

Voice

Semantics. Voice is another category of the English verb that deals with the interrelation of the acting part and affected part in a sentence. It has as well two values, Active and Passive.

The general structure of a sentence in English is "(subject) [V] (object)." If we put the object in the place of a subject, the verb has to change its voice for the sentence to retain the same meaning as it had in the original state.

The category of Voice functions in a similar way to Aspect and Phase. Should we desire to include it in the set of tense-forming categories, we will have a 4-dimensional object $3 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ which would yield 24 tense forms; this should make it clear that the number of tenses (with the lowercase "t") is completely arbitrary.

Formation Formulas.

Active: [V]

Passive: [be] V₃

It can be understood that after swapping the subject and object the sentence will take on the following structure: "(object) [be] V₃ by (subject)" (here "(object)" will be the new sentence subject!). In case the object is indirect (with a preposition before), the latter will remain after the verb: "(subject) [V] (prep) (object)" will give us "(object) [be] V₃ (prep) by (subject)" after changing the Voice.

Application & Examples. Voice switching in sentences is not very hard if you have learned to work with multiple grammatical categories acting upon the verb. As you may see, Voice works on the same level with Aspect and Phase.

"The hunter killed a snake with a stone." The verb "killed" is in the Past Tense, so we need to take the verb "be" in the same Tense ("was") with the Participle II of "kill" (i.e., "killed"), as well as flip the subject and object, bearing in mind the structure pattern above. "A snake was killed by a hunter with a stone" will be the sentence with the Passive Voice structure.