

The Passive voice

How to translate the French “on”

In English, the Passive voice is very often used (that sentence is written in the passive voice ;) and...this one as well !) in particular when the subject is unknown or when it is not important.

What matters is the result rather than the person who did the action.

Ex.: Somebody stole my car on Saturday.

→ My car was stolen on Saturday.

In French, people often use “Nous” (We) or “On” to speak about a generic situation.

In English, “On” does not exist, that’s why people use the passive voice.

EX: On parle anglais dans ce restaurant.

→ English is spoken in that restaurant.

So let’s apply this to the following sentences, turn the French “On” into the passive voice in English.

Reminder: The passive voice

Verb+ Be (in the correct tense) + Past Participle of the verb.

Translate the following sentences into English:

1. En 2014, On a interdit au Dr Max Bothwell, un scientifique canadien, de parler à la presse.

→ In 2014, Dr Max Bothwell, a canadian scientist was prohibited to talk to the press .

2. On ne devait pas faire de lien entre une algue particulière, la morve des rochers, et le changement climatique.

→ No link is exist between particular algae ,the snot of the rocks and the climate change.

3. A notre époque, on a besoin de connaissances scientifiques pour lutter contre les problèmes liés au climat, à la surpopulation.

→ In our time, scientific knowledge was beneficial to fight against climate-related issues, to overcrowding

4. On doit autoriser les scientifiques à parler avec la presse ou le public en général.

→ Scientists must be allowed to talk with the press or general public

5. On doit nous dire la vérité et on ne doit pas nous cacher les problèmes.

→ The truth must be told and the problems must not hidden.

6. On demande souvent aux scientifiques d’avoir raison, on leur demande de ne pas faire d’erreurs. C’est impossible, on va décourager les gens et plus personne ne voudra prendre de risques.

→ Scientist are often asked to be right . They are asked to not be mistake. It’s impossible