



IIT Madras
ONLINE DEGREE

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES IN PASSIVE VOICE

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- Natural languages are designed to say almost anything in any manner. Sometimes we speak about who has done what, but sometimes we also speak about what was done by whom. For instance, we know that police arrests criminals. So when we talk about the arrest of criminals, we need not say that Police have arrested the criminals. A shorter and appropriate answer is, “*Criminals have been arrested*”.

Listen to the audio:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ggUM0RWHyI6hNDIkGNf8F3SiTDgIxY6d/view?usp=sharing>

TRANSCRIPT

Renowned worldwide for its beauty and symmetry, the Taj Mahal is the most famous landmark in India. Located near the city of Agra, the Taj Mahal attracts millions of visitors each year who come to see its beauty and remember the romantic story of its origins. The Taj Mahal, its name is Persian for crown of palaces is an elaborate mausoleum or tomb. It was built more than 350 years ago by Emperor Shah Jehan as a memorial for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, who had died. Shah Jahan met his future wife when he was 15 years old and she was 14. Although they were not married until five years later in 1612. Their marriage was a happy one as the two loved each other and were good friends as well. Shah Jehan gave his wife the title Mumtaz Mahal which means chosen one of the palace and together they had 14 children. It was while giving birth to her final child in 1631 that Mumtaz Mahal died. Shah Jahan was heartbroken and decided to build a memorial for his beloved wife in Agra on the banks of the Yamuna river. Construction of the Taj Mahal began in 1632, it was an immense project. More than 20000 workers were involved and materials were transported by more than a 1000 elephants. The style of the building was inspired by Persian, Islamic and Indian architecture and the tomb was finished with huge slabs of white marble and decorated with many precious and semi-precious stones.

ANSWERS

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It was built more than 350 years ago by Emperor Shah Jehan as a memorial for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, who had died. Shah Jahan met his future wife when he was 15 years old and she was 14. **Although they were not married until five years later in 1612.** Their marriage was a happy one as the two loved each other and were good friends as well. Shah Jehan gave his wife the title Mumtaz Mahal which means chosen one of the palace and together they had 14 children. It was while giving birth to her final child in 1631 that Mumtaz Mahal died. Shah Jahan was heartbroken and decided to build a memorial for his beloved wife in Agra on the banks of the Yamuna river. Construction of the Taj Mahal began in 1632, it was an immense project. **More than 20000 workers were involved and materials were transported by more than a 1000 elephants.** The style of the building was inspired by Persian, Islamic and Indian architecture and the tomb was finished with huge slabs of white marble and decorated with many precious and semi-precious stones.

- Look at the following sentences. We do not even need to know who did them.

1)

- a. The order has been signed. Her resignation has been accepted.
- b. New academic block has been inaugurated and is being used now.
- c. Classes were suspended.
- d. Criminals were caught sooner than expected.
- e. Accident insurance is paid within weeks.
- f. Some students have been expelled from the hostel.
- g. The Taj Mahal was built in over 20 years, between 1632-53.

- h. Crops were destroyed even last year.
- i. Millions of young men have been rendered jobless.
- j. Millions of men are employed worldwide at huge costs doing nothing.
- k. They are called variously as army or defence forces.
- l. Gandhi was called by various names.
- m. He was called an army, a beggar, Bapu, Mahatma, and father of the nation.
- n. He was also called a traitor, and killed by an assassin.
- o. My wallet was stolen yesterday.

- In all of the sentences in 1. above, the doer or the cause or the agent is either well-known, or not known at all, or does not need to be known. Say, for instance. In 1.a, the governor has signed the order, and the chief minister's resignation has been accepted. In 1.b, the agent is likely to be the Director of the college or a higher authority; in 1.c. we can say "by the Dean"; in 1.d., "by police"; 1.e. "by the company". We can go on in this manner. Actually it may be a good idea for you to write this "by..." for the other sentences in the group. Some have already been done for you.

ACTIVITY 1

- For sentences given in 1. above, write the name of the possible agent. At the end of each sentence, use “by....” and after “by” write the name of the possible agent/cause/doer, etc.

ANSWERS

Activity 1:

- f. Some students have been expelled from the hostel by the warden.
- g. The Taj Mahal was built in over 20 years, between 1632-53, by Shah Jehan.
- h. Crops were destroyed even this year by floods.
- i. Millions of young men have been rendered jobless by the pandemic.
- j. Millions of men are employed worldwide at huge costs doing nothing by governments.
- k. They are called variously as army or defence forces by governments.

- l. Gandhi was called by various names by his friends and followers.
- m. He was called an army by Mountbatten, a beggar by Prime Minister Churchill, Bapu by Congressmen, Mahatma by Tagore, and father of the nation by Indian people.
- n. He was also called a traitor by some other people, and killed by an assassin.
- o. My wallet was stolen yesterday by thieves.

- Similar sentences are there in many languages. But, in English, again sentences of this kind, called **PASSIVE VOICE SENTENCES**, have a fixed structure. They are constructed only in a particular manner. If we look at their **ACTIVE VOICE**, we can soon and better understand how they are constructed. See the following sentences.

2)

- a. Tour operators provide guides on the bus.
- b. Air hostesses welcome all passengers on board before flights take off.
- c. Then hostesses give water bottles to passengers.
- d. Hostesses gave hot meals to passengers before corona pandemic,
- e. Security and Corona checks have made flying boring now.
- f. Fire is destroying vast tracts of forests in America.

- Sentences in 2. are in active voice. Agent or cause of action is at the beginning of the sentence. But passive voice is done the other way round. Here the agent comes last, victim, result, effect, etc. comes first, as follows:

3)

- a. Guides are provided on the bus by tour operators.
- b. All passengers are welcomed on board by air hostesses before flights take off.
- c. Then water bottles are given to passengers by hostesses.
- d. Hot meals were given to passengers by hostesses before corona pandemic.
- e. Flying has been made boring now by Security and Corona checks
- f. vast tracts of forests are being destroyed by fire in America.

- Rules for making passive voice sentences are given in steps as follows.

4)

- a. Subject and object switch places.
- b. Subject, or agent, or cause, is moved to the end of the verb phrase or to the end of the sentence.
- c. Object moves to the front of the sentence.
- d. Object is followed by “am/are/is/was/ were...” some tense bearing helping verb.
- e. If a helping verb is not there, then “is/am/are...” is inserted.
- f. Otherwise, “be” is inserted in a suitable form.
- g. Main verb is used in the participial, the 3rd form, like “done” for “do”.
- h. Then the rest of the sentence follows with a “by” before the subject.

5. The following examples show how these rules apply.

a) Fire destroys everything.				Changes to
Everything			fire	by 4.a, b, c
Everything	is		fire	by 4.e
Everything	is	destroyed	fire	by 4.g
Everything	is	destroyed	by fire	by 4.h

b) Fire is destroying everything		Changes to
Everything		by 4.a
Everything	fire	by 4.b, c
Everything is	fire	by 4.d.
Everything is being	fire	by 4. f.
Everything is being destroyed	fire	by 4. g.
Everything is being destroyed by	fire	by 4. h.

ACTIVITY 2

Showing steps as in 5.a and 5.b, change the following sentences into passive voice.

2)

- a. Fire can destroy anything.
- b. Fire has destroyed everything.
- c. Fire has been destroying everything.

ANSWERS

Activity 2:

a) Fire can destroy anything.			Changes to
Anything		fire	by 4.a, b, c
Anything can		fire	by 4.d
Anything can be		fire	by 4.f
Anything can be destroyed		fire	by 4.g
Anything can be destroyed by	fire		by 4.h

b) Fire has destroyed everything.

Changes to

Everything

fire

4.a, b. c

Everything has

fire

by 4.d

Everything has been

fire

by 4. f.

Everything has been destroyed

fire

by 4. g.

Everything has been destroyed

by

fire

by 4. h.

c) Fire has been destroying everything.		Changes to
Everything	fire	by 4.a, b. c
Everything has	fire	by 4.d
Everything has been being	fire	by 4. f.
Everything has been being destroyed	fire	by 4. g.
Everything has been being destroyed by fire		by 4. h.

Thank you!