

THE CATEGORY OF VOICE IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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Abstract. The aim of this article is a closer examination of Voice in English, that is to say, to thoroughly investigate the theme "Voice" and reveal its specific grammatical, pragmatic, stylistic, lexical and semantic peculiarities. It highlights the importance of a category which has barely received attention in the study of the English language. There is a closely connection between the category of 'Voice' and tense, because it provides important information about the internal temporal structure of situations.

Key words: active and passive voice, subject, object, diathesis, middle voice, reflexive voice, reciprocal voice, participle II.

КАТЕГОРИЯ ЗАЛОГА В АНГЛИЙСКОЙ ГРАММАТИКЕ

Аннотация. Целью данной статьи является более пристальное изучение голоса в английском языке, то есть досконально исследовать тему "Голос" и выявить ее специфические грамматические, прагматические, стилистические, лексические и семантические особенности. Это подчеркивает важность категории, которой почти не уделялось внимания при изучении английского языка. Существует замкнутая связь между категорией "Голос" и временем, поскольку она предоставляет важную информацию о внутренней временной структуре ситуаций.

Ключевые слова: активный и страдательный залог, подлежащее, объект, диатез, средний залог, возвратный залог, реципрокный залог, причастие II.

Introduction

In grammar, the voice of a verb describes the relationship between the action (or state) that the verb expresses and the participants identified by its arguments (subject, object, etc.). When the subject is the agent or doer of the action, the verb is in the active voice. When the subject is the patient, target or undergoer of the action, the verb is said to be in the passive voice. Voice is sometimes called diathesis.

In a transformation from an active-voice clause to an equivalent passive-voice construction, the subject and the direct object switch grammatical roles. The direct object gets promoted to subject, and the subject demoted to an (optional) adjunct. In the first example above, the mouse serves as the direct object in the active-voice version, but becomes the subject in the passive version. The subject of the active-voice version, the cat, becomes part of a prepositional phrase in the passive version of the sentence, and can be left out entirely.

Voice is the grammatical category of the verb which expresses an action from the subject or to it. For ex.:

1. The teacher asked the pupil.
2. The teacher was asked by the pupil.

All the words in the second sentence are the same, the difference is only in the voice of the verb. In the first sentence the action is directed from the subject to the object, while in the second

sentence the action is directed to the subject. Therefore, the category of voice shows the direction of an action from the subject or to the subject.

In Modern English there are two grammatical voices: the active voice and the passive voice. The active voice shows that the action is directed from the subject to the object and the subject itself is the doer of an action. The passive voice is used to show that the action is directed to the subject and not from it. The subject itself is not the doer of an action but is acted upon. The passive voice is not simply a parallel construction of the active voice. Very often we do not find the doer of an action in the passive constructions. This is because sometimes we do not know the doer of an action or we are not interested in it or sometimes we do not want to mention it for some reason or other.

For ex.: This folk song was composed many years ago.

This machine is operated by hand, (we are not interested by whom the action is done, we are interested in the fact that the machine is operated by hand).

The category of voice is a grammatical category, i.e. it is expressed by means of grammatical forms and not by lexical means.

Types of Voice

Generally, in English there are two primary types of voices:

1.Active voice

2.Passive voice

Active voice

The active voice of transitive verbs presents an action as directed from the subject and passing over to the object, that is from the doer (agent) of the action to its receiver.

John made a boat for his brother.

They are building a new railway.

We are talking about the new film.

One of the characteristic features of English is that verbs which were originally intransitive may function as transitive verbs without changing their morphological structure, with or without changing their lexical meaning.

They ran the distance in five minutes.

Frank will run your house.

James stood the lamp on the table.

2. The active voice of intransitive verbs shows that the action, directed from the subject, does not pass over to any object, and thus the verb only characterizes the subject as the doer of the action.

He came here yesterday.

The boy can run very fast.

You acted wisely.

He slept eight hours.

3. The form of the active voice of some transitive verbs, often accompanied by an adverbial modifier, does not indicate that the subject denotes the doer of the action. This specific use of the transitive verb is easily recognized from the meaning of the subject, which is a noun denoting a non-person, and by the absence of a direct object after a monotransitive, non-prepositional verb. In such cases the verb is used in the medial voice.

The bell rang.

The door opened.

The newspaper sells well.

The novel reads easily.

Glass breaks easily.

The place was filling up.

It said on the radio (in the article) that the weather forecast is favourable.

Passive voice

The passive voice in English may be found with different types of verbs (mostly transitive) in various verb phrases; monotransitive (non-prepositional and prepositional) and ditransitive. The subject of the passive construction may correspond to a direct, an indirect object, or to a prepositional object in the active construction. Accordingly we discriminate a direct passive construction, an indirect passive construction, and a prepositional passive construction.

Monotransitive verbs are numerous and almost all of them can form a direct passive construction. These are the verbs: to take, to do, to make, to build, to discuss, to translate, to hate, to love, to meet and a lot of others.

A new railway is being built near our town.

“A Farewell to Arms” was published in 1929.

You will be met at the station.

Phrasal transitive verbs, that is, such verbs as to blow up, to bring in, to bring up, to carry out, to put on, to see off, to turn down, etc. are also often used in the passive voice.

The plan was successfully carried out.

The boats are being brought in.

Originally intransitive verbs may form a direct passive construction, as in these examples:

This distance has never been run in five minutes before.

He thought of the lives, that had been lived here for nearly two centuries.

In the vast majority of cases, English transitive verb + object corresponds to the same type in Russian. There are a number of transitive verbs in English, however, which correspond to Russian verbs followed by an indirect or a prepositional object, or sometimes an adverbial modifier. These verbs are:

To answer, To approach, To assist, To address, To admire, To affect, To attend, To believe, To contradict, To enjoy, To enter, to follow, to help, to influence, to join, to need, to obey, to speak, to succeed, to threaten, to trust, to watch

Sentences with these verbs are rendered in Russian by means of the indefinite personal constructions with the verb in the active voice, or if the doer of the action is mentioned of a personal construction with the verb in the active voice.

We are not trusted, David, but who cares if we are not innocent.

The British bicycle was much admired.

In the spring of 1925 Hemingway was approached by two Americans

verbs in the passive voice may acquire almost all the aspect, tense and perfect forms that occur in the active voice, except for the future continuous and perfect continuous forms.

The examples below illustrate the use of the passive voice in different aspect, tense and perfect forms.

Common aspect, non-perfect

Students are examined twice a year.

They were examined in June.

They will be examined next Friday.

Continuous aspect, non-perfect

Don't be noisy! Students are being examined.

The students were being examined when the Professor came.

Common aspect, perfect

Our students have already been examined.

They had been examined by 2 o'clock.

Everybody will have been examined by 3 o'clock.

Conclusion

In this article, I have urged a clear-cut definition of morpho-syntactic patterns that should be termed, across different linguistic descriptions, as belonging to the voice. I also proposed that the voice should be reserved only for forms that are homogenous with the second-person voice: specific sentence types used for the performance of non-second-person singular directives should be called hortatives. I hope to have convinced the reader that my argument is not terminological nagging; without careful categorical delineation, important cross-linguistic differences between voice paradigms would be blurred. As far as the semantics of this sentence type goes, I have argued that potentiality is the only feature that is likely to be universal. Agency, though closely related to the illocutionary function of the voice, is likely to be a semantic feature of some, though not all, instantiations of this sentence type.