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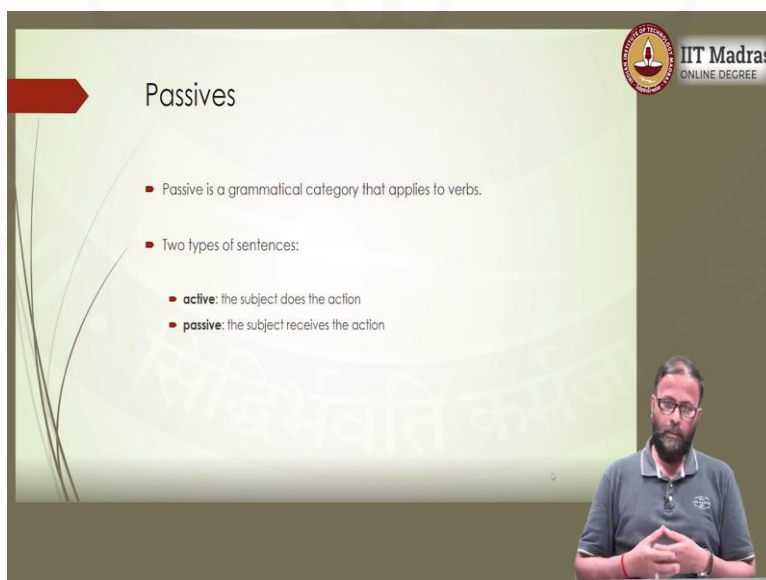
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English II (Advanced English)
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Structure and Functions of Passives in English

Welcome to class, today we are going to talk about Passives in English. Passives in English or in any language, for that matter, are very interesting structures. If you go by the literal meaning of passive, what do we mean? In our daily conversation, in our routine conversation when we say, when we say something or someone passive, we are essentially referring to the non-involvement or non-directness of an individual or something. So, indirect properties or non-involved, non-indulged, in that sense we use passive in our daily conversation.

If you look at the passive constructions in English or in any language, they exactly denote some event or someone who is acted upon or who is, who undergoes the action of the verb, but we have the immediate information about the doer or the agent, or the actor is missing or maybe suppressed or maybe not expressed. So, we call them passive structures.

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The slide is titled "Passives" and features a red arrow pointing to the title. The content includes the following bullet points:

- Passive is a grammatical category that applies to verbs.
- Two types of sentences:
 - active:** the subject does the action
 - passive:** the subject receives the action

In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, speaking. The IIT Madras logo and "ONLINE DEGREE" text are visible in the top right corner of the slide.

If you look at the verb, the verb indicates, in a sentence, whether the sentence is active or passive. So, we will have two types of sentences, depending on two types of verbs, active verbs and passive verbs. And how do we identify active and passive verbs? So, in active

written by Deepa. The whole idea of passive is encoded in the verb here, was written. So, this is verb be plus third form of the verb.

So, this is a passive verb. Because the third form of the verb is called past participle. So, this is past participle of the verb and this past participle is no more a full-fledged verb. The third form of the verb which is past participle, may act as an adjective. For example, when I say broken chair, a broken chair.

Broken, the third form of the verb, act as an adjective. So, they lose the property of the verb. The moment you recast write in the past form, it becomes be plus verb three. Auxiliary plus third form of the verb, it becomes past participle and this past participle loses the properties of the verb. So, it does not contain the tense, it does not contain the agreement, nothing. It can take no argument (agreement?) after it. Then what happens, another change what we see.

The direct object, which was the direct object here? Direct, this was direct object. So, this was direct object, direct object. Now, it is not in its original position to something like was written by Deepa, this object which was originally here, a novel. The moment we recast it as passive, let us go back, recast it as passive verb, what happens? A novel is a free element now, it is not, it is restricted and allowed to be here, why?

Because this becomes, it loses the property of the verb. So, it has to move somewhere, it comes here. So, a novel was written. Now, this is optional. We have an option to because as I told you, written as third form of the verb cannot take any argument, any noun. So, whether it is a novel or Deepa, there is no need to be here, it cannot take anything.

So, that is why we insert a preposition by, which ensures the presence of Deepa here. So, if you look at this passive verb, it makes a lot of changes in the original sentence. Change number one, the direct object is promoted as the subject of the sentence, because it cannot stay here and why it cannot stay here, because the written, the third form of the verb loses the properties of the verb to categorise or contain any direct object.

So, this is free, so it has to go somewhere, it comes here. What is novel? A theme. Who is writing the novel? Deepa the agent. But the moment we recast the active verb into passive, the agent moves out of there, because passives do not have agents present in the subject position. So, it has to move, so it is removed from there and this space becomes vacant and it is occupied by another noun which was originally a direct object.

Why? Because written as a third form of the verb cannot take this noun phrase anywhere anymore. So, this noun phrase is moved here, so this noun phrase is moved here. A novel was written and by a preposition is inserted here to hold the agent. We have option to drop it here, you will see in further examples, that we have an option to drop the agent.

What does it mean? What is happening here in the sentence? We are saying that the active verb is being recast as passive verb and the moment it is recast in passive it makes a lot of changes in this structure. Change number one, the subject position is vacant because the agent is suppressed.

So, this is vacant position. It has to be occupied with some argument in the sentence. So, it is occupied by a novel and why a novel? Because a novel is no more categorised by or assigned by the verb write, why? Because already this passive verb loses properties of a verb and all inflectional information, agreement, everything is with the verb be. So, it is free element. So, it has to move here and if you want to denote the agent, we insert by, to hold the original agent.

So, if you look at, this is in active cases, this is grammatical subject as well as logical subject, this is grammatical object as well as logical object. But if you look at the second sentence, a novel is a grammatical subject of the sentence, but not the logical subject. That is the difference. So, if you look at, if you look at the passive sentences in their canonical structure, the grammatical subject is there, but logical subject, thematic subject is missing, agent is missing.

So, you have an action and a novel which is theme, action is acted upon and by Deepa just to represent or highlight or intimate, inform, who is the agent. So, what we see, the roles are reversed, changed. So in the first sentence, we have two roles - grammatical subject and logical subject, agent of the action combined in one, object-direct object, the grammatical direct object and logical object, two roles combined in one.

But, in passive sentences, we have these roles separated. So, grammatical subject, so the original grammatical and logical object occupies grammatical subject position, but not the logical subject position. A novel is not the subject here logically, thematically, but grammatically it is a subject here.

Because this position needs to be occupied and why it needs to be occupied? Because English does not allow any sentence without subject, you have to keep in mind. So, if you look at, for

example, it is raining. If I will take this example, it is raining outside, it is raining outside. Now, what is it? What is the role of it here in the sentence or something like, there was a king. There was a king, what is the role, there here?

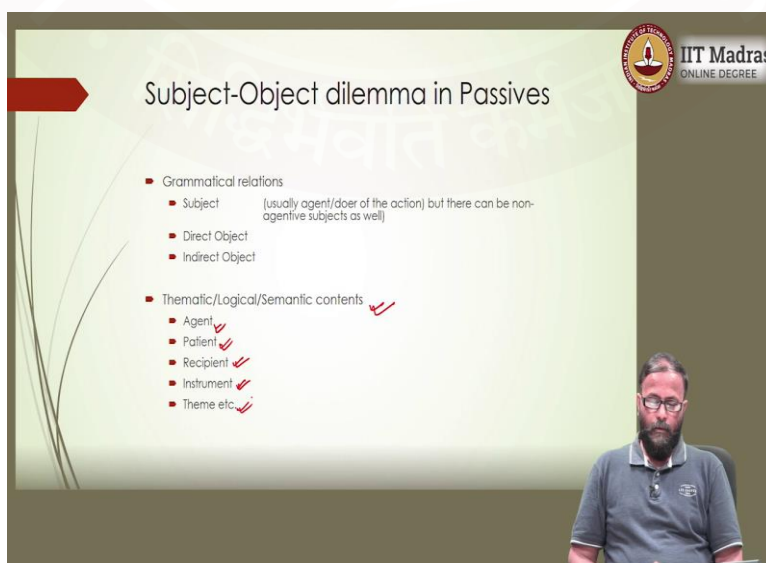
These are subject positions in the structure and because English does not allow any sentence without a subject except for one type of sentences like imperative mode-get out. So, you say, get out. Here, the universal subject is you the second person. You get out. So, because this remains universal subject for all imperative sentences, we drop it.

That is the only exception otherwise, in all these structures, English sentences cannot be without a subject. So, when we recast this verb as passive, this position is vacant and it cannot be sustained without the subject and that is why a free element which is a novel here, has to move and occupy this place, to complete the structure.

So, a novel was written. You can make the say, total sense of it and the agency is suppressed because the logical subject moves out of here. It has to land somewhere, but we have to create a position for it and that is why we insert a preposition by to create a position for this landing and this subject lands here. This is not exchanging, it is not exchanging at all. It is the structural need when this position is still occupied because we have recast this verb as passive and it becomes a novel was written by Deepa.

So, when you look at this second sentence, a novel is not the agent of, agentive subject. It is not an, it is not an agentive subject, it is grammatical subject. So, thematically it still remains an object, but grammatically it becomes a subject. We have to understand this distinction.


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Subject-Object dilemma in Passives

- Grammatical relations
 - Subject (usually agent/doer of the action) but there can be non-agentive subjects as well
 - Direct Object
 - Indirect Object
- Thematic/Logical/Semantic contents
 - Agent ✓
 - Patient ✓
 - Recipient ✓
 - Instrument ✓
 - Theme etc ✓

The slide features a green background with a red arrow pointing right. A small IIT Madras logo is in the top right corner. A video feed of a man with a beard and glasses is in the bottom right corner.


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Canonical Passives

In passive constructions, a form of the verb be (or sometimes get) is used as an auxiliary together with the past participle (V3) form of a transitive verb.

1. Deepa wrote a novel. [Active]

2. A novel was written by Deepa. [Passive]

Handwritten notes:


write → V₁ → V₃ (written)

NP (Deepa) → V₁ → NP (a novel)

be + V₃ (was written)

There was a king. It is raining outside. ?

broken chair V₃ ? of wood.



So, it is important to understand, there are two kinds of relations of these arguments in a sentence. One is grammatical relation and one is thematic, logical or semantic relations. So, thematic, logical or thematic contents, relations mean that thematic role that the argument plays in a sentence like role of an agent, one who does the action.

Patient- one who undergoes the impact of that action. Recipient- who is beneficiary of the action. Instrument, which becomes instrumental in performing the action. Theme- that is acted upon. So, multiple logical roles, multiple semantic roles, multiple thematic roles of these arguments. So, in passives, these are separated. Grammatical functions and thematic functions are separated.

So, that is why we see apparently at a structural level that a novel becomes the subject. It does not become the subject, actually, thematically, it is still a direct object, but grammatically because it occupies a grammatical subject position, we call it a subject. So, and that is why, when you look at this, we see that a novel is in subject position, but this is not exchanged by the way.

We need to understand why it happens and the whole thing is, was written. The passive form of the verb wrote is the active form of the verb. So, when the verb is in its active form, you have subject, logical subject and grammatical subject, these two relations and roles combined in one, infused in one.

So, you see Deepa wrote a novel. A novel is a direct object and semantically it is a theme. Deepa is the subject and thematically it is an agent. Write is an action. So, the action of

writing is being performed by the agent Deepa and we have the theme acted upon is a novel. But in passives what happens? These two different relations are separated, split.

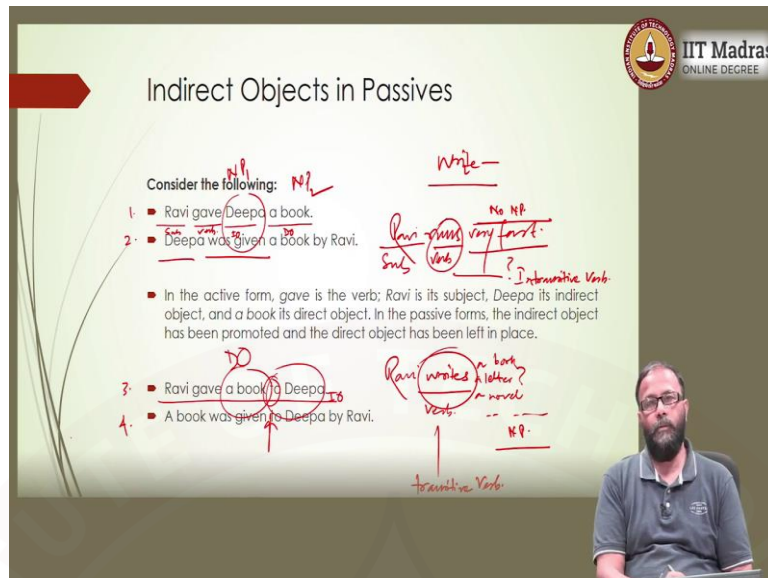
So, you have grammatical subject, grammatical object and thematic subject and thematic object in, combined in one. But here, thematically a novel in passive is not agent. It is a theme, but it occupies grammatical subject position and I told you, explained to you why. Because when we say was written, written becomes third form of the verb which acts as an adjective.

So, it loses the properties of verb. So, it can no more take a direct object. So, this novel direct object becomes free, because it cannot take it anymore and then we see in passives, the role of agent is suppressed. So, this is free position. So, grammatical subject position is free. So, this has to be occupied by a noun phrase because English mandates that all sentences have a noun phrase in its subject position. So, it has to move.

So, this movement happens and here the agent is represented in terms of a prepositional phrase where we insert by and have the agent here, so agent is indicated. So, this is the typical passive form. So, verb, if you want to make a verb passive, you have to have be plus third form of the verb. So, be or get. Sometimes it is get. The glass got broken or the glass was broken. Both are passive, was passive broken, got broken.

So, in English you have verb be or get to make passive and verb the main verb, the verb that contains the semantic element is always in third form, we have to remember. This is the only rule and because of passivization, the grammatical subject position becomes vacant. It has to be occupied by the free element, the direct object or the original active it moves in the beginning and the agent lands with a prepositional phrase by. This is a canonical passive.

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Indirect Objects in Passives

Consider the following:

1. Ravi gave Deepa a book. (Annotations: NP, V, NP, NP)
2. Deepa was given a book by Ravi. (Annotations: Subj, Verb, NP, NP, NP)
3. Ravi gave a book to Deepa. (Annotations: NP, V, NP, NP)
4. A book was given to Deepa by Ravi. (Annotations: NP, Verb, NP, NP, NP)

In the active form, gave is the verb; Ravi is its subject, Deepa its indirect object, and a book its direct object. In the passive forms, the indirect object has been promoted and the direct object has been left in place.

Handwritten notes on the right side of the slide include: 'Write -', 'No NP', 'very fast', 'Intransitive Verb', 'Ram writes a book', 'novel', 'NP', 'Transitive Verb'.

Now, there may be sentences where you have two direct objects. So if you have two direct objects, then what do we do? Because the subject position is one. So, which noun will occupy the subject position? Will it be the indirect object or will it be the direct object? What is the direct object, indirect object? Look at this.

Ravi is the subject in the sentence. This is verb, this is subject. This is verb. Deepa and a book. Now, there is a problem here, we have two noun phrases. So, which one is direct object and which one is indirect object. So, a book, Deepa is recipient, indirect object (IO) and a book is direct object (DO). So, sentence number one, two, let us see three and four here, four sentences. Four sets.

Ravi gave Deepa a book. You can also say Ravi gave a book to Deepa. Why it is indirect object, you can see it here, Ravi gave what? A book, direct object, to whom? Deepa, indirect object. So, the verb give is a ditransitive verb. So, write as a verb, transitive verb and what is transitive verb? I hope you know.

Transitive verbs are those verbs, which essentially take a noun phrase as an argument in the predicate. So, in common understanding, we all know that, if you go ask a question what, with the verb, whatever answer you get is the direct object. So, Deepa wrote what? A Novel. Ravi gave what? A book.

So, if you get the answer and why it is called transitive? Because without this noun phrases in the predicate, the sentence is not complete. So, when I say Deepa write, Deepa wrote, Deepa

writes, Deepa wrote, Deepa wrote what? The question remains unanswered. But if you go by the definition of sentence, a sentence is a group of words and cluster of words, chunk of words, which give you complete sense.

So, here the sense is not complete. So, transitive verbs mandatorily take a noun phrase in object position and when we talk about passives, we can form passives only of transitive verbs. Intransitive verbs cannot be recast in passive form. For example, Ravi runs very fast. Now, look at the sentence. Ravi is the subject and runs the verb. What is this? This is not a noun phrase and this is not required to make the sense complete, not required. So, this is a, this is the adverb of manner very fast.

So, no noun phrase, you have no NP, non-phrase, no noun here. So, this is intransitive verb. But take a sentence, something like Ravi writes. It is not complete. We need something to complete this, a book, a letter, a novel or whatever. So, write is a verb which mandatorily requires a noun phrase. So, this is transitive, so this is transitive verb.

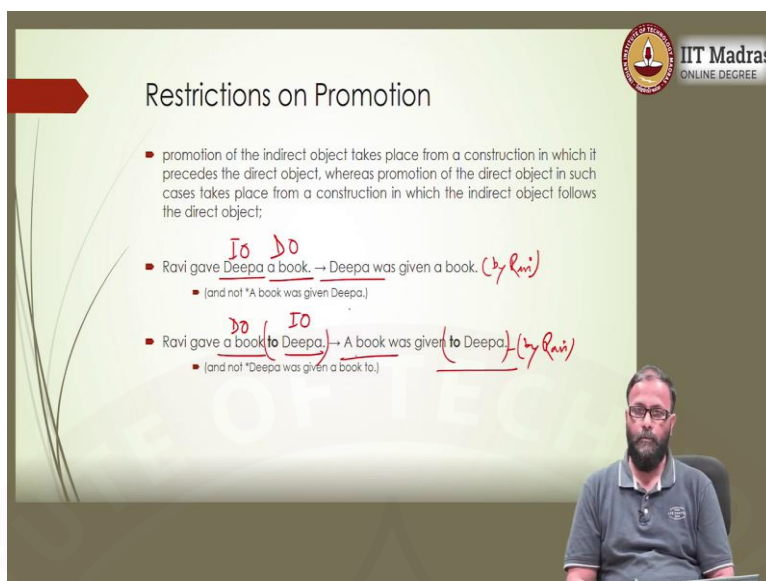
So, only transitive verbs can be recast in passive form and when we recast in passive form, we see that what other changes it makes in the sentence. Now, look at this sentence. Ravi gave Deepa a book versus Ravi gave a book to the Deepa. Deepa is indirect object, here Deepa is indirect object.

Now, if you have a sentence like this, how do we cast the verb in passive form? So, we have two options. If you have Ravi gave Deepa a book, where Deepa is the first noun that follows the verb, a book is the second noun, though the first noun is indirect object and the second noun is direct object. So, this is NP1, this is NP 2.

So, noun phrase 1, noun phrase 2, Deepa. So, in passive when we make was given, Deepa will move to the subject position, so Deepa was given and the rest of the things remain the same. A book, Deepa was given a book by Ravi, if you look at sentence number three, we find that direct object immediately follows... DO, direct object.

So, direct object immediately follows the verb. And when it immediately follows the verb, the second noun like Deepa is preceded by to. So, when you are making passive of such sentences, where you have a direct object, an indirect object, where direct object precedes the indirect object, then direct object will be promoted to subject position in passives and when what we get? A book was given to Deepa by Ravi.

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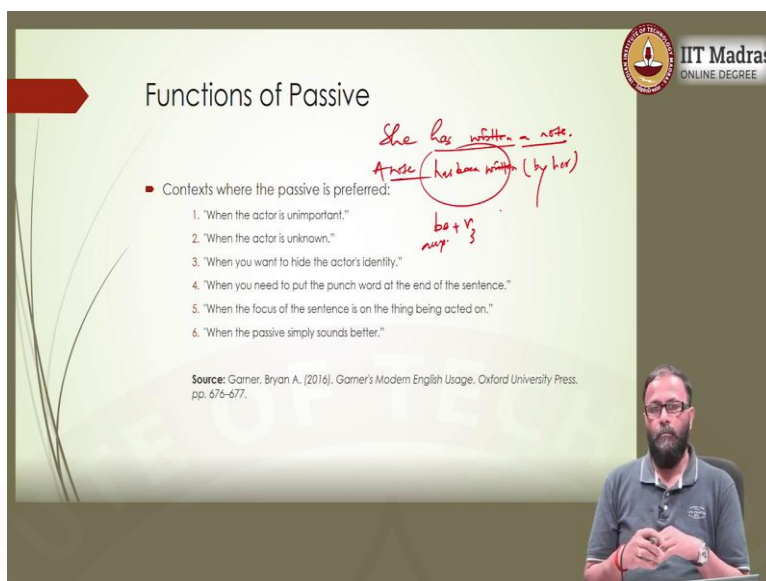
Restrictions on Promotion

- promotion of the indirect object takes place from a construction in which it precedes the direct object, whereas promotion of the direct object in such cases takes place from a construction in which the indirect object follows the direct object;
- Ravi gave Deepa a book. → Deepa was given a book. *(by Ravi)*
 (and not *A book was given Deepa.)
- Ravi gave a book to Deepa. → A book was given to Deepa. *(by Ravi)*
 (and not *Deepa was given a book to.)

Look at this. So, Ravi gave Deepa a book. Deepa was given a book by Ravi. Deepa is occupying the grammatical subject position, though thematically she is not the agent. She is the recipient. In the second sentence when the book, direct object Deepa, indirect object here. Deepa indirect object, a book direct object.

In second sentence what do we see? Direct object precedes the indirect object. So, Ravi gave a book to Deepa. A book will be promoted, a book occupies the subject position and this remains as it was in the active one and we can add by Ravi. So, this is how we form passives with the sentence which has both direct and indirect objects. But not something like Deepa was given a book to or something like a book was given Deepa. We cannot have such types of sentences. So, this is about indirect objects and passives.

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Functions of Passive

Handwritten examples:
 She has written a note.
 A note has been written (by her)
 be + V
 aux

- Contexts where the passive is preferred:
 1. "When the actor is unimportant."
 2. "When the actor is unknown."
 3. "When you want to hide the actor's identity."
 4. "When you need to put the punch word at the end of the sentence."
 5. "When the focus of the sentence is on the thing being acted on."
 6. "When the passive simply sounds better."

Source: Garner, Bryan A. (2016), Garner's Modern English Usage, Oxford University Press, pp. 676-677.

Now, we can form passive of any verb, active verb, provided it is a transitive verb. So, mandatorily it has a noun phrase, indirect object position, you can form it. Something like, let us say, she has written a note. So again, same rule applies, has written will become has been written. A note will occupy the subject position here, a note and this is optional.

So, you can form any passive. The only rule is this- be then means aux and third position. That is the passive verb form and it will make other corresponding changes. Now, the question is why do we use passive? What are passive and why do we use them? What is the significance of passives? What are the functions of passives?

One thing is for sure, that in passives agents do not remain the subject, grammatical subject of the sentence. What does this mean? That the grammatical subject position or the front topic position of the sentence is no more occupied by the agent of the sentence, of the action. So, where does, where does this agent go? So, it is suppressed, removed or concealed.

So, agency is suppressed. In active agency is declared, asserted in passive, agency of the action is suppressed. So, something like if I say, I broke the glass and I am the agent of the action of breaking of the glass. So, I assert, I announced, I accept, but when I say the glass got broken, so the event of breaking of the glass is highlighted, but who broke it, is concealed.

A bullet was fired. If I say, I fired a bullet, I am confessing and I may be punished for my action in the court. So, what do we do? So, we plead not guilty by saying a bullet got fired or

a bullet was fired. So, in such cases where you have a suppression of the agent or agency is suppressed. So, passives are very interesting structures in language, to suppress the agency, conceal the information about the agent.

So, something like, when the actor is not important or you do not want to show that actor is important or you do not want to reflect that actor is important. In cases where the actor of the action is not known. My book was stolen, my watch was stolen, I have no idea who stole it. Sometimes, you deliberately conceal the identity of the actor. The glass got broken, the glass was broken.

So, we do not want to declare who broke it. Sometimes, to bring or to add, added emphasis on the agent. So, if I say, the patient was killed by the doctor. So, by the doctor, I am trying to keep it separate, keep the agency or agent or the doer separate and highlight it. For that also we do.

We remove it from the original position, normal position and bring it at the end of the sentence to add extra emphasis to it and when we want to highlight or state the action, the outcome of the action as the most important primary goal. So, the actor is not important, the action is important. In that case, also, we suppress the agency of the actor of the subject and send it somewhere else, remove it from the original, active position.

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The slide is titled "More Functions:" and lists three functions of the passive voice:

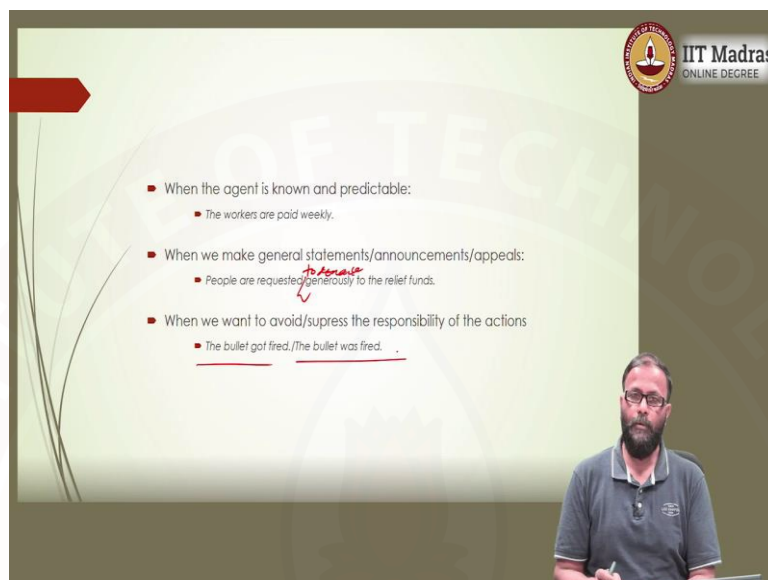
- When we want to emphasize the receiver of the action:
■ America was discovered by Columbus.
- When we don't know who did the action (the agent):
■ Some rare artefacts were stolen from the museum.
- When we think the agent is not important.
■ The bridge is being repaired.

In the bottom right corner, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, speaking and gesturing with his hands. The IIT Madras logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide.

So, some more functions of passives are something like, when we want to emphasise a receiver of the action. Like America was discovered by Columbus. When you do not know

who did the action, so when the actor is unknown. Some rare artefacts were stolen from the museum, but who stole it? No idea, we do this. When we think the actor is not important, when we think the agent is not important, but the act is important, the action is important. So, the bridge is being repaired. Of course, by agencies, by engineers, so whatever.

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So, these are some functions of passive constructions in English, when the agent is known and predictable, so we do not have to repeat it, because it is known to everyone. Something like the workers are paid weekly. Of course, by the employer, we do not have to say that. When we make general statement announcement and appeals, so we do not highlight the agency of the doer of the action, instead, the masses become important.

So, we say people are requested to generously, people are requested to donate generously to the relief funds. So, this donation is important. When we want to avoid or suppress the responsibility of the action again, the bullet got fired, the bullet was fired by me, by him, by Ravi, by Deepa is not important. We want to conceal, then we use passive.

So, this is how we form passive and these are the functions of passive in a language called English and similar functions in other languages as well. You can think of in your mother tongue. So, what we learned today? Passives are recast in terms of making changes in the verb. So, be plus third form of the verb is the only thing that you have to remember.

So, any verb in active form becomes passive, only when we have auxiliary plus third form of the verb and because of this passivization of the verb, other changes are mandatory. For

example, the subject position is occupied by the direct object of the sentence and the agent is indicated with a preposition by, that is the only rule for passive. We will practice more and talk more about it some other time. This is it for now. Thank you very much.

