

**(Analyzing Passive Sentences through Semantic Role Analysis)**

**SKRIPSI**

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## **Abstract**

Farizka Humolungo (2013): "Analyzing Passive Sentences through Semantic Role Analysis"

This research objectives are: providing a source of information for the new linguists or young linguists to study about Semantic deep and passive construction. It is very useful for the new coming linguists to know that linguistics field of study is dynamic and undergoes changes because one language is different to other languages and that is why the common pattern may not fit to some kind of sentences. Besides, this way of analyzing may be applied by the students when they are analyzing constituent's sentence, to find out what roles mostly found in data findings, and what kind of passive sentences dominantly occurred based on two different sources.

**Keywords: semantic role (agent, experiencer, patient, benefactive, location, instrument, source, objective, theme)**

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This chapter discusses several points. They are namely: basic consideration, research question, and objective of research, significance of study and definition of term.

#### **Basic Consideration.**

Voice in English consists of two types. They are; active voice and passive voice. Active voice is a sentence or sentences where the agent is doing the action. The agent (subject/ doer) is the important constituent in active sentences for instance: *Daisy cooks rice*, while passive voice is a sentence or sentences where the agent is unimportant or not desired in the sentence. The target of the action gets promoted to the subject position. The focus of the sentence is the recipient. For example: *Amy is loved by Steve*. The subject of the sentence becomes *Amy* but she is not doing anything. Rather she just the recipient of *Steve's love*. The focus of the sentence has changed from *Steve* to *Amy* and the verbs used in passive remains action verbs. Active voice is direct and clearly states the relationship between subject and action. It also focuses the reader's attention on the agent performing the action. For example: *Steve loves Amy*. *Steve* as an agent (subject), *loves* as the predicate and *Amy* as the recipient (object).

Passive voice is not something new in English or any other languages. Unfortunately it is not well understood by some students, especially students who learn English. Based on the researcher's own experience when learned English grammar, students find it difficult to work on passive voice because they only focus on the common pattern which is to some kinds of sentences the pattern does not work. The pattern only works to simple sentences. Transferring the simple sentences to passive ones is easy to do. Unfortunately, there are some kinds of sentences that cannot be transferred using the pattern. For instance: "*Somebody will get killed*".

How to transfer this sentence into passive while, in fact, it is already a passive sentence. To some students who do not know that *get+participle* forming a passive sentence, will consider it as an active sentence and they will say *somebody* is the subject while in fact, *somebody* does not do anything. Actually, *somebody* is the patient. Therefore, this is confusing the students.

A shift to the *get-passive* appears to be one of the most active grammatical changes taking place in English (Winer and Labov, 1983, p.43) (cited in Leech, 2009, p.146). *Get-passive* is less frequently used than *be -passive* but more frequently used in spoken. Still, it is important to be understood by students of English department.

Furthermore, when a sentence is put in passive voice, it is easy to leave out the person or the thing doing the action, for example; *the door is locked*. The thing is that we do not know who locks the door. It is because the focus of the sentence is *the door is locked*. The information is only expressing that the door is locked not the person who locks the door. Unfortunately, most of the English students did not know this way of analyzing sentence. Students construct passive sentences through a common pattern.

<b>S</b> + <b>To be</b> + <b>V3</b> + <b>By</b> + <b>O</b>
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**S** is subject, **to be** is am, is, are, were, was, have/has been, **V<sup>3</sup>** is participle and **O** is object of the sentence. They only focus on the pattern. Then, when it comes to some kinds of sentences, they will find that it is confusing.

Language is not mathematic. One language is different from other languages. We cannot just transfer an active sentence to a passive one using the pattern because one language is different from one another. Sometimes, when students translate a sentence, they will fit the target language to their language like when they are translating a sentence or sentences from Indonesian language to English language they will adjust their position as Indonesian language

speaker not as English speaker. For instance: *The trophy looks amazing*. Some of the students will think that this is an active sentence, because it has an active form but as matter of fact, it does not contain active meaning, therefore when they are translating it into Indonesia language or vice versa, they will see the verb “looks” as an active verb. As a result, they will fail to translate the sentence because actually the verb “looks” means “terlihat” not “melihat”.

However, as an English department student, it is important to know how to use passive and how to construct a passive sentence because passive is used in many fields such as politics, military writers, education and scientific writing. They use passive to avoid responsibility for action taken Winer and Labov (1983, p. 45) (cited in Leech, 2009, p.147), for example: *mistakes were made*. Placing the burden on the “*mistakes*” as opposed to “*They*” made mistakes. This kind of sentence places the focus to the object of the sentence. It is the *mistakes* rather than the one who made mistakes. It is absolutely not only about the structure is important but the meaning of the sentence is too. The sentence *mistakes were made* and *they made mistakes* are definitely different semantically. Let’s take a look to the situation where the sentence might be spoken. It is for example happening in a court where the judge announces that something wrong happens but the judge does not mention who did it in order to avoid accusing somebody or another reason may be because the judge does not have sufficient evidence to announce the one who did it. This kind of sentence (example) is related to the theory of politeness principle. Therefore, in order to be polite and formal, passive voice is required.

Moreover, the passive voice is especially helpful and even regarded in scientific writing or laboratory reports where the agent is not desired but the process being described is more important. Peters (2004, p.411) (cited in Leech, 2009, .p156) points out the usefulness of the passive in (objective) academic writing but also mentions that ‘the Council of Biology Editors in

the US has pushed for more direct, active reporting of scientific observations since the 1960s, encouraging their members to counter the ingrained habit of using passive verbs.

For instance; instead of saying *"I poured 20 cc of acid in to the beaker"* it will be better if we say *"20 cc of acid was poured in to the beaker"*. The reason of removing the agent is because the main thing they want to expound is the process of doing the research not who did the research. The information being stated is definitely more important than explaining who did it.

It can be concluded that people use passive voice to obtain good effect in a paragraph in which they wish to shift emphasis from what was the object in an active sentence to what becomes the subject in passive sentence. However, what is being focused on both active or passive is the same point. In order to find out how to analyze a passive sentence, there are several ways to use.

For instance, sentence (active or passive) can be analyzed through its constituents. To arrange a good sentence, we need to consider the proposition. Proposition is very important in sentence. There are several ways to analyze sentences (Aarts, 2001, p. 8):

1. Function discusses the subject, predicate, object (direct and indirect object), and adjunct.
2. Category discusses the noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, or part of speech
3. Role discusses the agent, patient, locative, instrument, benefactive, source, theme, etc.

Sentence is mostly analyzed through its function and category. For instance:

1. a). Janice gives the cake to Joe

Janice	Gives	the cake	to Joe
Subject/ pronoun	Predicate/verb	Direct object/ noun	Ind. Object/ Noun

2. b). The cake is given to Joe by Janice

The cake	is given	to Joe	by Janice
Direct object/ noun	Predicate /verb	Ind. Object/ noun	Subject/ pronoun

Based on the two sentences, there can be seen the difference. In sentence (1a) the subject occurs first then followed by predicate. The subject acts as the doer, while in sentence (1b), the direct object occurs first then followed by other functions. At first it seems easy or common. Therefore, there is no big problem about this sentence.

In fact, there are some types of sentence that need to be analyzed by its roles. Function and category to some kinds of sentence are just not sufficient to explain each constituent. In this following sentence, we cannot just analyze this sentence by its function and category. For example:

3. c).The man was killed with a gun.

The man	was killed	with a gun
Direct object	Predicate	Adjunct

**There is no subject in the sentence.** It is semantically an instrument. **Subject means the doer or someone who does something.** While in the sentence, **there is no doer.** We normally use *by* to introduce the agent or subject where in active sentence it takes the object position, but a gun is not the doer. The gun did not kill the man. He was killed by somebody with a gun. In active sentence, it will be: *Somebody killed the man with a gun.* (a gun is semantically an instrument). *Somebody* is the agent. If we only use functions to analyze the sentence, it will be difficult to determine "*with a gun*" means, because we cannot call it a subject. *A gun* did not do anything to *the man*.

Then, when the sentence is analyzed by using the semantic role analysis, it will be:

The man	was killed	with a gun
Patient	Verb	Instrument

This way of analyzing sentence is using the theory of Charles J. Fillmore about *Case Grammar*. Case Grammar was first introduced by Fillmore in his book "*The case for case*" in 1968 (Chaer, 2003). This theory was the modified theory of Generative Grammar by Chomsky in 1965 in his book "*Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*". Fillmore introduced case grammar into Semantic deep (Tarigan, 1968). In another word, the theory of case grammar discussed the cases or semantic role in analyzing a sentence structure in this case is each constituent.

The theory of case grammar gives each constituent a semantic role which he called *case*.

For example:

*John opened the door with the key*

*John* is the doer or semantically agentive, *opened* is the verb, *door* is the object, and *key* is the instrument. Or

Jhon	Opened	the door	with the key
Agentive	Verb	objective	instrument

Or

The door	was opened	by John	with the key
Objective	Verb	agentive	instrument

Or

With the key	the door	was opened	(by John)
Instrument	Objective	Verb	Agentive



This theory gives a better way of understanding and analyzing the role of each constituent. Therefore, function is not sufficient to be used to analyze the sentence. This is very important to be understood by teachers, students also translators that there is another rule that we need to consider in constructing a passive sentence not only by using the Phrase Structure Rule which is sometimes complicated and hard to be understood by the students.

In order to produce a good English sentence where as the English student is necessary because English is their field of study, we, the teachers must pay more attention to the way of delivering the theory, in this case is constructing passive sentences, in order for the students to well-gained the information that they could use to improve their Writing and Speaking skill not only by using the old common pattern. This new way of constructing sentences is something light and easy but never been used in teaching language especially in State University of Gorontalo. Therefore, the writer chooses this topic to be the research.

Meanwhile, the research on passive voice has been largely studied by many researchers. For instance; A research by Nida Rani was about an analysis of students grammatical errors in constructing passive voice (2008), also, Masbagik in 2005 studied about students ability in constructing passive sentences at SMA Muhammadiyah. However, this research is a little bit different from those previous studies. This research is introducing another way of analyzing and constructing passive sentences that seems easier to do. Besides, this research also wants to find out what roles mostly occur in passive sentences and which kind of passive mostly found in the data based on two different sources.

### **Research Question.**

It seems to the writer that in learning English, students' difficulties lie first in

identification of each constituent's role. Either in their input or output, students usually rush out to adopt the common pattern, therefore based on the previous explanation of the way sentences are analyzed or identified or even constructed. The writer is interested in analyzing the sentences especially passive sentences through semantic role (semantic deep). Therefore the formulated research questions are;

1. How is semantic role used in analyzing passive sentences?
2. What roles are mostly appeared in research findings?
3. What kind of passive voice is dominantly found in two different sources?

### **Objective of Research.**

As a student of English department, the writer finds difficulties in constructing passive voice. When the writer studied about constructing sentences especially passive sentences, the writer got confused to form a passive sentence. It happened because the writer only focused on constructing the sentence using the common pattern as mentioned before rather than finding what is the topic of the sentence. It is important to be well- understood by students who take English department as their major that learning passive is not always about the pattern. For some sentences cannot be analyzed through the common pattern.

Also for the translators, it is very important to well- gained the information as it is very useful for those who are translating sentences or even important documents. Besides, this might help students producing good writings. As a result, the students of English department will be confident to construct sentences especially passive sentences. Also, to introduce the new linguists that, this theory could be applied in the learning and teaching process as it could help them to determine the role of each constituent to make it clearer rather than focusing on the pattern.

Furthermore, as the university students, learning to speak English, to write in English are important but somehow it is just not sufficient. As the student of university, the first high level of education, the students are required to be able to write or to translate scientifically and formally. Therefore this research aims at helping students to be familiar with some types of sentences especially passive because we will deal with passive voice when we write a formal letter or scientific writing.

The next research objectives are to find out what roles are mostly found in data findings and what kind of passive sentences frequently occurred based on the two different sources (book: English for Academic Purposes, magazine: Insider's Guide 20112)

### **Significance of Research.**

Theoretically, this research aims to introduce students or the new linguists about semantic role. It therefore can be a reference or a source of information for the next research related with passive construction.

Practically, the result of this research could be a guideline for the students especially for the freshmen in order to know in advance how to analyze or construct a passive sentence. Besides, this could help them to form a sentence or sentences to be more scientific and formal.

As any other linguistic theory, case grammar has not been expounded in the first instance as a theory of language acquisition, but it can be adapted to language situations. Yet, the problem lies in the adaptation that is to say in the modalities of the conversion of a scientific grammar into a pedagogical grammar and in the preparation of teaching materials. Here I share Allen and Corder's idea (1974, p.94):

“As teachers we should be prepared to study linguistic grammars of all types, and to select from the whatever seems to contribute from a teaching point of view, and to what Palmer calls a 'complete and homogeneous' system of presentation”

**Definition of Term.**

Here are the cases shared by Fillmore which are used in this research:

- Agent is the initiator of an action, capable of acting with some volition
- Patient is the entity undergoing the effect of some action.
- Theme is the entity which is moved by an action, or whose location is described
- Goal is the end point of motion (final location, final time)
- Location is the place where an object or event located
- Time is time at which an object or event is located. Some verbs take location and time complements directly
- Benefactive is the one who benefits from an event or activity , animate
- Experiencer is accompaniment role, animate
- Instrument is the means by which an action performed or something comes about