Sein vs werden passive

user44591

Consider the following:

> Er wurde ermordet.

> Er war ermordet.

> Er wurde mordet.

> Er war mordet.

Are any of these incorrect German? Are the meanings the same or different? Can the sein and werden passives sometimes be interchangeable and is this an example?

asked Dec 24, 2020 at 22:01

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- Er wurde ermordet.
  This is correct. It means: He has been murdered (and now he is dead).

- Er wurde ermordet gewesen.
  This is wrong and means nothing.

- Er war ermordet.
  This is grammatically correct, but semantic nonsense. It means: He was murdered (but the chances are high, that he no longer is in this state now, so he could be alive now).

- Er wurde mordet. - Er wurde mordet gewesen. - Er war mordet.
  These are all wrong sentences which mean nothing.

This is **Aktiv** (active voice):

- Präsens

  > Paul ermordet ihn. = Paul murders him.
  > Michael wäscht das Auto. = Michael washes the car.

- Präteritum

  > Paul ermordete ihn. = Paul murdered him.
  > Michael wusch das Auto. = Michael washed the car.

- Perfekt

  > Paul hat ihn ermordet. = Paul murdered him. Paul has murdered him.
  > Michael hat das Auto gewaschen. = Michael washed the car. Michael has washed the car.

This is **Vorgangspassiv** (operational passive voice) (What is happening to the subject? What did happen to it?). Must be built with a form of *werden* (to become). When we use *Vorgangspassiv* we talk about an action, not about a state.

- Präsens

  > Er wird ermordet. = He is murdered.
  > *literal: "He becomes murdered" Meaning: The process of killing is happening in this moment*

  > Das Auto wird gewaschen. = The car is washed.
  > *The car is wet and someone is cleaning it right now.*

- Präteritum

  Er wurde ermordet. = He was murdered.
  He became murdered. Someone performed the process of killing on him in the past. As a result of this action he is dead since then, so he is also dead now.

  Das Auto wurde gewaschen. = The car was washed.
  Someone did clean it in the past.

- Perfekt

  Er ist ermordet worden. = He has been murdered.
  He has become murdered. Quite the same meaning as the sentence in Präteritum.

  Das Auto ist gewaschen worden. = The cas has been washed.
  Someone did clean it in the past.

And the next section is **Zustandspassiv** (state passive voice) (In which state is the the subject? In which state was it?). Must be built with a form of *sein* (to be). Here we talk about a state. We do not talk about an action.

- Präsens

  Er ist ermordet. = He is murdered.
  In the sense of: He is dead. We are not talking about what happened to him, but in which state he is now: He is dead. No killing is happening now. The killing happened at some time in the past, but this is not the topic of this sentence.

  Das Auto ist gewaschen. = The car is washed.
  It is dry and clean. Someone must have cleaned it in the past, but the person who did it, is no loner here.

- Präteritum

  Er war ermordet. = He was murdered.
  At some time in the past he was dead as a result of a crime that happened even before. We talk about the state that he was in at some moment in the past. The grammar provides no connection to the present state, so due to the grammar it could be that he is no longer murdered now

  Das Auto war gewaschen. = The car was washed.
  At some moment in the past the car was shiny and clean. It might be dirty now.

- Perfekt

  Er ist ermordet gewesen. = He has been murdered.
  Same meaning as in Präteritum

  Das Auto ist gewaschen worden. = The car has been washed.
  It was clean in the past.

answered Dec 24, 2020 at 22:52

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> Er wurde ermordet

That is the correct phrase.

> (1) Er wurde mordet

or

> (2) Er war mordet

or

> (3) Er war ermordet

are all not really accurate. The first and second one are very wrong, even in colloquial use (generally "mordet" is not a word and only used in combination with a prefix). The third phrase is archaic (/old German), with a slight modification.

(3.1) Er ward ermordet

Hope this clears your question up.

answered Dec 24, 2020 at 22:42