

Payton, Bible Translation, Session 23, Passive Constructions Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Payton, Bible Translation, Session 23, Passive Constructions, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. George Payton's lecture on Bible translation focuses on the complexities of passive constructions in the Old and New Testaments. He **explains passive and active voice**, providing examples and discussing how to translate passive constructions, particularly in languages lacking a passive voice. The lecture **highlights the importance of clarifying the agent and patient** in passive sentences to ensure clear communication. Furthermore, it emphasizes **contextual understanding** and the use of paratextual information like footnotes to aid comprehension. Finally, the lecture advocates for using **active voice whenever possible** for better readability and impact.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Payton, Session 23, Passive Constructions – Double click the icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introductory Series → Bible Translation).



Payton_BT_Session2
3.mp3

3. Bible Translation: Session 23, Passive Constructions

Understanding Passive Constructions in Bible Translation

Study Guide

Key Concepts:

- **Active Voice:** The subject of the sentence performs the action. Example: "The dog bit John."
- **Passive Voice:** The subject of the sentence receives the action. Example: "John was bitten by the dog."
- **Agent:** The entity performing the action in a sentence.
- **Patient:** The entity receiving the action in a sentence.
- **Pseudo-Passive:** A construction that functions like a passive voice but doesn't have a specific passive verb form.
- **Middle Voice:** A verb form that indicates a state of being rather than an active or passive action.
- **Explicit:** Clearly stated or expressed, leaving no room for confusion.
- **Implicit:** Implied or hinted at, but not directly stated.
- **Paratextual Material:** Additional materials that help readers understand a text, such as footnotes, introductions, glossaries, and study guides.
- **Intertextuality:** The relationship between different texts, particularly how one text references or draws meaning from another.

Reasons for Using Passive Constructions:

- To emphasize the recipient of the action.
- To obscure the agent of the action, either because it is unknown or intentionally hidden.

Challenges of Translating Passive Constructions:

- Some languages lack a specific passive verb form.
- Passive constructions can be less clear and direct than active constructions.

Strategies for Translating Passive Constructions:

- **Identify the agent and patient:** Determine who is performing the action and who is receiving it.
- **Restate the sentence using an active verb:** If possible, rephrase the sentence to make the agent the subject.
- **Make the participants explicit:** Clearly identify the agent and patient, even if they were not explicitly mentioned in the original text.
- **Consider the context:** Determine whether the passive voice is used for a specific reason (e.g., to hide the agent) and whether that reason is relevant in the target language.
- **Utilize paratextual material:** Footnotes, glossaries, and other materials can provide additional information to clarify passive constructions.

Short-Answer Quiz

1. What is the difference between active and passive voice?
2. What is a pseudo-passive construction? Provide an example from the source material.
3. Why might a writer choose to use a passive construction? Give two reasons.
4. What are two challenges that translators face when dealing with passive constructions?
5. Explain the concept of "making the participants explicit" when translating passive constructions.
6. Why is the active voice generally preferred in good writing?
7. How can paratextual material be helpful in clarifying passive constructions? Give two examples.
8. In the example from Acts 16:2, how is the passive construction "he was well spoken of" rephrased using an active voice?
9. Why might a translator choose to leave a passive construction unchanged even if the target language has a passive voice?

10. Dr. Payton argues that sometimes it's necessary to maintain figurative language, even if it might be confusing. Explain his reasoning using the example of "the leaven of the Pharisees."

Answer Key

1. Active voice is when the subject performs the action (e.g., "The cat chased the mouse"). Passive voice is when the subject receives the action (e.g., "The mouse was chased by the cat").
2. A pseudo-passive functions like a passive voice but lacks a distinct passive verb form. An example from the text is the Orma construction "Goyo danen," meaning "Goyo was beaten."
3. Writers use passive constructions to emphasize the recipient of the action or to obscure the agent when it's unknown or intentionally hidden.
4. Challenges include languages lacking passive verb forms and the potential for passive constructions to be less clear than active ones.
5. Making participants explicit means clearly identifying the agent and patient, even if not directly stated in the source text, to enhance clarity.
6. Active voice is preferred because it is more direct, concise, and often more vivid and impactful in writing.
7. Paratextual material like footnotes can explain the implied agent or provide cultural context for understanding the passive construction. Glossaries can clarify the meaning of terms related to the action.
8. The passive construction is rephrased as "the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him."
9. A translator might retain a passive construction if the author intentionally used it to obscure the agent or for stylistic reasons.
10. Maintaining the figurative language of "leaven" preserves the intended imagery and potential for misunderstanding, which is key to the narrative's flow and teaching point.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using the active voice versus the passive voice in writing and translation.
2. Analyze the use of passive constructions in the biblical examples provided by Dr. Payton. How do these constructions function in their respective contexts? What challenges do they pose for translators?
3. Evaluate the different strategies that translators can use to handle passive constructions. When might one strategy be more effective than another? Provide specific examples from the source material.
4. Explain the role of paratextual material in aiding comprehension of biblical texts, particularly in relation to complex grammatical constructions like passive voice and genitive constructions.
5. Dr. Payton emphasizes the importance of considering the author's intent and the overall communicative goal of the text. How can translators strike a balance between clarifying potentially confusing grammar and preserving the intended meaning and style of the original text?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Active Voice:** A grammatical voice where the subject of the sentence performs the action.
- **Agent:** The person or thing that performs the action in a sentence.
- **Explicit:** Stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for confusion or doubt.
- **Implicit:** Implied though not directly expressed; inherent.
- **Intertextuality:** The shaping of a text's meaning by another text.
- **Middle Voice:** A grammatical voice that falls between active and passive, often indicating a state of being or an action performed by the subject upon itself.
- **Paratextual Material:** Supplementary material that accompanies a text, such as introductions, footnotes, and glossaries.
- **Passive Voice:** A grammatical voice where the subject of the sentence receives the action.
- **Patient:** The person or thing that receives the action in a sentence.
- **Pseudo-Passive:** A construction that functions like a passive but lacks a distinct passive verb form.

4. Briefing Document

Briefing Doc: Passive Constructions in Bible Translation

Source: Excerpts from "Payton_BT__EN_Session23.pdf" - Dr. George Payton, Bible Translation, Session 23, Passive Constructions

Main Theme: This session focuses on the challenges of translating passive constructions in the Bible, particularly for languages that lack a distinct passive voice. Dr. Payton explores strategies to ensure clear communication while remaining faithful to the original text.

Key Ideas & Facts:

1. Understanding Passive Constructions:

- Passive voice emphasizes the recipient of the action rather than the agent.
- **Example:** "John was bitten by the dog" (passive) vs. "The dog bit John" (active).
- Identifying the agent and the patient is crucial for accurate translation.

1. Reasons for Passive Voice:

- **Focus:** Draws attention to the person receiving the action.
- **Agent Omission:** Agent unknown. **Example:** "My bike was stolen."
- Intentional concealment. **Example:** Children hiding the identity of the window breaker.

1. Challenges in Translation:

- **Greek Abundance:** The New Testament, written in Greek, frequently uses passive constructions.
- **Language Discrepancies:** Some languages lack a specific passive voice. **Example:** Orma language relies on a "pseudo-passive" construction with an unspecified subject.

1. Strategies for Clear Communication:

- **Active Voice Preference:** Generally preferred in good writing for clarity and vividness.
- May be more natural and impactful in the target language.

- **Explicit Participants:** Making agents and patients clear enhances understanding.
- **Contextual Adaptation:** Sometimes maintaining the passive voice is appropriate, especially when the agent is deliberately obscured.
- **Example:** Jesus' use of "leaven of the Pharisees."
- **Paratextual Aids:** Footnotes, glossaries, and other resources can clarify complex passages and unfamiliar imagery.

Important Quotes:

- "The purpose of this lecture and all the others is not to say you have to do it this way. The purpose is to say, if you had to, here are some suggestions on how to do it."
- "Sometimes you don't make it explicit if the writer wanted to keep the identity of the person secret for one reason or another."
- "We translate the scriptures so they can be read out loud."
- "The people doing the translation need to keep in mind what else our people need in order to understand this text."

Conclusion:

Translating passive constructions requires careful analysis of the text, the target language, and the author's intent. The goal is to achieve effective communication and make the Scriptures accessible to readers without compromising accuracy or meaning. Utilizing active voice when possible, clarifying participants, and strategically employing paratextual aids are valuable strategies for overcoming these translation challenges.

5. FAQs on Payton, Bible Translation, Session 23, Passive Constructions, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Passive Constructions in Bible Translation

1. What is a passive construction?

A passive construction is a grammatical form where the subject of the sentence receives the action instead of performing it. For example, in "John was bitten by the dog," John is the subject, but the dog is the one doing the biting.

2. Why are passive constructions used?

Passives are used to shift the focus onto the recipient of the action. Sometimes the agent (the performer of the action) is unknown or intentionally left out to emphasize the receiver.

3. What challenges do passive constructions pose in Bible translation?

Identifying the agent and the recipient can be challenging, especially when the agent is unspecified. This can create gaps in communication for readers who might not fully grasp who is performing the action. Additionally, some languages lack a passive voice, requiring translators to find creative solutions.

4. How do translators handle passive constructions when the target language lacks a passive voice?

One method is using a "pseudo-passive" construction. This involves using an active verb form in a way that implies a passive meaning. For example, in the Orma language, the sentence "Goyo danen" can mean either "The people beat Goyo" or "Somebody beat Goyo," depending on whether the subject marker is attached to "Goyo" or not.

5. What are some examples of passive constructions in the Bible, and how might they be translated?

- **Mark 1:14:** "Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days, being tempted by Satan." This could be translated as "Satan tempted Jesus for 40 days in the wilderness," emphasizing the duration and agent of the temptation.
- **Mark 14:4:** "Why has this perfume been wasted?" This could be translated as "Why did this woman waste this perfume?" shifting the focus to the woman's action.

- **Acts 4:11:** "He is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders." This could be rendered as "You builders rejected this stone," highlighting the builders' role in the rejection.

6. Why do translators sometimes choose to use the active voice instead of the passive voice even when the target language has a passive form?

The active voice is generally preferred in good writing because it's more direct, vivid, and impactful. It can also sound more natural and normal in the target language.

7. When should translators avoid making the agent of a passive construction explicit?

If the author intentionally left the agent unspecified for a reason (like protecting someone's identity or creating a sense of mystery), translators should maintain that ambiguity. For example, in the parable of the leaven, Jesus deliberately used the phrase "leaven of the Pharisees" to create a teaching moment and maintain a sense of intrigue.

8. What tools can translators use to help readers understand difficult passive constructions?

Footnotes, glossaries, section headings, study guides, and book introductions can provide valuable context and explanations for challenging grammatical structures and cultural nuances. These tools are essential for ensuring effective communication and accurate understanding of the biblical text.