

## Optimizing the Understanding of English Passive Sentences Among Students through the Mistake Buster Technique

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study explores the effectiveness of the Mistake Buster technique in optimizing the understanding of English passive sentences among students at ITB STIKOM Bali. Traditional teacher-centered learning approaches have gradually declined, paving the way for more interactive, student-centered methods. In this context, the research examines how the Mistake Buster technique, which emphasizes active student participation, can enhance comprehension of passive sentence structures. Conducted with students from the Digital Business Study Program, the study utilized pre-test and post-test assessments to evaluate the outcomes of the technique. The results showed a significant improvement in students' understanding of English passive sentences. A comparison between pre-test and post-test scores revealed a notable increase, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Mistake Buster technique in improving learning outcomes. These findings underscore the potential of innovative, student-centered teaching methods to foster deeper comprehension and engagement. It can effectively optimize the students' understanding, particularly for complex grammatical structures such as passive sentences.*

**KEYWORDS** -English passive sentence, mistake buster technique, student-centered

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### I. INTRODUCTION

English is an essential language skill for students in the current era of globalization. Mastery of this language is a requirement for academic graduation and a crucial asset for competing in the job market, particularly in writing academic studies or international articles. One of the grammatical aspects that often poses challenges for English learners is the transformation of active sentences into passive ones and vice versa. This issue is especially relevant for students who predominantly use Indonesian as their first language. In Indonesian, passive forms are only marked by the prefix “di-” without changes to the verb form based on time or tenses unlike in English, which requires verb adjustments according to grammatical rules.

For example, the active sentence “*She studies English every day*” is often incorrectly transformed into “*English is study by she every day*” by students. This error illustrates that students struggle to grasp grammatical rules and are influenced by the patterns of their first language. However, the correct form should be “*English is studied (by her) every day.*” If not addressed promptly, such errors can lead to more significant difficulties in learning English, including composing academic articles that meet international standards. Therefore, an effective teaching technique is needed to overcome these challenges while enhancing student's engagement and comprehension of the material.

Student engagement during the learning process plays a vital role in successful material understanding. However, a common phenomenon is low student engagement, mainly when learning is dominated by teacher activity in which chalk-and-talk. Teacher-centered learning approaches tend to make students passive and less motivated. Conversely, student-centered approaches allow students to actively participate in understanding the material. In this context, the Mistake Buster technique offers an effective alternative for teaching grammar.

The Mistake Buster technique is a grammar teaching method that emphasizes students' ability to identify and correct grammatical errors in texts or sentences prepared by the teacher. According to Huyn (2003), this technique has been proven effective in encouraging students to engage and take responsibility for their learning actively. By correcting grammatical patterns or rule errors, students better understand the material and develop critical and analytical skills essential for language learning.

Based on the phenomena above, this study addresses the challenges in transforming active and passive sentences, which are still influenced by first-language patterns. This research is conducted on third-semester students of the Digital Business Study Program at ITB STIKOM Bali in the Foreign Language I course, which focuses explicitly on active and passive sentences and the influence of tenses in English. These students use Indonesian as their first language and learn English as a supplementary skill for formal education. By employing the Mistake Buster technique, this study aims to optimize students' engagement and understanding of active and passive sentences, positively impacting their overall English proficiency.

This study aims to evaluate the improvement in student's ability to understand passive sentences in English before and after the implementation of the Mistake Buster technique. To measure this progress, the research utilizes a pre-test and post-test approach, allowing for a comparative analysis of student's performance. The pre-test is conducted to assess their initial understanding of passive sentence structures before the technique is introduced. Following the application of the Mistake Buster technique, which encourages students to actively identify and correct errors, a post-test is administered to determine any significant improvements. By comparing the results of both tests, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Mistake Buster technique in enhancing students' comprehension and mastery of passive sentences.

## **II. METHOD AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method to narrate the findings derived from the collected data in detail. The approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In this case, the research focuses on implementing the Mistake Buster technique to enhance the understanding of passive sentence in English among students of the Digital Business Program at ITB STIKOM Bali.

This study focuses exclusively on the canonical passive voice in English, which refers to the standard or most used form of passive construction. In canonical passive sentences, the sentence's subject receives the verb's action, and the object of the action becomes the subject. For example, in the sentence "The book was read by the student," the subject "the book" receives the action of being read, and the verb "was read" is in the past tense, which is a typical form of canonical passive construction.

The decision to limit the scope of this research to canonical passive was made to simplify the analysis and focus on the fundamental structure of passive sentences that students are most likely to encounter in their language learning process. By concentrating on canonical passive, the study aims to examine how students understand and apply the basic passive voice construction, including the correct use of auxiliary verbs (such as "is," "was," "were," and others.) and the past participle form of the main verb.

Data for the study was collected from 31 students enrolled in the Digital Business Program taking a foreign language course. These students were selected to provide insights into the effectiveness of the Mistake Buster technique in the learning process. Data collection methods included the pre-test and post-test. The tests in this study are designed to assess the student's ability to understand and use passive voice in English before and after implementing the Mistake Buster technique. Both test formats are divided into two parts. In the first part of the test, students are instructed to write a short essay on the theme of digital marketing, ensuring that

their essay contains at least two passive-voice sentences. This task aims to evaluate their ability to correctly apply passive voice in a context relevant to their field of study. In the second part of the test, students are provided with an essay containing grammatical errors specifically related to the use of passive voice. They are asked to identify these errors and explain the nature and location of the mistakes. This task evaluates their ability to recognize and correct errors in using passive voice. Both parts of the test are administered as a pre-test before the treatment and as a post-test after the treatment, allowing for a comparison of their understanding and application of passive voice in English.

In addition, observations were conducted to assess the classroom environment and teaching atmosphere directly. This observation aimed to provide a more holistic view of the learning process, including how students responded and interacted while applying the mistake-buster technique. All students and the course instructor have consented to participate in the study, ensuring that the data gathered is reliable for further analysis and discussion of the research findings.

## 2.2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the constructivist theory, which emphasizes students active learning and the idea that knowledge is constructed through their experience and interaction. The primary objective of this research is to investigate whether the use of the Mistake Buster technique, combined with a student-centered approach, can enhance students' ability to understand and use passive sentences in English effectively. The constructivist approach encourages learners to take an active role in their own learning process, promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and deeper comprehension. In this context, the Mistake Buster technique allows students to identify, analyze, and correct errors in passive sentence structures, fostering engagement and reinforcing their grammatical knowledge through hands-on practice. By shifting the focus from teacher-led instruction to student-driven exploration, this method aims to create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. The study seeks to determine whether this approach leads to significant improvements in student's grasp of passive sentences, ultimately contributing to more effective language learning outcomes.

## III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study implemented a series of specifically designed tests to comprehensively understand students' abilities in comprehending and utilizing passive sentences in English. These tests aimed to assess students' skills in identifying the structure of passive sentences, applying the correct tense, and correcting errors within passive constructions. The results of these tests are presented in the following table, which illustrates the distribution of students' scores.

### 3.1. Pre-Test Result

The result from the pre-test serves as the foundation for analyzing recurring error patterns. It will become the focal point during the implementation of the Mistake Buster technique in learning sessions before conducting the post-test.

Table 3. Pre-Test Result

Question	Number of Students	Question/Student	Questions in total	Correct Answers	Average Score
Multiple choice	31	10	310	187	60.4
Short answer	31	10	465	234	50.3

The pre-test results indicate that the students have a basic understanding of passive sentences in English; however, their comprehension and application of the concept still need to be improved. Despite studying passive constructions before the test, the results reveal that their knowledge still needs to develop fully.

One of the primary obstacles they face is the interference from their first language, Indonesian, which has a structure vastly different from that of English. In Indonesian, passive sentences do not require tense changes or auxiliary verbs like in English, which leads to confusion when applying English passive sentence rules. This structural difference between the two languages seems to be a key factor in the errors observed in their responses.

One of the biggest challenges for the students is the application of tense changes in passive sentences. English utilizes a variety of tenses that affect both the main verb and the auxiliary verb (*to be*). In a passive sentence, the form of *to be* must match the tense being used, such as "*is*" for present tense, "*was*" for past tense, and "*will be*" for future tense. Many students have yet to grasp this concept fully, and they often use the wrong form of *tobe* for the intended tense, such as using "*is*", where "*was*", or "*will be*" should be used. It demonstrates that they have not fully internalized the importance of matching tense with the appropriate auxiliary verb and past participle.

Additionally, transforming the main verb into its past participle form presents another challenge. In English, the main verb in a passive sentence must be in the past participle form, such as "*eaten*," "*done*," or "*written*." Students often need help determining when to use the correct past participle, especially in sentences involving more complex tenses. This issue arises because students tend to transfer rules from Indonesian, where passive sentences do not require such verb form changes.

Student's most frequent mistakes in the pre-test were related to the incorrect use of *to be* and the main verb about the tense. For example, many students wrote sentences such as "*The book is read by the student yesterday*" when the past tense was required, leading to the correct form "*The book was read by the student*." This indicates that students must fully know how tense, auxiliary verbs and past participles must work together in a passive sentence. These errors are likely due to the student's need to understand the relationship between tense and verb forms in English.

Overall, while the students have a basic understanding of passive sentences, the pre-test results highlight significant gaps in their ability to apply this knowledge correctly. Based on the average score, which falls into the "insufficient" category, it is clear that a more targeted and in-depth approach to teaching passive voice is needed. The interference from the Indonesian language, particularly in tense and verb transformations, must be addressed through focused instruction. With the proper teaching techniques, such as the Mistake Buster method, students can better grasp the structural differences between Indonesian and English and improve their use of tenses and auxiliary verbs in passive sentences.

### 3.2. Post-Test Result

After conducting the pre-test and identifying the most common errors, particularly in the use of auxiliary verbs (*to be*) and the correct verb forms corresponding to specific tenses, the Mistake Buster teaching technique was implemented to address these issues in learning English passive sentences. This technique focused on helping students recognize and correct their mistakes through active engagement and error analysis. Following the application of this method, a post-test was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. The results of the post-test are presented as follows:

Table 3. Post-Test Result

Question	Number of Students	Question/Student	Questions in total	Correct Answers	Average Score
Multiple choice	31	10	310	286	92.3
Short answer	31	10	465	340	73.1

The implementation of the Mistake Buster technique significantly improved students' understanding of English passive sentences, as evidenced by the post-test results showing a notable increase in scores compared to the pre-test. In the pre-test for multiple-choice questions, students achieved an average score of 60.32%, while in the post-test, the average score rose to 92.26%, reflecting a remarkable improvement of 31.94 percentage points. Similarly, the pre-test average score for the writing task was 50.32%. After applying the Mistake Buster technique, the post-test results showed an increase of 73.12%, indicating a growth of 22.8

percentage points. These results underscore the technique's effectiveness in addressing the students' initial difficulties with auxiliary verbs, tense agreement, and verb transformations in passive sentences.

The Mistake Buster technique fostered an interactive and student-centered learning environment. Unlike traditional teacher-driven methods, this approach encouraged students to actively identify, analyze actively, and correct errors in passive sentences. By engaging students in hands-on activities, the technique enhanced their ability to spot mistakes, understand the structural rules of passive sentences, and apply them correctly. This active involvement increased their confidence and reinforced their conceptual understanding as they became more aware of the common errors and their solutions.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the mistake-buster technique lies in its focus on critical thinking and collaborative learning. Students worked together to evaluate mistakes, providing opportunities for peer discussion and mutual learning. This approach helped bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, particularly in overcoming challenges posed by the interference of their first language, Indonesian, with its differing grammatical structures. The method's emphasis on addressing specific areas of difficulty, such as tense changes and the use of auxiliary verbs, proved instrumental in improving students' mastery of passive voice construction.

The remarkable improvement observed in the post-test results highlights the potential of the mistake-buster technique as an effective teaching method. This approach improved students' understanding of passive sentences by actively engaging them in learning and focusing on their specific challenges. It empowered them to identify and correct errors independently. It demonstrates that the Mistake-Buster technique is a practical and impactful strategy for enhancing students' linguistic competence in a focused and interactive manner.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the Mistake Buster technique in improving students' understanding of English passive sentences. The significant increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test results underscores the impact of this student-centred teaching approach. By fostering active participation and encouraging critical thinking, the technique effectively addressed common challenges such as incorrect usage of auxiliary verbs and tense mismatches, which were influenced by the structural differences between English and Indonesian. The Mistake Buster technique enhanced students' comprehension and empowered them to independently identify and correct errors, paving the way for sustained linguistic competence. This approach is a valuable tool in teaching complex grammatical concepts, emphasizing the importance of interactive and targeted learning strategies in language education.

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