

Decoding Challenges: EFL Learners' Struggles in Mastering Passive Voice

Dian Purnama Sari, Moh. Rofid Fikroni

dian@stba-prayoga.ac.id¹, moh_rofid@uinkhas.ac.id²

Prayoga School of Foreign Language Padang, Indonesia¹, Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, Indonesia²

Abstract. This study investigates EFL learners' challenges in mastering the passive voice—a critical grammatical structure that has persistently resulted in low test scores. A qualitative case study was conducted with 20 fourth-semester students from a college in Indonesia. Data were collected through a diagnostic completion test focusing on present and past passive constructions and preliminary interviews. Analysis revealed that students committed 155 errors due to omitting essential auxiliary verbs and incorrect verb forms. Using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, these errors were categorized as omission (55%), misformation (27%), misordering (13%), and addition (5%). The findings highlight a significant gap in learners' understanding of passive voice structures and underscore the need for targeted instructional strategies. Recommendations include using simplified examples, explicit practice with auxiliary verbs and verb forms, and integrating communicative, task-based activities to reinforce correct syntactic order. This study provides valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers seeking to enhance the teaching and learning of passive voice in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Passive voice, EFL Learners, Grammatical Challenges, Language Acquisition.

1 Introduction

Learning a new language can be intimidating and overwhelming for many individuals. From acquiring vocabulary to mastering grammar, learners must navigate various components, including pronunciation and cultural nuances[1]. Grammar is a critical element that often leaves learners perplexed and anxious. Accurate grammar usage is fundamental to effective communication, while grammatical errors, such as misuse of structures, can impede language development and hinder learners' progress[2][3].

One particularly challenging aspect of grammar is the passive voice, a frequently used yet often misunderstood grammatical construction. The passive voice emphasizes the object or recipient of an action rather than the agent performing it[4]. It is typically formed by combining a form of the verb "to be" with the past participle of a verb, often followed by the preposition "by." For example, in the sentence "The student read the book," the focus is on the book, not the student acting.

Despite its functional significance, the passive voice poses unique challenges for non-native speakers. Learners often struggle with its structural complexity and tendency to obscure the

agent of the action, leading to ambiguity and a lack of clarity in communication[5]. Furthermore, the passive voice is sometimes criticized for making writing impersonal and monotonous. Orwell famously discouraged its use in his rules for effective writing, arguing that active voice promotes clarity and engagement[6]. For learners accustomed to active constructions in their native languages, mastering the passive voice often requires a significant shift in perspective and cognitive effort[7].

Recent studies underscore the importance of targeted instruction in addressing these challenges. For example, research by Xiao and McEnery highlights the cognitive and pedagogical factors that influence learners' acquisition of the passive voice[8]. Similarly, a study emphasizes the role of explicit grammar instruction in improving learners' understanding and usage of passive structures[9]. These findings align with broader discussions in second language acquisition (SLA) literature, which advocate for integrating contextualized grammar teaching to enhance learners' comprehension and application[2], [10].

However, for many students, determining when to utilize the passive voice and when not can be a huge issue in their learning experience. In other words, students cannot avoid errors in language learning. The evaluation of the process of language learning involves the study of errors. It offers teachers knowledge regarding a learner's linguistic development and indicators of linguistic development. Experts also claim that error analysis should be a powerful tool to help students enhance their language acquisition. In this case, Recent studies have underscored the importance of error analysis in understanding students' challenges with passive voice constructions. For instance, a study analyzing Thai EFL students' use of passive voice revealed common errors that impede language acquisition[11]. Similarly, research focusing on students' writing skills identified frequent active and passive voice usage mistakes, highlighting the need for targeted pedagogical strategies [12]. Another study examined errors in passive sentence structures among EFL learners, providing insights into the causes of these errors and suggesting methods for effective instruction[13]. Additionally, analyzing students' errors in transforming sentences from active to passive voice emphasized learners' syntactical challenges, further supporting the need for comprehensive error analysis in language[14]. These findings highlight the critical role of error analysis in identifying and addressing the specific challenges students encounter with passive voice constructions, thereby informing more effective teaching methodologies.

Likewise, as a part of grammatical errors, analysis needs to be done to recognize the students' difficulty while learning a new language and help them alter their abilities [15]. This error frequently happens when the students want to make the sentences active; the form is not similar to the passive one, and vice versa. Therefore, the students need to recognize the use of each of them. Passive construction is used when the patient noun is the subject of a sentence. Therefore, the speaker or writer can use passive voice to remove the agent noun. Consequently, the presence of the doer is optional, so some sentences and utterances do not have the doer of the action. That means that passive voice does not require the doer to be one of the important constituents in the sentences that oppose active voice. Due to the uniqueness of the passive voice, it is urgently highlighted when using English in communication.

Analyzing errors in language learning is essential for understanding learners' challenges and improving instructional methods. One effective approach is the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which examines how learners modify language structures[16]. Introduced by Bialystock et al.,

this taxonomy categorizes errors into four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering[16].

Omission means the errors are caused by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. Several grammatical morphemes often omit function words rather than content words, namely noun and verb inflections, articles, verb auxiliaries, and prepositions. For instance, in the context provided, "James taught by professor Literature". The words "James", "taught", "by", "professor" and "Literature" are content morphemes that carry the burden of meaning, while the grammatical morphemes "is", "the", and "of" is omitted. The correct sentence should be "The professor of Literature teaches James."

The next is addition. The error of addition is characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance. In other words, it is the opposite of omission error. This error includes unnecessary or misplaced words that disturb the clarity of a sentence. For example, in the sentence, "The chef made pancake deliciously." The word "deliciously" is added and awkwardly placed, making the sentence less clear and grammatically incorrect in context. By deleting the word "deliciously" the sentence is already understood well.

The third category is misformation. The wrong form of the morpheme or structure characterizes this error. This error is typically shown when writers use an incorrect rule or substitute a morpheme with one that does not fit grammatically. For instance: "The man flew a dragon kite." The sentence does not use the correct morpheme because the past form of the verb "fly" is "flew" (irregular form). This error leads to a misunderstanding that can confuse readers about what is meant if they know the mistakes but do not know the intended words.

The last is misordering, which is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme, group, or morpheme in an utterance. For example, in the sentence "The letter was sent by John yesterday." "yesterday" is misordered where it should be written at the beginning. The placement of "yesterday" might be less precise if it did not specify when the action occurred, especially in more extended contexts. Another example is in the sentence "What you have done?" whereas it should be "What have you done?". This error can occur due to a direct translation from another language where the structure may differ or simply a misunderstanding of English question formation. In English, the inversion of the subject and the auxiliary verb is a key rule in question formation. That helps to signal that a question is being asked.

Research has shown that analyzing errors using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy provides valuable insights into learners' interlanguage development. For instance, a study by Suhono on EFL students' compositions found that omission errors were the most frequent, followed by misformation, addition, and misordering[17]. Similarly, Esmalde analyzed grammatical errors in academic writing and emphasized the importance of understanding error types to inform instructional practices[18].

Considering the urgency of investigating students' difficulties further, the researcher conducted preliminary research and discovered that English-major students still face challenges in using passive voice. Interviews revealed that students struggle with identifying and constructing passive-voice sentences. Many students also struggled to differentiate verb forms, which contributed to their confusion. However, the researcher hypothesizes these factors are only part of why students find the passive voice challenging. Gass and Selinker (as cited in Sari & Pamungkas) highlighted that errors are systematic, recurrent, and often invisible to the learner,

suggesting that students may not even be aware of their mistakes[19]. That highlights the critical need for a deeper exploration into these difficulties, emphasizing the lack of detailed analysis specific to Indonesian higher education institution students' challenges.

While some previous studies have addressed common challenges in mastering passive voice, limited research focuses on the specific error types students make and their frequency, particularly within Indonesian higher education institutions [20], [21]. Furthermore, these studies often overlook systematic categorization of errors using the surface strategy taxonomy, leaving a gap in understanding how patterns of errors manifest among students in this specific learning environment.

This research addresses the gap by utilizing the surface strategy taxonomy to analyze student writing errors, systematically categorizing error types and their frequencies. As highlighted in studies by Sari et al. and Rahman, understanding error patterns through this taxonomy can provide educators with a detailed perspective on common challenges faced by students[19], [21]. By identifying the most and least frequent error types, this study contributes novel insights that can inform targeted teaching strategies to improve passive voice comprehension and usage.

In light of the reasons explained above, the primary objectives of this study are (1) to examine the types of errors students made according to surface strategy taxonomies and (2) to identify which error types appeared most and least frequently in their writings based on surface strategy taxonomies.

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the errors made by students when using passive voice. The research participants comprised 25 fourth-semester students from an Indonesian higher education institution during the academic year 2023/2024. These students were purposefully selected based on several key criteria. First, they were at an intermediate level of proficiency, ensuring they had a foundational understanding of English grammar, including active and passive voice. Their intermediate proficiency allowed the research to focus on the nuances of passive voice usage rather than basic comprehension. Additionally, these students had been exposed to passive voice in their previous coursework, which made them suitable subjects for analyzing their understanding and potential errors in this grammatical structure.

Students who had received prior feedback or error correction on their passive voice usage were included to refine the selection process further. That allowed for an exploration of whether errors persisted despite corrective measures, providing insights into the effectiveness of traditional grammar instruction. The participants' motivation levels and general attitudes toward learning English were also considered. Students with higher motivation may demonstrate different error patterns compared to less engaged students, which could influence the research outcomes.

The researcher used a completion test as the primary instrument to gather data. As noted in Mathison, tests are a reliable means of assessing performance within a defined domain, providing structured data for analysis[22]. The completion test included 14 sentences, evenly divided between active (7 sentences) and passive (7 sentences) constructions. Students were tasked with converting these sentences between active and passive forms.

The decision to focus on specific tenses—simple, progressive, and perfect present and past tense forms—was deliberate. These tenses are foundational to English grammar and commonly used in written and spoken communication. Furthermore, including modals added complexity to the test, as modal verbs often pose additional challenges for learners when used in passive constructions. By selecting these tenses, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the student's ability to handle various grammatical contexts, offering insights into the specific areas where intervention might be necessary.

The indicators for error analysis were based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy proposed by Bialystock, Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), which categorizes errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering[16]. Each student's responses were checked against these indicators to identify and classify the errors systematically. This method ensured the analysis was thorough and aligned with established linguistic frameworks.

By targeting these specific grammatical structures and employing a systematic approach to error analysis, this research aimed to uncover detailed insights into the difficulties faced by students in mastering passive voice, thereby contributing valuable data for refining teaching strategies.

3 Results

The students face problems choosing the appropriate voice when constructing passive sentences. They should use the passive voice to focus on the object of an active sentence. However, the voice selection could influence the rules that work appropriately. The results of the students' problems were analyzed based on the test that twenty-five selected students answered.

The data from the test were divided into surface strategy taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Each of the error types found in this research had significant gap numbers. The analysis results prove that the students still had problems forming passive voices. There were 155 errors found in the student's completion test answers. Based on the data gathered, the researchers found that omission is the main problem for students using passive voice, with 85 (55%) errors made. It was followed by misformation type with 42 (27%) errors and misordering with 20 (13%) errors. The least frequent error was addition, with 8 (5%) errors. The results are illustrated in the following table.

Table 1. Frequencies of students' errors in using passive voice.

N o	Tenses aspects	Omissio n	Additio n	Misformatio n	Misorderin g	Total(percentage)
1	Simple tense	8	-	5	2	15 (10%)
2	Progressiv e tense	17	3	7	15	42 (27%)

3	Perfect tense	42	5	8	1	56 (36%)
4	Modals	18	-	22	2	42 (27%)
Total		85 (55%)	8 (5%)	42 (27%)	20 (13%)	155 (100%)

From the previous table, it can be seen that although the students did make mistakes in all types of surface strategy taxonomy, they did not do so in all tense aspects. An additional error was not found when students formed passive tenses in simple tenses and used models. As seen in the percentage, the most frequent tenses that caused the errors were progressive and using models.

The findings of this research have shown that the students committed all types of surface strategy taxonomy errors. The result supports the previous studies by Abdillah, Sutarsyah, and Hasan, which revealed that the learners also committed errors in all forms of surface strategy taxonomy. However, they found misformation as the most dominant error, with a 54.6% percentage, and misordering (2.4%) as the least dominant error made[23]. The following discussion outlines the error types ranked from most to least frequent to gain a deeper understanding of the evidence, particularly regarding the findings of this recent study on the error types learners made according to surface strategy taxonomy.

3.1 Omission

Omission errors are when students forget to include essential elements, such that the sentence is incomplete or inaccurate. These errors fall under the category of language proficiency in writing using a taxonomy designed for Surface Strategy. The results of those errors may be nouns, verbs, articles, prepositions, or even whole clauses. These omissions can change the meaning of a sentence significantly, which is why they are so important for educators to recognize and address.

Omission errors take many forms, such as leaving out essential grammatical elements of a sentence. One example is a learner who writes, " The book was read by students" rather than "The book was read by the student" in question 1. In this corrected version, adding the article "the" clarifies which students are being referred to. This mistake occurs due to the learner's native language interference, Minangnese.

Another error was found in question 4, which tests forming passive voice in progressive tense. The student creates, "The project is completed by the students" from the active sentence "The students are completing the project". In this case, the sentence uses the passive voice, indicating that the project is the focus of the action rather than the students performing it. However, this sentence is not in the progressive tense but in the simple present passive voice. It typically uses the auxiliary "be" followed by "being" and the past participle of the main verb to convey an ongoing action in the passive voice. The correct form for expressing an ongoing action would be: "The project is being completed by the students." In the original sentence, omitting the word "being" creates a grammatical error. The phrase "is completed" suggests a state of completion rather than an ongoing action. Thus, the intended meaning of the project currently undergoing completion is lost.

The error in the passive voice of perfect tense was also found in the sentence, "The group has submitted the report". The sentence lacks the essential component to form a passive voice. The verb "been" should be added between "has" and "submitted". Without it, it is read that "the report" is the subject that acts rather than receives it. This omission also leads to confusion because the intended meaning is obscured. The correct sentence should be "The team has submitted the report". Recognizing and correcting these errors is essential for effective communication and demonstrates a strong understanding of English grammar.

The following example was found when forming a passive voice using a modal test: "The homework should be finished by tomorrow," which omits the verb "be." The verb "be" is necessary to form the passive voice with the modal "should." The omission leads to confusion, making the sentence fail to convey the obligation to complete the homework by a specified time. The correct sentence should be "The homework should be finished by tomorrow."

Based on the examples of errors made, it can also be concluded that students tend to omit the verbs "be, being, been," which are essential in forming the correct passive voice. This error can indicate areas where learners may struggle with the complexities of grammar. Omission errors can hinder effective communication. Ensuring that all necessary components are included in a sentence is vital for conveying precise meanings and avoiding misunderstandings.

3.2 Misformation

Misformation is one of the categories in the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which deals with language errors made by learners, particularly in writing and speaking. The use of incorrect forms of morphemes or structures characterizes this type of error. Misformation occurs when learners incorrectly apply grammatical rules, leading to incorrect forms. That can involve verbs, nouns, adjectives, or any part of speech where the expected form is not correctly utilized.

The students make forty-two misformations. Most errors were made when the students formed passive voices using modals. The most dominant wrong forms are in verb forms. The first example is in the sentence, "The children must do the chores". The sentence "The children must do the chores" contains a misformation error due to the incorrect use of the past participle form of the verb "do." In passive voice constructions, the auxiliary verb "be" must precede the correct past participle in this case, "did" is the simple past form, while the correct past participle is "done." Therefore, the sentence should read "The children must do the chores." This error illustrates a common issue where learners may confuse verb forms, leading to grammatical inaccuracies in expressing obligations or requirements in the passive voice.

The following example was in the perfect tense sentence, "The team has made the posters." The sentence "The team has made the posters" contains a misformation error due to the incorrect use of the subject-verb agreement in the auxiliary verb. The word "has" is incorrectly used with the plural noun "posters." The correct form should be "have" to match the plural subject, resulting in "The team has made the posters." This error illustrates a common issue where learners may overlook the necessity of ensuring that the verb form aligns with the subject in number, leading to grammatical inaccuracies in the sentence.

The other error was in the progressive tense sentence, "The assistant is writing the documents". The sentence "The assistant is writing the documents" contains a misinformation error due to the incorrect use of the verb form. The verb "write" is mistakenly used instead of its correct past

participle form, "written." In passive voice constructions, the present progressive tense requires the structure "are being" followed by the appropriate past participle to accurately indicate that the action is currently being performed on the subject—in this case, the documents. The error disrupts the grammatical integrity of the sentence. It can confuse the reader about the intended meaning, highlighting the importance of using the correct verb forms in passive voice structures.

The following example is in the simple tense sentence, "The author will write the novel". The sentence contains a misinformation error due to the incorrect use of the verb form; specifically, "wrote" is the simple past tense of "write," while the correct past participle for the passive voice in this context should be "written." In the passive voice structure for simple future tense, it is essential to use the correct past participle after the auxiliary verb "will be" to convey that the action of writing the novel is expected to happen in the future. This error highlights the importance of using proper verb forms to maintain grammatical accuracy and clarity in communication, as the original sentence can lead to confusion about the intended action.

3.3 Misordering

Misordering errors occur when the elements of a sentence are arranged incorrectly, disrupting the standard syntax and making the meaning unclear. In English, the typical word order in active and passive sentences follows a specific structure (e.g., Subject-Verb-Object in the active voice or Subject-Verb-By-Agent in the passive voice). When altered, this order can confuse readers or listeners about who is performing the action and who is receiving it. Based on the data obtained, there was proof that students tend to make mistakes when placing the auxiliary verbs. The example can be seen in the following examples.

In this research, the most misordering error was made in forming a passive voice with progressive tense. One can be seen in the sentence, "The assistant writes the documents". The sentence "The documents are written being by the assistant" contains a misordering error due to the incorrect arrangement of the words, which disrupts the standard structure of the passive voice in the progressive tense. In English, the correct passive construction should place the subject first, followed by the appropriate form of the verb "to be," and then the past participle, resulting in "The assistant is writing the documents." The original sentence's misordering leads to confusion about the intended meaning and makes it difficult to understand the action being performed. Proper word order is essential for clarity and grammatical accuracy, especially in conveying actions and agents in passive constructions.

A student also made an error in the sentence, "The novel be well written by the author". The sentence "The novel be well written by the author" contains a misordering error due to the incorrect placement of the auxiliary verbs, which disrupts the standard structure of the passive voice in the simple future tense. In English, the correct order should place "will" before "be" to form "will be," resulting in the sentence "The novel will be written by the author." The original misordering confuses the reader about the intended future action, as it fails to follow the conventional syntax that indicates that the action of writing the novel is expected to occur in the future. Adhering to the correct word order ensures clarity and grammatical correctness in passive constructions.

In the following example, a reordering error was in using modals in passive as in "The results could be analyzed by the researchers". The sentence "The results be could be analyzed by the researchers" contains a misordering error due to the incorrect arrangement of the modal verb

"could" and the auxiliary verb "be." In English, the correct structure for a passive voice sentence using a modal should place the modal verb directly before "be," resulting in the correct sentence "The researchers could analyze the results." The original misordering creates confusion about the intended meaning, making it unclear that the action of analyzing the results is possible and performed on the subject (the results) by the agent (the researchers). Proper word order is crucial in passive constructions to convey meaning accurately and maintain grammatical correctness.

The other example is in the sentence, "Was the book read by the students". The sentence contains a misordering error due to the incorrect placement of the subject and the auxiliary verb. In English, the standard structure for a passive voice sentence in the simple present tense requires the subject to come first, followed by the appropriate form of the verb "to be," and then the past participle, resulting in "The students read the book". The original misordering makes the sentence unclear, suggesting a question rather than a statement about the action being performed.

3.4 Addition

Addition errors occur when unnecessary words or elements are included in a sentence, leading to redundancy or grammatical inaccuracies. In the context of language learning, such errors often stem from learners attempting to create more complex sentences but inadvertently introducing superfluous components that disrupt the intended meaning. This study found 8% addition errors as the least dominant error. The errors were made in producing the passive voice of perfect and progressive tense.

The first example was "The students complete the project by themselves." The sentence includes the redundant phrase "by them," which is unnecessary since the subject "the students" has already been identified. Addition errors can confuse readers and dilute the clarity of communication, making it essential for writers to review their sentences for conciseness and to ensure that every word contributes meaningfully to the overall message.

Another example is in the sentence, "The posters have been made by the team by them". The sentence contains errors, primarily related to redundancy and clarity. The phrase "by them" is unnecessary because "the team" already identifies the agents acting, leading to confusion about who makes the posters. This addition complicates the sentence without adding value. The sentence could be streamlined for clarity and conciseness, improving its overall readability. A corrected version could be "The posters have been made by the team," effectively conveying the intended meaning without unnecessary repetition.

Based on this view, it is clear that the learners often tended to select or use inappropriate words when constructing sentences, particularly in relation to verb forms, word placement, and adding unnecessary words.

4 Discussion

This research highlights students' challenges in constructing passive voice, focusing on their frequent errors categorized under the surface strategy taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering[16]. Among these, omission errors were the most prevalent, accounting for 55% of the total errors. Misformation errors followed with 27%, misordering

errors made up 13%, and addition errors were the least frequent at 5%. These findings underscore the significant difficulty students experience in accurately constructing passive voice, particularly in correctly using auxiliary verbs, verb forms, and word order. The dominance of omission errors suggests that students often neglect essential grammatical components for forming passive constructions, which can distort the meaning or make the sentence ungrammatical[24].

The analysis reveals that students struggle most with the auxiliary verbs "be," "being," and "been," which are critical in the formation of the passive voice, especially in the progressive and perfect tenses. For instance, omission errors often involve leaving out forms of "be," such as in the sentence, "The project is completed by the students" instead of the expected "The project is being completed by the students" [20]. This omission indicates a gap in students' understanding of how auxiliary verbs interact with main verbs in passive constructions, particularly in tenses that require progressive or perfect aspects. Similarly, misformation errors, such as "The chores must be done by the children" instead of "The chores must be done by the children," reflect students' confusion with verb forms, wildly irregular verbs, and the use of models [25]. These errors often result from the students' reliance on incorrect rules or patterns internalized during their language learning process[4], [5].

Misordering errors, accounting for 13% of the total, suggest a difficulty with the syntactic structure of passive sentences. In examples like "The novel will be written by the author" instead of "The author will write the novel," the incorrect placement of auxiliary verbs or time indicators disrupts the intended meaning and fluency of the sentence[10]. That highlights a misunderstanding of the correct syntactic order for passive constructions, which can be particularly challenging for students whose native languages follow different sentence structures[7]. Although less frequent at 5%, addition errors also contribute to students' difficulties in mastering passive voice. These errors involve the unnecessary repetition of elements, as in the sentence, "The students complete the project by them". This redundancy complicates the sentence and suggests that students may be overcompensating in their attempts to clarify the subject and object roles in a passive construction[26].

These errors reflect common pitfalls that English learners encounter, particularly with the passive voice, and point to areas requiring targeted instructional strategies. Specifically, the findings suggest a need for focused teaching on auxiliary verbs, verb forms, and word order in passive voice constructions[2], [27]. Providing students with explicit practice in these areas, particularly in progressive and perfect tenses, where auxiliary verbs play a crucial role, is essential. Additionally, students would benefit from more exposure to varied sentence structures, helping them internalize the correct order of elements in passive sentences. By targeting these areas, educators can enhance students' ability to form passive sentences correctly and meaningfully.

The findings align with previous studies showing that students often struggle with passive voice formation. However, this research's dominance of omission errors contrasts with earlier studies that identified misformation errors as the most common challenge[9], [28]. For instance, previous research has often pointed to errors in verb forms as the primary difficulty in passive voice construction[8]. This discrepancy emphasizes the importance of considering specific learning contexts and adapting teaching methods to address students' unique challenges in different settings. In this case, the prevalence of omission errors suggests that the students may

not have received sufficient exposure to the concept of auxiliary verbs in passive constructions, particularly in more complex tenses[21].

Given these findings, educators should focus on reinforcing the rules of passive construction, with particular attention to the proper use of auxiliary verbs and correct word order[12]. Targeted exercises like transformation drills and error correction tasks could help students internalize the correct forms and structures[29]. Additionally, using a communicative approach incorporating passive voice in context, such as role-play or authentic reading and listening materials, may further support students' understanding[26]. By addressing these areas of difficulty, students can develop excellent proficiency in passive voice usage, ultimately improving their overall communication skills in English and enhancing their academic writing and speaking abilities.

5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that EFL learners at an Indonesian higher education institution encounter substantial challenges in mastering passive voice constructions, as evidenced by the 155 errors identified in their attempts to transform active sentences. Predominantly, omission errors—accounting for 55% of the total—highlight a critical difficulty with essential grammatical elements, particularly auxiliary verbs and verb forms. Misformation, misordering, and addition errors were also observed, albeit to a lesser extent, indicating additional areas of syntactic and morphological struggle.

These findings underscore the need for targeted instructional strategies that address the unique challenges of passive voice formation. Educators are encouraged to implement a multifaceted pedagogical approach, incorporating simplified examples, focused exercises on auxiliary usage, and communicative and task-based activities that reinforce correct syntactic structures. Such methods are likely to improve grammatical accuracy and enhance overall language proficiency.

Future research should extend these insights by examining error patterns across diverse educational contexts and investigating the long-term effects of tailored grammar instruction. By refining teaching strategies in light of these findings, educators can better support learners in developing the linguistic competence necessary for effective academic and professional communication.

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