**G. The Passive Voice**

**A. Introduction**

We form the passive voice with the different tenses of the verb *be* and the past participle. In this way, a transitive sentence, that is with a direct object, can be transformed into a passive one as follows:

*Tannenbaum* ***wrote*** *a book about networks.*

*A book about networks* ***was written*** *by Tannenbaum.*

*They* ***installed*** *the system successfully.*

*The system* ***was installed*** *successfully.*

In both examples, the direct object in the active sentence becomes the subject of the passive one. But, although in the first sentence we have *by* introducing the agent (the equivalent to the subject in the active sentence), in the second example, when the agent is unknown, unimportant or obvious, it is not included as it is not relevant for the exchange of information.

* + - **Verbs with two objects**

When the active verb has two objects, that is, a direct object and an indirect one, there are two possible passive constructions:

*I* ***sent*** *Chris an e-mail message. I* ***sent*** *Chris an e-mail message.*

a. *An e-mail message* ***was sent*** *to Chris.*  b.*Chris****was sent*** *an e-mail message.*

Generally speaking, it is more common to begin a passive sentence with the person, the active indirect object. The verbs that present these two possibilities are "show", "pay", "offer", "teach" and "promise". With verbs followed by a personal complement and a subordinate clause introduced by "that" or an infinitive, the only option is to use the indirect object as the passive subject:

*He* ***told*** *me that I should not come.*

*I* ***was told*** *not to come.*

*He* ***told*** *me not to come.*

*I****was told****not to come*.

* + - **Infinitives and gerunds**

These can also be in the passive:

*The mouse* ***moves*** *the cursor around the screen.*

*The mouse* ***causes*** *the cursor* ***to be moved*** *around the screen.*

*We* ***should sort out*** *the problem as soon as possible.*

*The problem* ***should be sorted out*** *as soon as possible.*

*I* ***hate*** *people* ***laughing at*** *me.*

*I* ***hate being laughed at****.*

* + - **The passive with certain verbs of opinion and communication**

When we talk about what other people say, think, believe, claim, etc, we come across two possible passive constructions:

*They* ***say*** *that this program corrects your style.*

a.*It* ***is said*** *that this program corrects your style.*

*They* ***say*** *that this program corrects your style.*

b.*This program* ***is said*** *to correct your style*.

In the second passive transformation, the subject of the that-clause *this program* has been upgraded, that is, has become the new subject of the main clause and the verb of that clause has become an infinitive: *to correct*. This infinitive will vary according to the tense of the verb in the *that*-clause:

*They* ***think*** *that this machine* ***is suffering*** *from viruses.*

*This machine* ***is thought to be suffering*** *from viruses.*

*They* ***report*** *that he committed suicide.*

*He* ***is reported to have committed*** *suicide.*

*Everybody* ***knows*** *that the company has been overspending.*

*The company* ***is known to have been overspending***.

1. **Transform the following active sentences into the passive, omit the agent if it does not seem semantically relevant.**

1. They grow a lot of coffee in Brazil.

A lot **of coffee is grown in Brazil**

2. The police are looking into the company's accounts.

The company's accounts **are being looked into.**

3. They have fired him.

He **has been fired**

4. They accused him of theft.

He **was accused of theft**

5. Somebody was interviewing the singer when I arrived.

The singer **was being interviewed when I arrived.**

6. Will they finish work on the tunnel next year?

Will work on the tunnel **be finished next year?**

7. I think they have misunderstood me.

I think **I have misunderstood**.

8 Somebody is following us.

We **are being followed**.

8. The Queen is going to open the new laboratory.

The new laboratory **is going to be opened by the Queen**

9. Somebody was shooting at us.

We **were being shot at**.

10. Did Baird invent the television?

Was **the tv invented by Baird?**

12. They have put the meeting off.

The meeting **has been put off**

13. They are completely reorganizing the company.

The company **is being completely reorganised**

14. Nobody is using the car tonight.

The car **is not being used tonight**

1. **We can also use the passive of the infinitive and the gerund. Transform the sentences below, using a passive infinitive or gerund, omit the agent.**

1. They are going to make a lot of people redundant.

A lot of people **are** **going to be made redundant**

2. The mouse allows the user to move the cursor around the screen.

The mouse allows the cursor **to be moved around the screen**

3. I hate people laughing at me.

I hate **being laughed at.**

4. This facility allows you to move whole blocks of text.

This facility allows whole blocks of text **to be moved**

5. We need to reformulate the whole problem.

The whole problem **needs to be reformulated**.

6. You'll have to rewrite the whole article.

The whole article .............................................................

7. A member of the club should sign in all visitors.

All visitors .......................................................................

8. The program allows you to control grids and blocks easily.

The program allows grids and blocks.............................

**3. A special problem is posed by the passive transformation of verbs that have two objects in the active. Although with most verbs either object can become the subject of the passive sentence, it is more usual to make the indirect object the passive subject and with some verbs this is the only possibility. Make the following active sentences passive.**

1. They gave a gold watch to Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown **was given a gold watch**

1. They warned me not to touch that button.

I **was warned not to touch that button.**

1. They have already told me the news.

I **have already been told the news.**

1. Have they asked you to go to the party?

Have you been asked to go to the party?

1. Somebody is sending me poison-pen letters.
2. Why didn't somebody tell me that he was here?

Why .............. I ................................................................

1. They're going to offer the post to Ann.

Ann ..................................................................................

1. They've told me to wait here.

I ........................................................................................

1. Did they teach you Greek at school?

............ you ......................................................................

1. They have granted permission to build to the company.

The company ...................................................................

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| **The passive voice of certain verbs of opinion and communication pose a special problem. In the passive the subject of the subordinate *that* clause can become the subject of the passive sentence, the verb of the *that* clause must then become an infinitive** |
| They believe that she is a genius  It is believed that she is a genius  She is believed to be a genius |
| **We must pay special attention to the infinitive. The progressive infinitive expresses limited duration and the perfect infinitive expresses past time:** |
| They think he is living in Paris  He is thought to be living in Paris  They say that he escaped  He is said to have escaped  They believe that he was lying  He is believed to have been lying |

1. **Rewrite the sentences with the new beginnings.**
2. They think she is a spy.

She **is thought to be a spy.**

1. They say he is working for the competition.

He **is said to be working for the competition.**

1. There are rumours that he **resigned** last night.

He is rumoured to **have resigned** last night.

1. They believe that he **was organizing** the campaign.

He is believed **to have been organising** the campaign.

1. They report that the police have arrested him.

The police **are reported to have arrested him**

1. They think that the company is hiding the truth.

The company **is thought to be hiding the truth**

1. They say that the president was totally baffled.

The president **is said to have been totally baffled**

1. They report that the unions are planning a severe reply.

The unions **are reported to be planning a severe reply.**

1. **Rewrite the sentences with the new beginnings.**
2. The user can train a neural network to behave in a given way.

A neural network **can be trained to behave in a given way.**

1. They say that the program compresses data very efficiently.

The program **is said to compress data very efficiently**

1. They fear that all the passengers have died.

All the passengers **are feared to have died.**

1. Nobody warned us about this problem.

We **were not warned about this program**

1. They used fuzzy logic to get over the problem.

Fuzzy logic  **was used to get over the problem**

1. It is claimed that the up-grade is completely compatible with earlier versions.

The up-grade ...................................................................

1. They didn't ask me to tell you anything.

I ........................................................................................

1. They are going to reject the proposal.

The proposal ....................................................................

1. We all know that she was risking her life.

She ...................................................................................

1. Will the author sign copies of the book?

.................................................................. by the author?

1. The Commons will debate the issue tomorrow.

The issue ..........................................................................

1. You should now refine the program.

The program ....................................................................

1. They think that he was selling state secrets.

He .....................................................................................

1. They say that travel broadens the mind.

Travel ...............................................................................