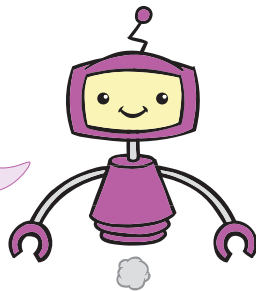


My passive voice

I can't help but notice how important the passive voice seems to be in Indonesian. Let's have a look at how it has been used so far.



LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 6
Learning Object 4: *What a year!*

PRIOR LEARNING:

Stage 2

Module 18 Work Sheet 3: *The one that got away*

Work Sheet 2: *Jamming it up*

Module 16 Work Sheet 5: *A simple yes or no would suffice*

Module 15 Work Sheet 7: *Let the games begin*

1 Passively speaking

Throughout Stages 1, 2 and 3 you have encountered the object focus construction, also known as the passive voice. The object focus construction plays an important role in Indonesian communication, much more so than in English.

Indonesians prefer to focus their attention on the object of an action, rather than on the subject or agent; that is, the person who carries out a particular action. Often this is simply a random choice, but often it is a way of maintaining social harmony.

By deflecting the focus of speech away from the person whom they are addressing, towards the object being spoken about, Indonesians are able to

engage in conversation while minimising the risk of embarrassing, or belittling, the person to whom they are talking.

At other times, when speaking in the first person about themselves, using the passive voice deflects attention away from themselves towards the object to which they are referring. This is done to avoid sounding arrogant; it is all about saving face. This work sheet will provide a summary of the object focus constructions you have encountered so far.

2 Object focus construction

First- and second-person object focus construction

The simplest form of the object focus construction is when you are talking about an action undertaken by you as the first person (*saya*), or by a person you are addressing in the second person (*Anda, kamu, Ibu, Bapak*, and so on).

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First person

Note the active form:

Saya menulis surat itu.

I wrote that letter.

Note the active structure:

<i>Saya</i>	<i>menulis</i>	<i>surat itu.</i>
subject (first person)	verb	object

Here the focus is on the subject, *saya*.

Note the object focus form:

In the first-person object focus construction, simply place the object to the front of the sentence.

➡ For example:

Surat itu saya tulis.

(Literally, 'that letter I wrote'.)

Note the object focus structure:

<i>Surat itu</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>tulis.</i>
object	subject (first person)	verb (minus <i>meN~</i> prefix)*

Now the focus of the sentence is on the object, in this case *surat itu*, 'that letter'.

Note:

* Remember to remove the *meN~* prefix from the base word, paying attention to the original spelling of the base word, for example, *menulis* would become *tulis*.

Second person

When addressing a second person, the structure remains the same. We will use a question for this example:

Note the active form:

Kamu membeli buku itu di mana?

Where did you buy that book?

Note the active structure:

<i>Kamu</i>	<i>membeli</i>	<i>buku itu</i>	<i>di mana?</i>
subject (second person)	verb	object	question phrase

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Note the object focus form:

Buku itu kamu beli di mana?

(Literally, 'that book you bought where?')

Note the object focus structure:

<i>Buku itu</i>	<i>kamu</i>	<i>beli</i>	<i>di mana?</i>
object	subject (second person)	verb (minus <i>meN-</i> prefix)	question phrase

Once again, the focus is on the object — 'that book'.

Third person object focus construction

The other, slightly more difficult, structure is the object focus construction used when referring to a third person or persons, such as *dia*, *-nya*, *mereka*, *Peter*, *Pak Sugianto*, *Ibu Smart*, and so on.

Note the active form:

Peter menulis laporan tentang Pulau Fraser.

Peter wrote a report about Fraser Island.

Note the active structure:

<i>Peter</i>	<i>menulis</i>	<i>laporan tentang Pulau Fraser.</i>
subject (third person)	verb	object

The object focus form:

To focus on the object of this sentence, that is, *laporan tentang Pulau Fraser*, we need to:

- move the object to the front, *Laporan tentang Pulau Fraser*
- replace the *meN-* prefix with *di-* on the base word (taking note of the original spelling of the base word), *ditulis*
- end with the subject, *Peter*, plus an optional *oleh* (by).

Note the new object focus structure:

<i>Laporan tentang Pulau Fraser</i>	<i>ditulis</i>	<i>(oleh) Peter.</i>
object	<i>di-</i> prefix + base word	subject (including optional <i>oleh</i>) (third person)

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An exception — third person pronouns

You can also use the first- and second-person structure when referring to a third person, but **only if using a pronoun**, such as *dia* / *~nya* or *mereka*, and not their name.

➔ For example:

Dia menulis laporan tentang Pulau Fraser.

He wrote a report about Fraser Island.

The object focus can be either:

<i>Laporan tentang Pulau Fraser</i>	<i>ditulis</i>	<i>~nya</i> or <i>(oleh)~nya</i> .
object	<i>di~</i> prefix + base word	subject (including optional <i>oleh</i>)

Note: the pronoun *dia* becomes the suffix *~nya* in the object focus form.

Or, the first- and second-person structure:

<i>Laporan tentang Pulau Fraser</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>tulis.</i>
object	subject (third person pronoun)	base word minus the <i>meN-</i> prefix

3 Adding auxiliaries, prepositional phrases and adverbs

Auxiliaries

When constructing object focus sentences, Indonesian auxiliaries such as *sedang*, *belum*, *sudah* and *akan* are always placed immediately **after** the object. This is because the subject and the verb cannot be separated.

Active, subject focus:

Saya akan membeli buku itu.

I am going to buy that book.

Object focus:

<i>Buku itu</i>	<i>akan</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>beli.</i>
object	auxiliary	subject	verb

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Active, subject focus:

Dia sudah menjual rumahnya.
He has sold his house.

Object focus:

<i>Rumahnya</i>	<i>sudah</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>jual.</i>
object	auxiliary	subject	verb

or

<i>Rumahnya</i>	<i>sudah</i>	<i>dijual</i>	<i>(oleh)~nya</i>
object	auxiliary	verb	subject

Prepositional phrases and adverbs

Prepositional phrases, such as *dari toko, kepada teman saya* } remain **in their usual positions**, generally at
Adverbs, such as *besok* and *kemarin* } the end of the sentence.

Active, subject focus:

Dia sudah menjual rumahnya kepada teman saya.
He has sold his house to my friend.

Object focus structure:

<i>Rumahnya</i>	<i>sudah</i>	<i>dia</i>	<i>jual</i>	<i>kepada teman saya.</i>
object	auxiliary	subject	verb	prepositional phrase

Active, subject focus:

Saya akan membeli buku itu besok.
I am going to buy that book tomorrow.

Object focus structure:

<i>Buku itu</i>	<i>akan</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>beli</i>	<i>besok.</i>
object	auxiliary	subject	verb	adverb

4 Omitting the subject

In third-person object focus sentences, the subject can often be omitted.

➔ For example:

Mobil itu akan dicuci besok.

That car will be washed tomorrow.

Rumahnya sudah dijual kepada teman saya.

His house has been sold to my friend.

Note the object focus structure:

<i>Mobil itu</i>	<i>akan</i>	<i>dicuci</i>		<i>besok.</i>
object	auxiliary	verb	omitted agent	adverb

Note the object focus structure:

<i>Rumahnya</i>	<i>sudah</i>	<i>dijual</i>		<i>kepada teman saya.</i>
object	auxiliary	verb	omitted agent	prepositional phrase

Exercises

Exercise 1

Transform these active, subject focus sentences into object focus sentences.

1.1 Saya akan membeli komputer baru.

1.2 Kamu akan mencari komputer baru di mana?

1.3 Saya sudah menemukan komputer baru di Ratu Plasa.

1.4 Apakah kamu mau mencoba makanan ini?

1.5 Dia mencuri es-krim rasa coklat dari iCafe.

1.6 Zak menghabiskan semua coklat organik Anna.

1.7 Peter memecahkan jendela dengan bola sepak.

Exercise 2

Read the following information about a burglary. Then write a list of the main events in the object focus construction without referring to the subject. An example has been given for you.

- Seseorang merampok sebuah pabrik es-krim tadi malam.
- Perampoknya memecahkan jendela di belakang pabrik itu.
- Perampoknya membuka pintu ruang pendingin lalu mengambil beberapa kardus berisi es-krim.
- Perampoknya tanpa sengaja mengaktifkan alarm.
- Dia melarikan diri dari pabrik itu tetapi dia menjatuhkan dua kardus es-krim.
- Polisi datang dan menangkap perampok lalu membawanya ke kantor polisi.
- Polisi mengembalikan kardus-kardus es-krim kepada pihak pabrik.

Example:

Perampok memecahkan jendela.

The thief broke the window.

Jendela dipecahkan.

The window was broken.

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Exercise 3

On the following page there are two pictures. Find the differences between the two pictures, then write as many object focus sentences as you can, describing the differences in the second picture.

Use the vocabulary list below for help. Verbs are provided in active form.

Vocabulary

<i>jam</i>	clock	<i>telepon</i>	telephone
<i>jam dinding</i>	wall clock	<i>kaos kaki</i>	socks
<i>meja</i>	table	<i>menukar</i>	to change/exchange
<i>kursi</i>	chair	<i>membalik</i>	to turn something over
<i>keranjang</i>	basket	<i>mengeluarkan</i>	to put something outside
<i>kucing</i>	cat	<i>mengambil</i>	to take away/remove
<i>radio</i>	radio	<i>menutup</i>	to close
<i>bola</i>	ball	<i>memindahkan</i>	to move something
<i>buku</i>	book	<i>menurunkan</i>	to lower something
<i>bantal</i>	cushion	<i>menjatuhkan</i>	to drop something
<i>cangkir</i>	cup		

