

Producing Passive Sentences-a Common Issue of Undergraduates

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Abstract

Knowledge of passive constructions which is a part of formal writing is an essential requirement for academic writing. Undergraduates who pursue their content subjects in the English medium frequently complain about their inability to produce passive sentences. The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons that lead to the learners' claim that passive voice constructions are more difficult and hence they score low marks in academic writing activities. This study which uses convenient sampling is an experimental research design consisting of a sample of sixty-first-year students who follow their three months Intensive English Course meant for the new entrants to a Sri Lankan state university. The relevant data was generated through a pre and post-test conducted for both control and experimental groups after and before the language treatment. The treatment included teaching the logical structure of passive voice, different forms of 'be' verbs, how to identify transitive verbs, past participle and the spelling rules of the past participle. Further, the students were given time to memorize the past participle of irregular verbs and the spellings. Gathered quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package. It was found that given language remedial treatment is significant. Students in both the controlled group and experiential group scored much lower marks than expected. The controlled group and the experiential group scored, which was evident that students in both groups were equally weak in knowledge in passive voice. After conducting lectures following the conventional method to the control group and introducing the newly designed passive structure to the experimental group, a post-evaluation test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the new teaching methods compared to the conventional method. According to the results students in the experimental group scored 57.7 marks on average, recording an increase of 30.5% on this average mark. Whereas students in the control group showed only an increase of 8.4% on their average marks which is 36.7 on average. This study suggests designing similar remedial courses to treat weaker students who stay behind their counterparts due to a lack of knowledge in the use of passive voice appropriately.

Keywords: *Undergraduates, academic writing, passive voice, logical structure, remedial course*

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