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Grammar by the book

The passive in pedagogical grammars
for EFL/ESL teachers

INTRODUCTION

It's easy if you ask them to rewrite the sentences, because they find it easy to follow. However [...] they just don't know when we are supposed to use passive voice and when we are supposed to use active voice. And one of the students even asked me 'Miss Wong, why do we have to use passive voice in our daily life? And I find this question difficult to answer, ha, and I 'Oh, I'll tell you next time' [...] and then I asked my colleagues 'Why do we use and teach passive voice?' and no one can give me the correct answer. And then I go home and think about it. But even now I really don't know how to handle that student's questions. I finish the worksheets with them and they know how to rewrite the sentences. But I don't know how to explain to them. (A Hong Kong secondary school teacher, quoted in Andrews 1999, p. 169)

The main virtue of the grammarian is (alas) not originality and inspiration but consistency and reliability. (Lehmann - Maslova 2004, p. 1862)

The present work is an exercise in grammaticography¹. Its aim is to explore how one specific area of English grammar – the passive – is embodied in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers. For the purposes of this study, I am using the term 'pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers'

¹ In this work the term 'grammaticography' will be used to refer to the study of grammar books, while 'grammatology' will be intended as the study of the development of grammatical models (as in *e.g.* transformational grammar, traditional grammar etc.). Other commentators use both terms to refer to the writing of grammar books (cf. Graustein - Leitner 1989b, Leitner 1985). I shall thus follow Lehmann and Maslova, who point out that «[g]rammaticography is related to investigation of grammar just as lexicography is related to lexicology (investigation of the lexicon)» (Lehmann - Maslova 2004, p. 1857).

to mean those grammar books aimed specifically at trainee and practising teachers of English as a foreign/second language and intended to supply metalinguistic information on English grammar, often combined with information on the typical problems experienced by EFL/ESL learners in acquiring different grammatical areas, suggestions on suitable teaching activities and practice in language analysis and error correction.

Pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers have been chosen as the main focus of this grammaticographical survey for a number of reasons. In the first place, there appears to be very little research on recent pedagogical grammaticography. Indeed, although important studies were carried out in the Eighties and early Nineties in the area of modern grammaticography, notably in continental Europe, the main thrust of these inquiries was the analysis of descriptive/reference grammars. The last couple of years have seen a new surge of interest in the study of grammar writing, which has thus far resulted in the publication of an edited collection (*Catching language: the standing challenge of grammar writing*)² and a special issue of «Studies in language»³, but again the issues that are tackled in these recent publications concern the writing of descriptive grammars, in particular of lesser known languages. Even within the specific domain of pedagogical grammar studies, the investigation of grammars for teachers has hitherto been almost completely ignored⁴. Two recent studies (Balcom 2001 and Ellis 2002) have shed some light on how current grammar textbooks for EFL/ESL students are designed and how they present (or fail to present) aspects of English grammar. Grammar materials aimed at EFL/ESL *teachers*, however, are still virtually uncharted territory. This is all the more surprising given that there is now a growing area of research exploring EFL/ESL teachers' language awareness⁵.

Another reason that has led me to focus this work on pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers is the fact that these books set themselves the overarching aim of bridging the gap between linguistic research and the practical concerns of the non-academic language professional. As such, they are the ideal 'laboratory' for investigating how linguistics is mediated for a non-specialized audience.

The passive has attracted a great deal of attention from theoretical and descriptive linguists in the last fifty years. However, a mismatch appears

² Cf. Ameka *et al.* 2006.

³ Cf. Payne - Weber 2006.

⁴ A brief investigation into the features of pedagogical grammar/s for teachers can be found in Corder 1973. More recently, Giunchi 2005 includes references to pedagogical grammaticography aimed at EFL/ESL teachers.

⁵ Cf. *e.g.* Andrews 2003, 2006, 2007.

to exist between the status this grammatical area has in English language research and in its applications in the teaching of English as a foreign/second language. Indeed, surveys of EFL/ESL teachers and trainee teachers indicate that the passive is not ranked by practitioners amongst the most challenging aspects of English grammar to learn or teach⁶, and is often little known or understood⁷. For this reason, the analysis of how this grammatical area is conceptualised and represented in publications chiefly aimed at teachers and teachers in training has appeared to be particularly worthwhile.

The study singles out a sample of ten grammars for EFL/ESL teachers. Spanning approximately thirty years (the oldest was published in 1978, while the most recent came out in 2004), the ten grammars on which this study is based originated not only in Inner Circle⁸ countries (Canada, USA, UK, New Zealand), but also in former British colonies (India, Hong Kong, Singapore) and in a country where English is learnt as a foreign language (Colombia).

The analysis aims at identifying what information is selected by the ten grammars to describe the passive as both a linguistic phenomenon and a learning/teaching issue, and the way this information is represented. To do so, the verbal descriptions, the examples, the diagrams and the meta-language featured in the presentations of the passive in the ten grammars are scrutinised. The general approach to data analysis that is adopted is qualitative. Throughout the analysis, it is attempted to highlight the extent to which pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers draw upon and apply different grammaticological models and thus assess the use that is made of theory in presenting English grammar for EFL/ESL teachers. For this reason, extensive reviews of how the passive has been conceived of and presented in the English grammaticological tradition are also provided. A subsidiary focus of the analysis is the evaluation of the 'fitness for purpose' of the presentations, *i.e.* whether they achieve the purposes that a teacher-oriented pedagogical description should serve⁹.

A cautionary note is in order here. As the grammars span almost three decades, they necessarily reflect different stages in the development of re-

⁶ Cf. *e.g.* the survey carried out by Bald, whose findings are summarised in Bald 1988. Hinkel 2002 claims that there is greater awareness of the challenges posed by this grammatical area among EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teachers.

⁷ The linguistic and metalinguistic competence of Italian EFL trainee teachers in the areas of voice, ergativity and transitivity has been investigated in a project conducted within Milan University's teacher training school (Scuola Interuniversitaria Lombarda di Specializzazione per l'Insegnamento Universitario – Sezione di lingue straniere). Findings from the study appear to suggest that Italian EFL trainee teachers have little metalinguistic awareness of the passive, in particular of its pragmatic features.

⁸ Cf. Kachru 1985.

⁹ Cf. *e.g.* Trappes-Lomax - Ferguson 2002.

search into the passive and its grammaticographical representation. Hence, some of the ‘weaknesses’ that may be discerned in the older publications may be regarded as less ‘serious’ if viewed through the lens of the linguistic knowledge and grammaticographical practice of the time when these books were originally written.

The book opens with a chapter aimed at introducing the research methodology underpinning this study. The second chapter analyses the verbal descriptions of the passive featured in the ten grammars: after a quick glance at the general structure and organization of the presentations, the chapter focuses on how the passive as a linguistic phenomenon is represented. Each of the five sections (Defining voice, The form of the passive, The pragmatics of the passive, The *get*-passive, ‘Exceptions’ to the passive) into which this investigation is divided opens with a detailed review aimed at reconstructing the theoretical context from which pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers may have drawn for their inspiration. The chapter goes on to investigate how the passive is construed as a learning/teaching issue in the ten grammars. The examples accompanying the verbal descriptions in the corpus are made the subject of the third chapter, alongside the diagrams, which provide a graphic representation of sentence structure. The metalanguage used by the grammars to talk about the passive is investigated in some detail in the fourth chapter. The concluding chapter summarises and discusses the findings of the foregoing analyses with reference to the research questions addressed in the study.



II

THE PASSIVE AS A LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON AND A LEARNING/TEACHING ISSUE IN PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMARS FOR EFL/ESL TEACHERS

This chapter is the first of three which will analyse the verbal descriptions, the examples/diagrams and the metalanguage featured in the ten presentations of the passive. In order to provide some additional contextual information about the sources of data, it seems useful to precede the actual data analysis with three brief sections illustrating the location of the ten presentations in the grammar books, their components and the main principles of organization of the subject matter in them.

1. LOCATION, COMPONENTS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESENTATIONS OF THE PASSIVE IN PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMARS FOR EFL/ESL TEACHERS

1.1. *Location*

There appear to be three different ways the presentations of the passive are arranged in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers. The first alternative is to present the passive in a self-contained chapter with no obvious link with the neighbouring chapters – this is the solution adopted by **CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99**, **P 91** and **N 04**, and the one which more generally accords with the way this grammatical phenomenon is usually presented in EFL/ESL materials.

Another alternative favoured by grammars for teachers is to frame the passive as a grammatical property of the verb/verb phrase. This is done by **E 78** and **K 03**, which present the passive (as one of the two voices – cf. *infra*) alongside *e.g.* tense and aspect. In the first of its three ‘mini-gram-

grams'¹, **DP 01**, too, introduces the passive in a chapter devoted to the verb. This presentation option is probably the one that chimes in the most with the grammaticological tradition, which as a rule has tended to view grammatical voice as a property distinctive of the verb (cf. 2.1.1.). **M 96** differs slightly from the grammars cited in this paragraph in that although it includes voice in a unit devoted to the verb, it casts it as a «system» (alongside *e.g.* the negation or the question «systems») rather than merely a grammatical feature of the verb. In other words, it explicitly accords to the passive a wider remit than the verb alone.

Finally, several grammars contextualize their presentations of the passive within chapters or groups of chapters that illustrate grammatical processes that alter the standard order of constituents of the sentence. These grammars, then, construe the passive as a phenomenon that affects the entire sentence or even structures larger than the sentence. For example, **L 96** features its main treatment of the passive («Voice selection») in a chapter entitled «Organizing messages». Likewise, the second 'mini-grammar' included in **DP 01** deals with «passivization» as one of the processes that can engender a «marked theme» or change the constituent in «end-focus». In **P 00**, the passive takes up an entire chapter, but the chapter itself is part of a larger section explicitly labelled «Sentence constituents and word order».

I should point out that although most grammars provide information about the passive in one part of the books, some deal with specific aspects in separate sections. This is especially the case of those grammars that are more obviously wedded to a particular grammaticological school or schools, namely **L 96** and **DP 01**. **L 96**, which claims to be a «functional grammar» and in large part reproduces the organization of Halliday 1994, features (besides the main presentation in the section headed «Voice selection») an initial introduction to the topic of the passive in the context of the description of action process clauses, with further brief references scattered throughout the subsequent chapters that illustrate other types of clauses. In **DP 01** descriptions of aspects of the passive are provided in each of its three (traditional – functional – transformational) 'mini-grammars' of the English language.

Other grammars deal with some of those that are often labelled 'exceptions' to the passive (notably, the passive of ditransitive verbs and the prepositional passive) in sections of the books which are located outside the main presentations of the passive (*e.g.* **CMLF 83** and **CMLF 99** tackle

¹ **DP 01** contains three 'mini-grammars' of the English language. Each 'mini-grammar' is associated with a specific grammaticological model (traditional – functional – transformational).

the passive of ditransitives in the chapter that deals with «Sentences with Indirect Objects»).

1.2. *Components*

Several components were singled out in the process of tagging the presentations of the passive featured by the ten grammars in the sample (cf. *Table 2*).

Verbal descriptions and examples are the staple of grammaticographical descriptions and unsurprisingly come up in all ten presentations. These are usually accompanied by graphics (generally, tables rather than diagrams). **E 78** contains neither and more generally appears to be the grammar that includes the least number of components. Information about the passive as a learning/teaching issue is also featured in most of the presentations, sometimes integrated into the main sections of grammatical description, sometimes provided in separate sections. Only **DP 01** and **N 04** – those grammars in the sample which are specifically aimed at non-native English speaking readers – fail to include explicit references to the processes of acquisition and teaching of the passive.

The presentations of the passive usually also feature operations ², *i.e.* exercises, tasks and discussion questions that involve the reader in actively making use of the information provided. The operative sections in the ten grammars can be further subcategorised according to whether they foster linguistic competence, mainly through controlled production activities involving the transformation, completion and expansion of sentences and/or short texts ³ (these are primarily found in those grammars that cater more explicitly for a non-native English speaking audience – *i.e.* **DP 01** and **N 04**), engage readers in language analysis through what Larsen Freeman calls a process of «abduction» ⁴ (in *e.g.* **L 96**, **P 00**) or simulate classroom teaching situations (error editing, fielding possible learners' queries – in *e.g.* **CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99**, **M 96**).

² This term originally comes from Ellis 2002.

³ There is conspicuous paucity in the ten grammars of operations geared towards the «noticing» (cf. Schmidt 1990) of grammar in context – one of the few examples is to be found in **K 03**.

⁴ Cf. Larsen-Freeman 2003. I mentioned in Chapter I that a similar process of «abductive reasoning» (for a definition of the term, cf. fn. 5) was also implemented in this study when deriving the indexing categories. Larsen-Freeman describes the logic of abduction applied to language analysis in the following terms: «The function of abduction is to identify the explanations that are most likely to be fruitful in accounting for a given pattern of data. Abduction involves after-the-fact reasoning in order to determine why something happened as it did» (Larsen-Freeman 2003, p. 84).

Table 2. Components of the presentations of the passive in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers

	E	CMLF	P	M	L	CMLF	P	DP	K	N
	78	83	91	96	96	99	00	01	03	04
Verbal descriptions of the passive as a linguistic phenomenon	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Examples	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Diagrams	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Tables	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Verbal descriptions of the passive as a learning issue	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Verbal descriptions of the passive as a teaching issue	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Operations	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Suggestions for further reading	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
Key and alternative metalanguage	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Note-taking section	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

The other components listed in *Table 2* are only present in a few grammars. References to other books and articles that readers can consult should they wish to explore the topic of the passive further can be found in **CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99** and **DP 01**. **L 96** features a section which lists the key terms introduced in the chapter alongside possible alternative labels that are used in the literature, while **P 91** provides some space for readers to jot down notes and observations as they work through the chapter.

1.3. Organization

Having identified the different components that make up the presentations of the passive in the ten grammars in the sample, I want to say a few words about the organization of the subject matter in them (cf. *Table 3*).

The predominant pattern that the ten grammars appear to follow in organizing the information about the passive is one of ‘form first, then function’. In other words, the pragmatics of the passive is usually described after its syntactic features have been illustrated. A few additional points need to be made in this connection. First, all grammars devote some space to *both* the formal *and* the pragmatic uses of the passive, even **L 96**, the most obviously ‘functional’ grammar. It goes without saying that different grammars allocate different weight to these two aspects, but it is of some significance that in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers the passive is always presented from more than one perspective, not from an exclusively formal or functional point of view.

Table 3. Organization of the presentations of the passive in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers

E 78	CMLF 83
<p style="text-align: center;">VOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of voice • Form • Distribution • Use 	<p style="text-align: center;">THE PASSIVE VOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • A review and analysis of the passive • Active and passive sentences • Semantic and lexical differences • Agentless passive • Different kinds of passive • Interaction of the passive voice with modals and perfect tenses • When to use the passive • Stative passive • Change of state verbs • Conclusion

P 91	M 96
<p>PASSIVE VS ACTIVE VOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition • Usage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Types of verbs that can enter into passive construction ii. Syntactic differences between active and passive iii. Passive tenses iv. <i>Get/become</i> as passive auxiliaries v. Infinitives and gerunds vi. in the passive vi. Distribution of passive in English vs Spanish vii. Uses of passive viii. Passive and causatives 	<p>THE VOICE SYSTEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • The active voice • The passive voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Steps for changing an active into a passive sentence ii. The twelve tenses of <i>BE</i> iii. Choosing the correct voice iv. Transitivity and the passive voice • Problem solving with the voice system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Problem solving with the seven most commonly used tenses ii. Problem solving with the twelve tenses • The English voice system in discourse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Passive sentences with <i>by</i>-phrases ii. Special cases of the passive voice
L 96	CMLF 99
<p>DOING AND HAPPENING I: THE TRANSITIVITY OF ACTION PROCESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action processes and voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Definitions of active vs passive voice ii. Passive verb group iii. Passive of ditransitives <p>ORGANIZING MESSAGES: THEME AND FOCUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Experiential and textual differences of active vs passive ii. Uses of the passive 	<p>INTRODUCTION FORMS OF THE ENGLISH PASSIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syntax of agentless and agentful passive • The passive with tense and aspect • Other passive verbs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Get</i> ii. <i>Have</i> iii. <i>Be</i> (in complex passives) • Passive only <p>THE MEANING OF THE PASSIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantic constraints on using the passive • Meaning difference between the active and the passive • <i>Be</i>-passives versus <i>get</i>-passives • Past participles: adjectives or passive? • A middle voice <p>THE USE OF THE PASSIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active vs passive • Agented passives <p>CONCLUSION</p>

P 00	DP 01
<p>PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS</p> <p><i>Key considerations</i></p> <p>What are standard passive constructions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they do? • ‘Rules of thumb’ • What do they look like? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The basic pattern ii. Verb types iii. Choosing between <i>be</i> and <i>get</i> as auxiliary verbs iv. Verbs which we use with a full infinitive only in passive constructions v. Passive constructions with <i>it</i> as the subject vi. Reduced relative clauses vii. Using <i>by</i> and other prepositions after passive constructions viii. Passive constructions and adjectives <p><i>What are causative passive constructions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they do? • What do they look like? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The basic pattern ii. Verb types iii. Choosing between <i>have</i> and <i>get</i> as auxiliary verbs <p><i>Features common to both standard and causative passive constructions</i></p>	<p>TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR</p> <p><i>Verbs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive <p>FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR</p> <p><i>Sentence types and grammatical processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammatical processes producing marked structures <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Passivization • Processes which change the item in end focus <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Passivization <p>TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR</p> <p><i>Transformations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The passive transformation
K 03	N 04
<p>VERBS AND VERB PHRASES</p> <p><i>Verb phrase functions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Definition of voice ii. Use of the passive iii. Form of the passive iv. Distribution of the passive 	<p>THE PASSIVE VOICE</p> <p><i>The form of the passive</i></p> <p><i>The use of the passive</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Functions of the passive ii. Verbs which can only be used in the active or in the passive iii. Passive of transitive phrasal verbs iv. The impersonal passive

Moreover, some grammars actually provide some clues as to the rationale that is behind their choice of criteria for the arrangement of the subject matter. A particularly telling example is **CMLF 99**, which devotes a fair amount of space in the introductory chapter (pp. 4-5) to illustrating the three-pronged approach followed in organizing the presentation of the information in each chapter. Each grammatical area is viewed from the three «dimensions» of «form», «meaning» and «use»⁵, which are tackled in this sequence in the thirty-six chapters of the book. The authors feel that such an approach has encouraged them to expand their perspective on grammar and ultimately has enabled them to provide a truly comprehensive description of the grammar points that are featured in the book. Indeed, compared to the first edition, which has a more traditional organization, **CMLF 99** features several new sections (*e.g.* most of those associated with the «meaning» dimension). Viewing a grammatical phenomenon as a multidimensional construct is also claimed to assist readers in identifying its chief «learning challenge» (*i.e.* the aspect that presents the greatest problems for EFL/ESL students). As far as the passive is concerned, **CMLF 99** highlights the «use» dimension as the most challenging aspect for EFL/ESL students to handle, although it is also acknowledged that learners at a lower proficiency level are confronted with the additional problem of learning how to manipulate the different «forms» and «meanings» of the passive verb phrase:

As with all structures, students will have to learn its forms and their meanings, so it is to these that we turn first, before concluding the chapter by fully explicating the use of the passive voice. (**CMLF 99**, p. 344)

While the form-function arrangement is the one most commonly adopted in the presentations of the passive, there are a number of grammars that reverse this sequence, namely **L 96**, **M 96**, **P 00** and **K 03**.

I have already mentioned that most of the information featured in **L 96** concerns the functions and uses of the passive in discourse; formal issues, albeit not neglected, are only touched upon in this book.

M 96 presents the two main types of passive – agentless and agentful – by highlighting their main functions first. The book makes a basic split between sentence-level grammar and discourse-level phenomena, so the agentless passive is chiefly presented as a feature of sentence-level grammar (although the description of its functions necessarily refers to

⁵ As pointed out in Larsen-Freeman 2002, p. 107 fn. 3, the «use» dimension includes both the appropriate deployment of grammar in communication according to social-functional factors and the use of grammar in discourse. Martin Bygate (personal communication) labels the former «pragmatic use» and the latter «textual use».

pragmatic, extra-sentential issues), while the agentful version is introduced as a device for achieving topic continuity in discourse. In **P 00**, the function-form pattern is even more evident, as it is built into the structure of the chapter. Hence, after the introductory «Key considerations», a ‘functional’ section is first featured for both «standard» and «causative» passives («what do they do?»), while the sections tackling form («what do they look like?») are located further on. This book also gives us some clues in the background material as to why it was decided to depart from the traditional form-function arrangement. It is indeed claimed (**P 00**, p. 6) that «the pragmatic distinctions and classes found in course materials» have been followed. Although «distinctions and classes» refers to the fact that the metalanguage and the grammatical categories usually employed by EFL/ESL materials have been adopted, it should not be too far-fetched to assume that these materials have also been followed in connection to the organization of the subject matter, *i.e.* foregrounding of communicative uses of language structures.

Despite falling in the function-form category, **K 03** is rather unusual in that it concentrates the explanations of the uses of the passive in just a few lines, while it devotes more space to illustrating the frequency of different passive forms. As the book claims to be a «corpus-informed» grammar (**K 03**, p. 5), however, it is perhaps only natural that it should place more emphasis on the issue of distribution rather than pragmatic use of language forms.

If we consider the actual range of information included in each of the ten grammatical descriptions of the passive, as shown by the list of features in *Table 3*, we cannot fail to notice considerable differences across the sample – clearly, some grammars (*e.g.* **CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99**, **P 00**) appear to be more comprehensive or at least display a more complex organization than others. This issue need not detain us here, as a detailed analysis of the verbal descriptions, the examples/diagrams and the metalanguage used to present the passive in the grammars in the sample will be the subject of the rest of this chapter and the next two chapters. To wrap up this section, I shall only highlight a few features that appear to be particularly characteristic of the organization of the descriptions of the passive in some of the grammars:

- *Ergativity* in **CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99** and **L 96**. Voice and ergativity are associated in three grammars. In the two editions of **CMLF** a section of the main chapter devoted to the passive is taken up by the presentation of what is dubbed «middle voice» (the earlier edition does not use this label and refers instead to «change of state verbs»). **L 96** includes ergativity as one of the three options of the «voice system», but it deals with it in a separate chapter from the one that focuses on «voice selection».

- *Causatives and Rules of thumb* in **P 00**. As mentioned above, the chapter on «passive constructions» in **P 00** features both «standard» passive constructions and causatives. Although **CMLF 83** and **CMLF 99** also refer to *have* as a possible auxiliary of the passive, they only admit the «experiential» use (unintentional occurrence, e.g. *I had my bicycle stolen*) under the umbrella of the passive and exclude the causative use. Another section featured by **P 00** («rules of thumb») lists a selection of the most common rules that are often given by coursebooks when presenting the passive:

In order to help learners to develop a feeling for when to use passive constructions, in addition to the rules above, course materials generally give them or help them to work out ‘rules of thumb’ which focus on particular contexts of use and particular verbs. (**P 00**, p. 288)

Examples of such «rules of thumb» are that «passive constructions» can be used «to describe processes» or «to describe procedure in formally reporting scientific experiments» (**P 00**, pp. 288-289). One of the aims of this book, as claimed in the preface, is to encourage readers «to recognise the limitations» of such rules ⁶ (**P 00**, p. 1).

- *Problem solving sections* in **M 96**. It is a distinctive feature of **M 96** to intersperse its verbal descriptions with special «problem solving» sections which aim to show readers how the information presented in the chapter can be put to use in identifying, correcting and giving feedback on errors made by EFL/ESL learners.

The detailed analysis of the descriptions of the passive in the grammars in the sample, which will take up the rest of the chapter, will start by considering how the notion of grammatical voice, of which the passive is generally said to be one of the two possible instantiations, is defined. It will then isolate several aspects of the passive – its formal features, its pragmatics, the *get*-passive and the ‘exceptions’ to the passive. In the final section of the chapter, the focus will shift from the passive as a linguistic phenomenon to the passive as a learning/teaching issue.



⁶ **CMLF 99** also refers to the issue of pedagogical grammar rules, highlighting the fact that the rules that learners are often fed are «airtight» and «arbitrary» formulations. What appears more useful, according to the authors, is to provide «reasons, not rules, for why English grammar functions as it does». Reasons for the workings of English grammar are often to be found by viewing grammatical phenomena from the «highest possible level of language», *i.e.* the level of the general ‘laws’ that govern language (cf. **CMLF 99**, pp. 3-4).

IV

THE PASSIVE IN PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMARS FOR EFL/ESL TEACHERS: METALANGUAGE

In this chapter, I shall isolate a final aspect of the way the passive is represented in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers: the subject-specific metalanguage, *i.e.* the specific terminology devised by grammarians to describe this phenomenon¹. The focus of the chapter will thus differ from recent work on metalanguage in grammaticography², which has sought to investigate the genre-specific, non-propositional metalanguage (*e.g.* the use of personality markers in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL students) and its impact on the readability of grammars.

Remarks about the presence in the descriptions of the passive as a linguistic phenomenon of terminology characteristic of specific grammatical schools are scattered throughout the previous three chapters – for example, it has been pointed out that **DP 01** features a passive transformation rule that closely reproduces the formalization of Chomsky 1957, whereas in **CMLF 83** Chomskyan transformation rules are not couched in the abstract symbolism of early transformational grammar.

The present chapter has a deliberately narrower remit. The emphasis will be laid on a restricted number of terms that are either traditionally associated with the grammatical area under consideration (voice, agent, terminology for ‘degrees of passiveness’) or that, whilst not specific to this grammatical area, the foregoing analyses have nevertheless shown to be particularly problematic (indirect object). Special attention will be given to those ‘discourse’ terms that are often used in the description of the pragmatics of the passive (theme/rheme, topic, focus, given/new, end-focus, end-weight), in that use in discourse is the aspect of the passive that,

¹ Cf. Lyons 1977, Riley 1987.

² Cf. Berry 2000, 2004, 2005.

as was amply illustrated in Chapter II, has the shortest grammaticological history and thus presents the greatest challenge to grammarians from a descriptive and notably terminological point of view.

1. VOICE

To start this overview, I shall take up the label ‘voice’ again very briefly. I have already mentioned the fact that although this term comes up in most of the grammars in the sample (the only exception being **DP 01**), it is not always defined independently of active/passive, which might be evidence of the ambivalence felt by pedagogical grammarians towards identifying a separate grammatical category of voice. **P 00** does not construe the passive with reference to a system of voice and justifies its choice with the need to minimize ambiguity:

Some materials use the term ‘passive voice’, but the term is used to mean different things. In this book we use the term ‘passive constructions’ [...]. (**P 00**, p. 287)

Attention should be drawn to the reference to «some materials» at the beginning of the quote. As has already been mentioned, and further examples will be provided throughout this chapter, it is a distinctive feature of **P 00** to show awareness of alternative terminology – the metalanguage found in more academic works, for example, or in EFL/ESL coursebooks. It could thus be argued that the reason why the book opens its section on the passive with the remark cited above is to enable readers to find their way when consulting materials where the passive is traditionally referred to as one of the two voices.

2. AGENT

Another term that will be commented upon here is ‘agent’. ‘Agent’, like ‘indirect object’, which I shall be investigating below, is an example of a label that has often been used confusingly in less academic grammars, including materials aimed at EFL/ESL students, in many cases as a result of the failure to keep different interpretive levels distinct (*e.g.* semantic vs functional). Modern grammaticology has contributed greatly to making the use of such terms more precise. In particular, ‘agent’ has been singled out as one of a set of semantic cases in Fillmore’s case grammar³, whose influ-

³ Cf. Fillmore 1968.

ence, as is well-known, is clearly discernible in Hallidayan grammaticology (cf. use of terms ‘actor’/‘agent’).

The analysis of the presentations of the passive has revealed that the way the term ‘agent’ is used is fairly consistent throughout the corpus and to a large extent accords with the interpretation of ‘semantic role of initiator of an action’. It is worth, however, homing in on each specific presentation in turn, if only to highlight the different relationships that are established between agent and other semantic role terms (*e.g.* patient, theme etc.) in different grammars.

In **E 78** ‘agent’ is introduced as «a subject who performs or directs the action»⁴, *i.e.* as a semantic role. It is the only term for describing semantic roles that comes up in this description of the passive, most probably because it is thought to be already familiar to readers; another semantic role, whose label (*e.g.* patient) is assumed to be new to readers, is referred to only through a paraphrase:

Whether the subject in a sentence performed or directed the action, or whether the subject received the action. (**E 78**, p. 65)

As will be illustrated further below, when the same word has both a general ‘everyday’ meaning and a specialized metalinguistic one, misunderstandings may arise if which meaning is being invoked at a particular time is not spelled out unambiguously. This is the case of the word «subject» in the two definitions above, which are located on the same page of **E 78**. The two instances of this word differ in as much as the second instance (which actually comes first in the book) refers to the technical use of the word ‘subject’, whereas in «a subject who performs or directs the action» the term is clearly used in the general meaning of ‘individual’.

P 91, too, gives ‘agent’ a semantic interpretation; this is clearly shown in the two-tiered labelling that is provided of an active and a passive sentence:

Active:	Teaching assistants	assign	readings.
	Subject	Verb	Direct Object
Passive:	Readings	are assigned	by teaching assistants.
	Subject	Verb Phrase	Prepositional Phrase
	Receiver	Action	Agent

(**P 91**, p. 264)

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the two tiers are aimed at introducing two different ways of analysing sentences: the first tier refers

⁴ **E 78**, p. 65.

to syntactic functions (although it should be noted that categories appear to have been mixed up here: «Subject», «Verb» and «Direct Object» are indeed syntactic functions, but «Prepositional Phrase» isn't); the second tier has to do with semantic categories. The two levels are also associated in the labels «semantic subject» and «semantic direct object»:

In active voice the grammatical subject is also the semantic subject or performer of the action [...]. In passive voice, on the other hand, the subject is the semantic direct object or receiver of the action, and the actor or the semantic subject is either expressed through the use of a prepositional phrase introduced by **by** or is omitted. (P 91, p. 264)

Obviously, «semantic subject» and «semantic direct object» correspond to the traditional 'logical subject/object', with the advantage that the adjective «semantic» is more transparent and more clearly alerts readers to the nature of the interpretive framework (*i.e.* semantic roles) that is referred to with the use of the terms «agent/actor/performer» and «receiver». I should also point out that whereas the 'active' semantic role is labelled with the technical terms «actor» and «agent», the 'passive' semantic role is not associated with the equally technical 'patient', but with the 'everyday' term «receiver».

In the two editions of **CMLF** we still come across the same semantic-based use of 'agent'. Notice, however, that the first edition frames the concept of agent explicitly within Fillmore's case grammar and contrasts it with the concept of theme, intended as «the most neutral noun in the sentence, *i.e.* the noun that has been changed, moved, created, etc.»⁵. The second edition scraps explicit references to case grammar; this enables the authors to introduce a wider range of terms to do with the main semantic roles. «Agent/doer» is thus contrasted with «receiver/undergoer/patient/nonagent». This way, on the one hand, the book may provide for different levels of generality, if required (*e.g.* «nonagent» as a general label, «receiver» vs «undergoer» as slightly more specific terms); on the other hand, it is free to use 'theme' as a 'discourse' term (cf. *infra*), which is also the most familiar interpretation that is now associated with this term.

M 96 is the only grammar in the sample that refrains from using 'agent' altogether. In keeping with the fact that the overarching interpretive system this book relies on analyses the sentence into four main syntactic functions, the semantic differences between the active and the passive are explained through reference to what the «subject» 'does':

⁵ **CMLF 83**, p. 6.

In English, we need to know 1) whether the subject in a sentence is acting or causing something to happen or 2) whether it is being acted upon or bearing the result of something that happened. (M 96, p. 96)

L 96 to a large degree follows the terminological conventions of Halliday 1994. It uses «Actor» rather than ‘agent’ in the presentation it features of the passive as characteristic of action processes. «Actor» thus has a more limited scope than what is meant by ‘agent’ in the grammars that have been analysed so far, as more specific terms associated with other types of processes (e.g. «Senser») are used in the book. Likewise, in regard to action processes, «Goal» is the term used to designate the patient role, while other specific terms for the same role are introduced for other process clauses (e.g. «Phenomenon»). The labels ‘agent’ and ‘patient’ are, however, given as possible alternatives in the special appendix which lists the key terms introduced in each chapter.

This is not the whole story, though. ‘Agent’ does come up in Hallidayan grammaticology – in Halliday 1994 it is used as a general label for one of the roles of the more specific Ergative model of Transitivity⁶. L 96 takes up this idea of using ‘agent’ as a general or umbrella term, but detaches it from any association with the specific theory of Ergativity. This happens when the book introduces the idea of the «Agentless passive». In this case, ‘agent’ is used in the more traditional sense of ‘doer’, with no connotation as to the type of process involved – the specific roles that this agent may have in accordance with Hallidayan grammaticology are then recalled in brackets:

Such so-called **Agentless** (Actorless, Senserless, etc. depending on process type) passives are very common. (L 96, p. 235)

This is an instance of the mediation attempted by L 96 between Hallidayan and traditional grammar terminology.

‘Agent’ as initiator of the action is also featured in the descriptions of the passive in P 00, K 03 and N 04. Moreover, P 00 and N 04 use the non-technical «receiver» and «recipient» to refer to the patient role (it should be emphasised, though, that ‘recipient’ may be employed in a technical meaning to refer to a semantic role that is often associated with ditransitive verbs – cf. *infra*).

⁶ In Halliday - Matthiessen 2004, p. 179, it is pointed out that «the ‘Actor’ of a ‘material’ clause (Halliday, 1967/8) is distinct from the ‘Agent’ of an ‘effective’ clause; [...] the two represent different generalizations about the experiential organization of the clause. Some linguists have used the two terms more or less interchangeably».

Finally, **DP 01** features ‘agent’ with the same meaning in both its traditional and functional ‘mini-grammars’. In the latter ‘mini-grammar’, it is used instead of the Hallidayan «Actor», probably in order not to confuse readers, as is stated in the introduction to the section:

We will use his [Halliday’s] terminology fairly consistently with one main exception: in a few cases he uses terms for morphological and syntactic categories which differ from those introduced earlier in this book. In these cases, we will retain the ones introduced in previous chapters here as their use makes no difference in the explication of the original portions of Halliday’s model and using different terms for the same thing would only generate confusion. (**DP 01**, p. 105)

In this same part of the book, however, ‘agent’ also comes up among the labels meant to designate syntactic functions, which are provided as glosses to examples:

The project	was successfully completed	by our SCientists.
Subject	Verb	Agent
(Underl.		(Underlying
Object)		Subject)
THEME		FOCUS

(**DP 01**, p. 137)



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Pedagogical grammars are routinely regarded as a somewhat ‘inferior’ type of grammar book. As they are aimed at students and teachers of a language rather than grammarians or linguistics scholars, they need to be accessible – the pedagogical grammarian cannot afford the luxury of being misunderstood¹. However, accessibility is often taken to be a synonym for ‘dumbed down’ simplification. Writing pedagogical grammars is thus thought to require a lower degree of knowledge or expertise than is required of the ‘scholarly’ grammarian.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the representation of grammatical phenomena in scores of coursebooks and pedagogical grammars aimed at EFL/ESL *students* is riddled with half-truths, if not complete inaccuracies. Much ink has been poured in recent years by academic grammarians and applied linguists to lampoon the treatment of grammatical points in well-known (and best-selling) students’ grammars. But this is only part of the story. Despite focusing on only one grammatical area, the analyses which have taken up the preceding three chapters have shown that far from being a simple grammaticographical product, pedagogical grammars aimed expressly at EFL/ESL *teachers* are highly sophisticated texts, whose authors are by no means less knowledgeable and skilful than ‘scholarly’ grammarians.

Given the complexity of issues raised in the analyses, it is useful to return to the original research questions that were singled out in chapter I and summarise and discuss the main findings of the investigation with reference to them.

¹ Swan puts the issue in very cogent terms: «One of the things that distinguish pedagogic rules sharply from general purpose descriptive rules is the requirement that they be simple. The truth is of no value if it cannot be understood» (Swan 1994, p. 49).

1. THE PASSIVE IN PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMARS FOR EFL/ESL TEACHERS: SELECTION OF INFORMATION

The first research question that this work has sought to address concerns the selection of information about the passive carried out by pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers, or, to put it another way, the degree of comprehensiveness exhibited by the ten presentations of the passive.

Throughout this discussion of the extent and type of selection underpinning the presentations of the passive in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers, I will be guided by Dagut's (1990) article entitled *A teaching grammar of the passive voice in English* – an applied linguist's selection of features of the English passive that a grammar specifically aimed at EFL/ESL teachers should include. Dagut's proposal (cf. *Table 18*) is premised on the assumption that a grammar meant for the use of teachers has to enable users to take cognizance of the communicative functioning of the language and develop a more general contrastive awareness of the target language vis-à-vis the learners' L1(s)².

As is shown by *Table 18*, Dagut's grammar of the passive tries to put these general principles into practice. The first item is the «morphology of the passive», by which the author means what I have called the 'general formula' of the passive. Dagut claims that beyond some familiarity with the *be + -en* form formula, EFL/ESL teachers need not be bothered with details of the morphosyntax of the passive. The description of the main denotational function of the passive, *i.e.* impersonalization / agent removal, embodied by the agentless passive – second item on the list – should, according to Dagut, represent the core of a teacher-/teaching-oriented presentation of the passive. The passive should be related to the corresponding way(s) of achieving agent removal in the L1(s) of the students (third item). Other structures that are available to English to fulfil the same communicative function should be explored, compared and contrasted at the same time (fourth item). The study of the pragmatics of the passive should be completed with the analysis of the functions of the agentful pas-

² The proposal that a contrastive dimension be prioritised in a teaching-/teacher-oriented grammar has found support in the findings of a recent investigation into the learning of the passive by non-native English speaking learners of different nationalities, reported in Hinkel 2002. It is shown that semantic notions that play a role in the way some languages organize sentence constituents and determine the scope that the passive has in these languages also have an impact on how their speakers interpret and use the English passive. For this reason, Hinkel calls for the widening of the focus of L2 grammar teaching, to include a contrastive orientation: «In addition to focusing on the systems that the English language includes, L2 pedagogy needs to refer to linguistic constraints that it does not» (Hinkel 2002, pp. 257-258).

sive (fifth item) and the *get*-passive (eighth item). The description of other features of the passive is held to be of lesser import – Dagut mentions the «syntactic and semantic» aspects of the passive of ditransitive verbs, the prepositional passive (but not other ‘exceptions’, viz. ‘one-voice’ verbs) as well as the «differences between passive verbs and adjectives» (sixth and seventh items).

Table 18. A teaching grammar of the passive (from Dagut 1990)

1. Morphology of passive
2. Use of passive as primarily agentless passive
3. Relation of passive with same semantic function in learners’ L1
4. Relation of passive with other impersonal constructions in English
5. Pragmatic functions of agentful passive
6. Syntactic and semantic features of passives of ditransitives, prepositional verbs, phrasal verbs
7. Differences between passive verbs and adjectives
8. Communicative functions of <i>get</i> -passive

How do the ten grammars in the sample compare with Dagut’s proposal? The description of the formal features of the passive plays a more important role in the sample than is recommended by Dagut. Indeed, in addition to highlighting the general formula of the passive, most of the presentations in the corpus feature detailed descriptions of the various combinations of tense and aspect (the passive ‘tenses’). In several cases, the syntactic relationships between the passive and the active are also explicitly spelled out. Three presentations (**CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99**, **P 00**) even introduce *have* as a possible third passive auxiliary, alongside *be* and *get*.

As for the second item in Dagut’s grammar, in keeping with Dagut’s recommendation, all ten presentations deal with the function of agent removal embodied by the agentless passive. It is indeed the only use of the passive that comes up consistently across the corpus.

The third item (the contrastive aspect) is also featured in most of the presentations in the corpus, although it often has a different focus than envisaged by Dagut. Remarks are sometimes made about the fact that the passive is used more in English vis-à-vis other common languages. In **CMLF 83**, **CMLF 99** and **L 96**, there is an attempt to account for these mismatches by referring to overarching typological differences between English and the learners’ L1s. Contrastive information is at times also provided when the issue of how the passive is learnt is being tackled. Again,

typological differences between the target and the native languages may be invoked to account for the problems EFL/ESL students face up to in learning the uses of the passive.

Interestingly, the contrastive dimension is eschewed by **N 04**, one of the grammars that is specifically aimed at a well-identified audience of non-native English teachers. This grammar, which was published in India, views as its overarching aim that of establishing standards (*i.e.* the standards of the prestigious BANA varieties) and eradicating the ‘sloppy’ use of the English language, which is thought to be a barrier to learners accessing global study and work opportunities. In this light, the students’ L1 is probably regarded as a necessary evil, whose influence should be minimized, rather than a resource that teachers can build upon in their teaching. Another grammar that has to deal with the same issue of emerging local varieties of English (**D 01**) focuses its main part of grammatical description on BANA Englishes, yet caters for the contrastive dimension by featuring self-contained grammars of Singapore English, Mandarin, Malay and Tagalog – the L1s spoken by the students that the intended users of this book are presumably going to teach. This way, the local variety of English (Singapore English) is given the status of a fully-fledged language and placed on the same level as other local L1s.

The fourth item in Dagut’s grammar shifts the focus from interlinguistic to intralinguistic concerns – the use of structures other than the passive which fulfil the function of impersonalization in English. Only three presentations (**L 96**, **CMLF 99**, **P 00**) appear to provide in their description of the pragmatics of the passive explicit references to alternative ways of ‘doing the same thing’ available to English. In a similar vein, the specific pragmatic uses of the agentful passive (fifth item) are referred to in half the sample only.

Within the ‘communicative’ core of a teaching grammar of the passive is, according to Dagut, the pragmatics of the *get*-passive (eighth item). This construction again does not come up in all the presentations and is even ignored in some of the more recent grammars; the five presentations (**CMLF 83**, **P 91**, **M 96**, **CMLF 99**, **P 00**) that do deal with the *get*-passive, however, usually foreground its semantic/pragmatic features rather than the details of its syntax, in line with what Dagut suggests.

Let us turn to the issue of the ‘exceptions’ to the passive. Dagut’s grammar considers those ‘exceptions’ which stem from the ‘over-application’ of the passive to constructions that in many other languages disallow the passive – passive of ditransitive verbs, prepositional passive (sixth item). This issue seems to have a rather low priority in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers. The passive of ditransitive verbs comes up in six presentations (**CMLF 83**, **L 96**, **CMLF 99**, **P 00**, **DP 01**, **N 04**), but it is

usually dealt with in a cursory way. The prepositional passive takes up an even more marginal position.

As regards the «differences between passive verbs and adjectives» (seventh item), I have viewed this issue in my categorization of the descriptions of the form of the passive as part of the more general investigation into the nature of the *-en* form. Ever since the publication of Svartvik's corpus-based study into voice in English³, most major grammars have provided examples of a scale or gradient of passiveness exhibited by various *be* (and, in more recent grammars, *get*) + *-en* form constructions, at whose ends are located the constructions where the *-en* form is clearly verbal or functions as an adjective, while the intermediate stages of the cline are taken up by less clear-cut cases. Pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers make no mention of a fully-fledged passive scale; they do, nevertheless, in five (CMLF 83, L 96, CMLF 99, P 00, K 03) out of the ten presentations of the passive surveyed, supply some criteria for distinguishing verbal from adjectival *-en* forms.

It is apparent that despite many similarities between Dagut's proposal and the corpus of ten presentations, selection of information about the passive in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers was informed by a wider range of criteria. The overarching criterion underlying selection in the grammars in the sample appears to have been 'catering for the *practical* needs of the practising teacher'. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the passive as a linguistic phenomenon in order to be able to provide metalinguistic explanations or feedback, but they also need to appreciate the problems that their students may encounter in learning this construction and devise suitable teaching activities. Hence, most of the presentations also feature descriptions of the passive as a learning/teaching issue – a glaring omission in Dagut's grammar⁴. More importantly, they tend to include in the main part of linguistic description aspects of the passive that are traditionally found in coursebooks for EFL/ESL students. For this reason, the descriptions of the form of the passive are quite detailed in the corpus, and mention is often made of 'active-only' and 'passive-only' verbs.

Another aspect that seems to have played a major role in the process of selection is the degree of linguistic knowledge that the authors of the ten grammars expect their audience to possess. Some grammars (*e.g.* M 96) pitch their descriptions at a more basic or introductory level. As a result, they may have decided to ignore aspects of the passive (*e.g.* functions of the agentful passive) which can only be satisfactorily described by

³ Cf. Svartvik 1966.

⁴ Dagut's grammar appears to fit Corder's model of a grammar for teachers (cf. Corder 1973 and section 4. *infra*).

referring to more advanced linguistic notions (*e.g.* information structure) and be appropriately exemplified through longer texts rather than the traditional discrete sentence example. By the same token, despite the fact that ditransitive and prepositional passives do not occur in many common languages and thus represent a learning challenge for some students, some of the grammars may have chosen to omit them or refer to them in passing, as an afterthought, in order not to introduce an ‘exception’ to the rule that ‘only transitive verbs can form the passive’.

Finally, some grammars appear to have excluded aspects of the passive as a result of their low frequency of occurrence or because they tend to be associated with spoken informal registers. An example is the *get*-passive. Although increasingly widespread in spoken informal English, the *get*-passive is a relatively infrequent construction vis-à-vis *be*-passive forms. This may have led to its exclusion in some presentations, in spite of the importance that has been attached to this construction by recent linguistic research. Other grammars may have omitted mention of the *get*-passive as a result of their bias towards the grammar of written English.

2. THE PASSIVE IN PEDAGOGICAL GRAMMARS FOR EFL/ESL TEACHERS: 2. REPRESENTATION OF INFORMATION

The second research question investigates the way the passive is represented in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers. Chapters II, III, and IV have illustrated at some length the features of the verbal descriptions, the examples, the diagrams and the metalanguage used in the representation of this grammatical phenomenon. Here I shall attempt to cast a more critical eye over the findings of the foregoing analyses. To do so, I shall refer to four evaluation criteria⁵. The first criterion I shall consider concerns the *accuracy* of the presentations – how accurately the passive has been represented in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers. Next, I will explore the degree of *accessibility* of the presentations. The third criterion has to do with how categorical the generalizations provided are – their degree of *categoricity*. Finally, I will attempt to evaluate the extent to which the ten presentations explain rather than just describe the workings

⁵ Many of the grammaticographical studies cited in fn. 1 and in Chapter I (cf. *e.g.* Ameka *et al.* 2006, Graustein - Leitner 1989a, Lehmann - Maslova 2004, Leitner 1986a) feature taxonomies of criteria for the evaluation of grammaticographical representations. Similar taxonomies are also present in several works that focus specifically on pedagogical grammar (cf. *e.g.* Swan 1994, Westney 1994), but none is aimed explicitly at pedagogical grammar for *teachers*.

of the passive (*explanatory force*). These four criteria are intended to be *genre* - not *subject*-specific. In other words, they are meant to fit the evaluation of the treatment of any grammatical area in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers.

My general orientation to the business of evaluation will be informed by the following quote:

Since there is no way of establishing a 'best' rule for any particular set of language phenomena, and our understanding of linguistic structure and of psycholinguistic processes is not such as to influence the formulation of pedagogical rules other than indirectly, there are sound reasons, both practical and theoretical, for learners and teachers to assume a cautious, if not skeptical, attitude towards any pedagogical treatment of language regularities.⁶

2.1. Accuracy

It goes without saying that the first thing one expects from a grammaticographical description is that it be accurate – *i.e.* that it provides a faithful representation of the workings of the language being described. Apart from accuracy *vis-à-vis* external linguistic standards, internal accuracy may also be taken into consideration – *i.e.* are there contradictions in the claims made by the grammar writer?

Given the rather extended temporal spread of the ten grammars, it is obvious that caution must be exercised when accuracy is evaluated. Some of the problems that may be detected in the older presentations stem from their dependence on grammaticological orientations (*e.g.* early Chomskyan grammaticology) which are now regarded as outdated.

On the whole, the impression that can be gained from the analysis of the presentations of the passive in pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers is that they provide a fairly accurate representation of this grammatical phenomenon. Some potential problems can, however, still be singled out.

A feature of several presentations in the corpus that often detracts from their accuracy is their reliance on the written language – or rather the fact that generalizations, while purporting to represent the grammar of English (without qualifications), in fact often have to do with the conventions of written English. It is of course still a matter for debate whether written and spoken English have two different grammars or a different distribu-

⁶ Cf. Westney 1994, pp. 72-73.

tion of the same grammatical features⁷. There is no gainsaying the fact, however, that there are aspects related to the workings of the passive in English that exclusively concern the spoken medium (*e.g.* the fact that the suprasegmental system may fulfil some of the functions that are associated with the passive).

Two general factors appear to be relevant to this issue: the chronological aspect (when the grammars were first published) and the specific audience the grammars are aimed at (whether they cater exclusively for a specific group of non-native English speakers or indistinctly for native and non-native English speakers alike).

Among the ten grammars in the sample, there is clear evidence of a trend towards paying increasingly more attention to this issue of written vs spoken grammar in some of the more recent grammars. Mention is made, for instance, of impersonalization constructions such as *they* + active verb (**CMLF 99**) and the use of tonic prominence for focalization (**P 00**), which are options available to spoken English to fulfil some of the pragmatic functions that are also deployed by the passive, and account for the fact that the passive is far less used in speech than it is in writing.

Not all the more recent grammars, however, display this concern with the grammar of spoken English. Those that were written by non-native (BANA) English speaking grammarians and aimed more expressly at a non-native (BANA) English speaking readership (**DP 01, N 04**) still seem to rely chiefly on the standards of written English grammar (despite protestations to the contrary one reads in the introductions). Underpinning this choice is the assumption that while local varieties of English are appropriate to spoken informal contexts of use, it is standard BANA English that befits more formal, written communication – what a pedagogical grammar for EFL/ESL teachers should aim to do then is illustrate the standard grammar of written BANA English.

The second problem that may be detected in the presentations has to do with the possible misunderstandings that some of the verbal descriptions may give rise to. This ambiguity stems from the fact that some key terms used in the descriptions are not accompanied by a gloss that pinpoints the technical meaning in which they are being employed – it is normally those terms which also have an ‘everyday’ meaning (‘focus’/‘emphasis’/‘new’ ...) that tend to go unexplained. These are also the terms that the reader is least likely to dwell upon for the very reason that they appear deceptively transparent. It could be argued, though, that in this case, rather than errors of commission (inaccurate representation of facts), pedagogical grammars

⁷ For a discussion, cf. Leech 2000.

for EFL/ESL teachers may be accused of omission (lack of precise definition of terms) ⁸.

The same errors of omission appear to be at the root of the myths and half-truths associated with coursebooks and grammar materials for EFL/ESL students, which writers of pedagogical grammars for EFL/ESL teachers sometimes refer to in order to 'set the record straight'. In Chapter II I cited the critical remark that **P 00** makes in regard to a pedagogical rule about one use of the passive, which for convenience is quoted again below:

Learners are sometimes told that we choose passive constructions in order to give extra prominence to the subject. This is not true. (**P 00**, p. 289)

Again, whether this rule is «true» or not hinges on what meaning is given to the term «prominence». If, for instance, it is intended in the cognitive sense highlighted by Shibatani, as was seen in Chapter II, this rule may arguably be taken to be accurate enough – I have actually come across a similar formulation in a 'non-suspect' source, namely an article by the linguist R. Tomlin:

The general wisdom has been that the difference between active and passive is largely a difference in *theme* or emphasis, the passive occurring when it is the patient which is more important than the agent. ⁹

I would now like to consider the examples that accompany the verbal descriptions of the passive in the ten grammars – to what extent is their representation of English usage accurate? The first thing that should be pointed out is that we have a greater reliance on 'invented' examples in the older grammars – arguably, a consequence of their greater dependence upon Chomskyan grammaticology. By contrast, in the grammars published in the last decade or so, I have found an almost exclusive recourse to authentic sources for the 'model' examples, *i.e.* what I have termed 'grammatical examples' – contrived examples are usually only employed to illustrate various combinations of aspect and tense in the passive (the passive 'tenses'). Having said that, no evidence of the «grotesque monstrosities» Allen talked about ¹⁰ was actually found in the corpus – the contrived

⁸ Swan has detected a similar problem with many pedagogical descriptions: «Where rules are unclear, it is often because of the use of unsatisfactory terminology, and this may conceal the fact that the writer does not himself or herself really understand the point at issue. Vague terms such as *emphasis*, *define*, *habitual*, *pronoun*, *condition*, *modality* or *style* can give the illusion of explanation without really conveying very much» (Swan 1994, p. 48).

⁹ Cf. Tomlin 1994, p. 147.

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter II, fn. 270.

examples still appear to be likely sentences that conform to the rules of information structure in English.

A possible 'error of omission' may, however, also be detected in connection to the representation of the examples. Indeed, even those grammars that do include authentic examples alongside contrived ones, often fail to keep the two kinds of examples apart. If the reader has no way of knowing the origin of the language with which he/she is confronted, he/she may not be in a position to distinguish between pedagogical simplification/idealization and authentic language use, and may end up gaining a distorted view of what contemporary English is actually like. Again, this is obviously less of an issue for native English speaking readers, who have an intuitive 'feel' for the language, but may be a major hindrance for non-native readers.

Let us now turn very briefly to the issue of whether the presentations suffer from any internal lack of accuracy. A mismatch between descriptions and examples has been detected in connection with the representation of the distribution the passive. While some of the older grammar generally provide correct information about the typical distribution patterns of the passive vs the active in different registers, they nevertheless tend to feature examples which are mostly register-neutral. The grammars published in the last decade turn out to be more adept at attaining internal consistency in that most of the examples supplied display more obvious features of specific registers.

