USING STORY COMPLETION ACTIVITIES TO TEACH ENGLISH PASSIVE VOICE: A CONTEXT-BASED APPROACH

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Abstract

The passive voice is frequently introduced as a grammatical transformation from active sentences into passive forms. Although this method helps learners ***recognize structure, it often does not support communicative use. Students Oktabr*** correctly change “People grow cotton” into “Cotton is grown”, yet struggle to use passive constructions naturally in speaking or writing. This article explores the use of story completion activities as an alternative method for teaching passive voice. The paper argues that contextual storytelling can improve understanding of meaning, increase learner participation, and promote practical application of grammatical knowledge.

Keywords: passive voice, grammar instruction, storytelling, communicative teaching, English methodology

Introduction

Grammar lessons on passive voice commonly begin with formulas:

Active: Subject + Verb + Object

Passive: Object + be + past participle

Students usually practice through sentence transformation exercises:

The chef cooked the meal.

The meal was cooked by the chef.

While these exercises develop structural awareness, many learners still ask an important question:

“Why do we use passive voice?”

This question reveals a gap between grammar knowledge and language use.

In authentic communication, passive voice is often used when:

the action is more important than the actor;

the actor is unknown;

attention should be placed on results rather than performers.

Therefore, teaching should focus not only on structure but also on purpose.

Difficulties Learners Experience with Passive Voice

1. Dependence on Active Structures

Many students prefer active sentences because they appear easier:

Scientists discovered the medicine.

Instead of:

The medicine was discovered.

Learners often avoid passive constructions even when context requires them.

2. Confusion with Verb Forms

Passive voice combines:

auxiliary verbs;

tense changes;

past participles.

For example:

is written

was built

has been completed

Students sometimes mix active and passive patterns:

✗ The book wrote yesterday.

✓ The book was written yesterday.

3. Mechanical Practice

Traditional exercises emphasize conversion rather than communication.

Students may complete worksheets successfully but fail to use passive structures in writing tasks.

Story Completion Activities as an Alternative

Story completion activities encourage learners to continue a narrative while using target grammar naturally.

Passive voice works especially well in stories involving:

historical events;

mysteries;

inventions;

accidents;

discoveries.

Example opening:

“Last night, something unusual happened in the museum. A painting was moved. Several doors were opened. A message was left on the wall…”

Students continue the story.

Possible responses:

The painting was hidden in another room.

The windows were broken.

Nothing valuable was stolen.

Grammar becomes part of meaning creation.

Suggested Classroom Procedure

Stage One: Context Introduction

Present a short story or picture.

Example:

A bridge collapsed during a storm.

Ask:

What happened?

What damage was caused?

What was destroyed?

Students naturally produce passive forms.

Stage Two: Guided Construction

Provide sentence starters:

The road was…

Several houses were…

Emergency services were…

Learners complete ideas collaboratively.

Stage Three: Group Story Building

Divide students into groups.

Each group receives a beginning:

Group A: An old castle was discovered.

Group B: A valuable object was found.

Group C: A festival was organized.

Students extend narratives using passive voice.

Stage Four: Reflection

After storytelling, discuss:

Which passive forms appeared?

Why were they used?

Could active voice change the meaning?

Reflection links communication with grammatical awareness.

Observations from Classroom Practice

When passive voice is taught through storytelling:

learners participate more actively;

grammar becomes less mechanical;

sentence variety increases;

writing tasks improve.

Students also become more aware of why passive voice exists rather than viewing it as another rule to memorize.

Pedagogical Implications

Teachers may strengthen passive voice instruction by:

Using stories instead of isolated sentences;

Connecting grammar with events and outcomes;

Encouraging collaborative narrative tasks;

Focusing on meaning before correction.

This approach supports both grammatical development and communicative competence.

Conclusion

Passive voice is often considered difficult because it is introduced mainly through structural transformation exercises. However, its real function extends beyond sentence conversion.

Story completion activities provide learners with opportunities to use passive forms meaningfully while creating narratives and discussing events.

As a result, grammar becomes connected to communication, imagination, and context.

Future classroom studies may investigate whether narrative-based instruction improves long-term retention of passive constructions.

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