approach will assist the students to get a clear idea about the passive, its nature and usefulness.

To sum up, here are two Tables which are meant to give a bird's-eye view of the most frequent passive verb forms and the educational level at which they should be presented; and the infrequent verb forms which should be eliminated from preparatory and secondary school courses and textbooks.

Table VIII

The Most Frequent Passive Verb Forms and The Educational Level at which They Should be Presented

Passive Verb Forms	Educational Level
Simple Present	Second Year Preparatory
Simple Past	Second Year Preparatory
Simple Future	Third Year Preparatory
Simple Present Continuous	First Year Secondary
Simple Past Continuous	First Year Secondary
Present Perfect	Third Year Secondary
Past Perfect	Third Year Secondary
can + be + past participle	First Year Secondary
(could, must, may, might, should, would) + be + past participle	Second Year Secondary
to + be + past participle	First Year Secondary
(get, got) + past participle	Third Year Preparatory

Table IX

Passive Verb Forms Which Should be Eliminated
From Preparatory and Secondary School
Courses and Textbooks

Passive Verb Forms

Simple Future Continuous

Present Perfect Continuous

Past Perfect Continuous

Future Perfect

Future Perfect Continuous

Modal + have + been + past participle

(am, is, are, was, were)+ to + be + past participle

(have, has, had)+ to + be + past participle

be + past participle (Imperative)

(become, became)+ past participle

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