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Grammar in academic texts (2)

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Homework: noun phrases

The correct verb to follow the noun phrase is circled.

- 1 Vast **sums** of money was / were spent on the new football stadium.
- 2 A **series** of relatively simple steps is / are needed to send an email.
- 3 A smaller **number** of students in the classroom seems / seem to translate into less noise and disruptive behaviour.
- 4 Smaller **classes** at junior school means / mean that the teacher can give more individual attention.
- 5 A **pattern** of light and movement appears / appear on the monitor screen.
- 6 Every day a **sample** of trainers is / are tested by the Quality Control Department.

The controlling nouns are highlighted. The correct verb is circled.

- 1 A **series** of advertisements was / were run on TV to promote the new product.
- 2 Only the smallest possible **amounts** of stock is / are kept at the factories.
- 3 In a cellular production system, the **stages** in assembling a car is / are carried out by a **group** of workers **which** is / are called a cell.
- 4 Any **problems** in the manufacturing process becomes / become obvious if there is a good Quality Control Department.
- 5 The **benefits** of reduced class size depends on / depend on whether teachers adapt their methods to take advantage of smaller classes.
- 6 The **findings** of an investigation into the effectiveness of pre-university language courses is / are reported in this paper.

The controlling nouns are highlighted and the correct verb is given in the gap.

- 1 The **extent** to which **computers** have changed modern societies is phenomenal.
- 2 The **improvement** in customer services that technology can deliver makes it an essential investment.
- 3 The **importance** of comparing companies operating in similar business activities has already been mentioned.
- 4 In recent years, the **improvement** in telephone services which are available to the general public has been extraordinary.
- 5 The principal **medium** of teaching which modern universities and other institutions of learning still employ remains the lecture.

Think about your own language:

- How are noun phrases constructed in your language?
- Is it the same as in English or different?

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The passive voice

Passive Pub Quiz (1)

1) In which register is the passive most common?

- a) **Academic writing**
- b) Conversation
- c) Fiction
- d) News

2) In RPs* from which discipline is the passive most common?

- a) Biological sciences
- b) **Physical sciences**
- c) Social sciences

*RP = research paper

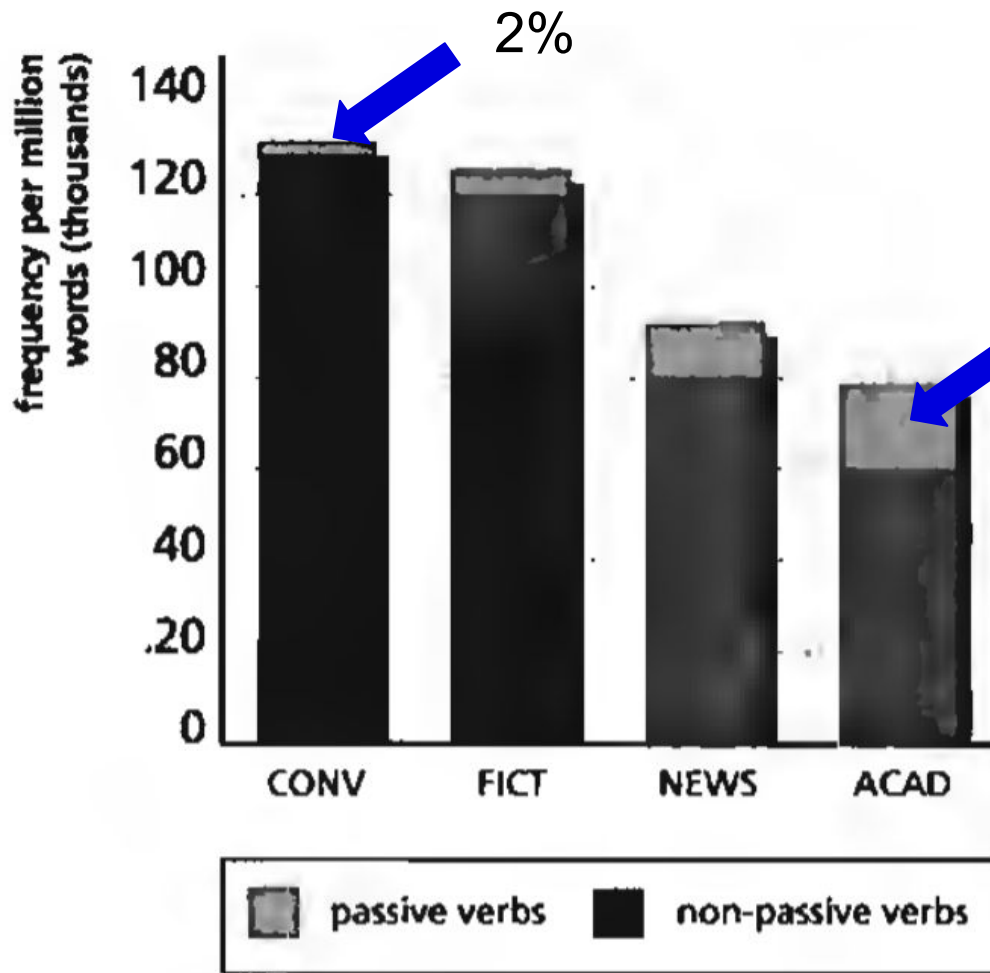
Passive Pub Quiz (2)

3) In which section of a RP is the passive most common?

- a) Introduction
- b) Discussion
- c) **Methods**
- d) Results

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(Biber *et al.*, 1999)

Percentages of voice per section in the processes of three types of sciences in 21 research articles.

	Introduction		Method		Results		Discussion	
	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P
Physical sciences	63,0	37,0	26,0	74,0	72,0	28,0	71,0	29,0
Biological sciences	74,0	26,0	38,0	61,05	68,0	32,0	79,0	21,0
Social sciences	84,0	16,0	46,0	54,0	77,0	23,0	85,0	15,0

A=active, P=passive

Source: I.A.Martinez/English for Specific Purposes 20 (2001) 227-247)

(Štěpánek, 2018)

Rewrite the sentences with the verbs in bold in the passive.

a) We **should reject** this conclusion for two reasons.

b) We **would never have published** this book without additional financial support from the Nansen Institute.

c) Experts **presented** and **discussed** a total of ten innovative papers during the two-day workshop sessions.

d) To preserve originality of thinking, we **have kept** editing of all chapters to a minimum.

(Štěpánek, 2018)

The **subject** of a **passive verb** corresponds to the **object** of an **active verb**.

Passive: SUBJECT
 This house **was built** in 1486.

Active: They **built** this house in 1486.
 OBJECT

 SUBJECT
 German **is spoken** in Austria.

Austrians **speak** German.
 OBJECT

(Swan and Walter, 1997)

PASSIVE TENSE	STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
simple present	<i>am/are/is + past participle</i>	English is spoken here.
present progressive	<i>am/are/is being + pp</i>	Excuse the mess: the house is being painted .
simple past	<i>was/were + pp</i>	I wasn't invited , but I went.
past progressive	<i>was/were being + pp</i>	I felt I was being watched .
present perfect	<i>have/has been + pp</i>	Has Mary been told ?
past perfect	<i>had been + pp</i>	I knew I had been forgotten .
<i>will</i> future	<i>will be + pp</i>	You'll be told soon.
future perfect	<i>will have been + pp</i>	Everything will have been done by Tuesday.
<i>going to</i> future	<i>am/are/is going to be + pp</i>	Who's going to be invited ?

Examples of passive infinitives: *(to) be told*; *(to) have been taken*.

Examples of passive *-ing* forms: *being told*; *having been taken*.

Future progressive passives (*will be being + pp*) and perfect progressive passives (e.g. *has been being + pp*) are unusual.

Two-word verbs can have passive forms (e.g. *The meeting **has been put off***).

(Swan and Walter, 1997)

Frequent passive verbs in academic writing

made, given, done, taken, used, found, seen, called, concerned, said, expected, put, told, known, set, left, held, asked, brought, prepared, based, described, determined, involved, needed, considered, shown, paid, forced, sent, drawn, kept, lost, reported, thought, treated, understood, carried, required; achieved, associated, defined, expressed, measured, obtained, performed, related; applied, calculated, chosen, compared, derived, designed, developed, discussed, examined, explained, formed, identified, illustrated, introduced, limited, noted, observed, presented, recognised, regarded, replaced, represented, studied, suggested

(Biber *et al.*, 1999)

Verbs that occur mostly in passive voice

+90%: aligned (with), based (on), born, coupled (with), deemed, effected, entitled (to), flattened, inclined, obliged, positioned, situated, stained, subjected (to)

+70%: approved, associated (with), attributed (to), classified (as), composed (of), confined (to), designed, diagnosed (as), distributed, documented, estimated, extracted, grouped (with), intended, labelled, linked (to/with), located (at/in), plotted, recruited, stored, transferred, viewed

(Biber *et al.*, 1999)