

Extension exercises

Chapter 22: Passive constructions

Exploring English

Mentally or on paper, translate the following sentences into a language that you know well so that they sound natural and idiomatic. (If you don't know a language other than English sufficiently well, try to enlist the help of an advanced learner.) Then answer the questions which follow.

- (i) Is French spoken in Cameroon?
- (ii) I need to have my hair cut.
- (iii) Be careful you don't get caught.
- (iv) When were you born?
- (v) Where was your shirt made?
- (vi) It is believed that the attacker was a man of about 20, with long, fair hair, worn in a pony tail.

- 1 Is there one form in the foreign language which is equivalent to the passive in English or are you obliged to use different forms? If you are obliged to use different forms, what determines the way you choose among these?
- 2 Did translating these forms present any particular problems or lead to any particular insights? What?

Course materials

Choose two coursebooks for learners.

Locate those sections in the books which deal with passive constructions, and then answer the following questions.

- 1 Is this topic dealt with in one section or are different aspects of it dealt with separately?
- 2 At what level(s) is the topic dealt with?
- 3 How much attention is paid, respectively, to use and to form? How comprehensively are these covered?
- 4 How clear are the explanations and examples?
- 5 How much opportunity is provided (if at all) for learners to study the use of passive forms in authentic texts? Do these texts include spoken use as well as written?
- 6 What opportunities are provided for learners to practise using passive constructions in a controlled context (for example, exercises, 'question and answer' activities or dialogue activities)?
- 7 What opportunities are provided for learners to use passive constructions naturally, i.e. where the instructions or the task doesn't dictate that they use these?

Exploring how learners use English

Arrange to interview two or three learners of English who are at an intermediate level or higher. If possible, ask them to write something in which you would expect passive constructions to be used (for example, how some kind of manufactured goods are produced – perhaps car tyres, socks or books), or ask them to talk about the subject and record them doing so.

Ask them some questions about the use of passive constructions in English. For example:

- How widely are these used?
- When are these used?
- How are they formed?

Ask them to compare the use of these in English with any equivalent forms in their own language(s).

Ask them how easy or difficult they have found it to:

- understand the use and meaning of these forms.
- understand the construction of these forms.
- remember these forms.
- use these forms in speaking and in writing.

Compare what they have to say about using passive constructions with the way they used them in the initial exercise.