"Expunge Virtually All Use of the Passive Voice": How Does Style Guideline Affect Passive Voice Occurrences in Research Articles?

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ABSTRACT

Background: The prevalence and impact of passive voice (PV) structures in research articles have garnered attention, particularly within the context of academic publishing guidelines. Some journals' writing style guideline, for example, explicitly advises authors to eliminate passive voice instances from their manuscripts, prompting an examination of the extent to which this guideline influences authors' choices in different journal contexts.

Purpose: This study aimed at comparing the frequency of passive voice (PV) structures used in research articles published by journals originating in Indonesia (henceforth, JOI) to those in research articles published by journals originating in English-speaking countries (henceforth, JOE).

Method: Data were gathered from respected journals in Indonesia and the United Kingdom, both renowned for their excellence in language education and applied linguistics. After reviewing relevant literature and considering journal origins and author affiliations, we selected 34 articles (17 from each group) out of 66. We focused our analysis on the 'Introduction' and 'Method' sections, as these sections typically contain active voice in the former and passive voice in the latter. Other sections and peripheral elements were excluded. The analysis involved exporting PDFs to text files to count words and passive voice occurrences. We utilized a passive voice detector tool and manual analysis for accuracy. A t-test was conducted to compare the frequency of passive voice between the two journals.

Results: The results indicated three main findings with respect to the research questions: 1) PVs in JOI occurred more frequently in the 'Method' than in the 'Introduction' section, 2) similarly, PVs in JOE occurred more frequently in the 'Method' than in the 'Introduction' section, 3) JOI comprised fewer sentences than JOE but the frequency of PVs in JOI was significantly higher than that in JOE.

Conclusion: We inferred that the current guidelines seemingly affected the authors' choices of using PV. We also provided some suggestions on how to use AV and PV appropriately in the manuscript.

KEYWORDS

Passive Voice, Active Voice, Academic Writing, Research Article

INTRODUCTION

In most universities in Indonesia, producing an academic writing, such as a research report, and publishing it in English-medium international journals have become one of requirements for most of postgraduate students to obtain their degree (Hanami et al., 2023; Ratnawati et al., 2018). Also, this mandatory requirement is true for universities in some countries (Barbero, 2008; Hill & Thabet, 2021; Moradi, 2019). This academic compulsion occasionally poses much pressure on Indonesian students, as indicated by Lemana and Ariffin (2020) suggesting that the participants faced challenges from cognitive, linguistic, psychological, and external factors. In linguistic aspect, for example, Purwanto et al (2020) found

that Indonesian students hardly publish their work, especially in reputable international journals, due to their inadequate English grammar competence in fulfilling the journal guidelines. In addition to content, format, and ethical issues, linguistic considerations are given substantial emphasis in evaluating a manuscript's quality (Martin et al., 2014). One of these linguistic concerns deals with the use of active (AV) and passive voice (VP) (Leong, 2014). Although some journals also inform suggestions on how to use those voices appropriately for academic writing (Millar et al., 2013; Minton, 2015), the conundrum of satisfying the linguistic requirement still prevails among authors.

The rate of using PV in scientific writing has decreased over the last few years (Banks, 2017; Leong, 2020), while AV has gained more popularity in English academic style manuals because it is presumed to elevate sentence clarity and conciseness (Bannet, 2009). For instance, Elsevier requires writers to use AV in their papers, as explicated in the following excerpt of the writing style guideline:

Expunge virtually all use of the passive voice. Use of the passive voice confuses readers because it does not tell the reader "who" did the action.

In addition, several journals often provide style guidelines as to how authors should use grammatical voices in their manuscripts (e.g., Leong, 2014; Millar et al., 2013). Given the compulsion in such linguistic properties to improve publication opportunity, authors should be mindful of their use of PV throughout their manuscript although not all journal publishers request the same requirements (Millar et al., 2013).

The guideline regarding the use of AV and PV is more likely to be affected by the country from which a particular journal originates (e.g., Izunza, 2020; Ruperez & Martín-Pintado, 2003). When comparing PV occurrences in research articles written by Spanish and American authors, Ruperez and Martín-Pintado (2003) found that American authors use more AV than their Spanish counterparts. Furthermore, Izunza (2020) highlighted a significant decline in the use of passive voice (PV) in JOEs, advocating strongly for active voice (AV), in which manuscripts submitted to JOEs commonly undergo the conversion of PV to AV. This preference extends to research articles submitted to journals from North American and Western European regions, as well as those from countries where English is a second language. However, the frequency of both voices in diverse scientific disciplines has not been clearly established.

This issue has encouraged several researchers to investigate AV and PV practices in research articles. For instance, Leong (2014) analyzed 60 science articles from two groups of journals (Group A had specific statements to encourage authors to use AV, while Group B did not include such statements on their websites). The overall result revealed that

Group A had a lower proportion of PV clauses than Group B (26.02% vs. 34.09%). Similarly, Millar et al (2013) indicated that the journal guidelines for expunging PV in manuscripts significantly reduced the use of PV and it highly appeared in the 'Methods' and 'Results' sections.

In Indonesia, majority of studies examining the use of active voice (AV) and passive voice (PV) in academic writing have typically focused on analyzing students' proficiency and challenges with either or both voices (e.g., Manurung et al., 2020; Princess et al., 2018; Simanjuntak, 2019). PV occurrences in students' writing seem to have been underexplored. However, Yannuar (2014) and Subagio (2019) took a different approach compared to the aforementioned studies. Their focus was on analyzing the occurrences of active voice (AV) and passive voice (PV) frequencies in research articles for instance, Yannuar et al. (2014) analyzed the frequent verbs used in 124 Indonesian undergraduate theses and found that AV appeared more frequently than PV. Similarly, Subagio et al. (2019), who investigated the 'Method' section of Graduate EFL students' theses of Universitas Negeri Malang from two periods (1985-2000 and 2002-2015), revealed that AV sentences appeared more frequently in those research reports than PV.

In brief, to the best of our investigation, we hardly found a publication comparing research articles in the Indonesian context with those in English-speaking countries (JOE) context to see how these journals differ in the use of PV. The results of this study are geared to make Indonesian authors aware of the JOE's requirements so that they could successfully publish their research articles in targeted international reputable journals. Therefore, the research questions that emanated from this current study was three-fold:

1. What is the frequency of passive voice in research articles published by journals originating in Indonesia (JOI)?
2. What is the frequency of passive voice in research articles published by journals originating in an English-speaking country (JOE)?
3. Is the frequency of passive voice occurrences in research articles of JOI different from those of JOE?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Passive Voice in Academic Writing

Academic writings (e.g., research reports or articles) prompt more rigid requirements for authors than non-academic writings, such as newspapers, novels, letters, etc. Taking into account the growing acceptance of AV and the lower rate of PV in academic writing over the last few years (Banks, 2017), we presumed two main reasons why AV is probably preferable to PV. The first concern relates to the authorial voice that affects PV occurrence in each section of a research article.

The second one deals with the clarity and conciseness issues that PV brings into a manuscript.

Passive Voice and Authorial Voice

The use of PV is commonly associated with authors' stances embedded in the manuscripts. Authors frequently use PV to indicate an objective and formal tone in their research papers (Baratta, 2009; Chan & Maglio, 2020; Hyland & Jiang, 2017; Rundblad, 2007). Besides, contributing to an objective and formal tone, PV contributes to the authors' opinions and evaluation of a manuscript. In other words, the avoidance of using first-person references, such as «I», «we», «my», and «our», aims to prevent subjectivity (Banks, 2021; Swan, 1995). However, showing confident judgment in academic writing is necessary to show the authors' credible critical thinking, authority, and ownership on the content. The use of "I" and "we" is one of the ways to depict the authors' identities that can manifest themselves in the readers' consciousness (Hyland, 2002). Yannuar (2014) mentioned that projecting the authors' stance through first-person references («I», «we», «my», and «our») in a text is related to AV construction. This seems to be the reason for some journals to encourage the authors to use more AV than PV.

In addition, Siegel (2009) argued that using PV could weaken a scholarly argument. To investigate how the use of PV could reveal the authors' stance, Baratta (2009) analyzed essays written by three undergraduate students through close contextual analysis. The result indicated that the authors implicitly showed their voice and argument within their essay by employing PV. He then asked the students to complete a questionnaire and interviewed them to gain more information about their attitudes toward their preference in using more PV instead of AV. Eventually, the study uncovered that the students attempted to hide their authority on their idea through PV construction.

Passive Voice in Language Typology and Culture

Li and Thompson (1976), employing the topological theory classified language into subject-prominent and topic-prominent languages. Subject-prominent language is defined as a language where the structure of sentences underscores the subject-predicate grammatical relation. In contrast, topic-prominent language is characterized by topic-comment grammatical relations, which assume a paramount role in shaping its basic sentence structure. Despite the multifaceted nature of the term topic in topic-prominent languages, encompassing syntactically, semantically and pragmatic dimensions (Paul & Whitman, 2017), active voice aligns with subject-prominent language, while passive voice is linked to topic-prominent language. This correlation stems from the process of passivation whereby the transformation involves repositioning an object as the subject, subsequently designing it as the topic of the sentence.

Concerning the authors' culture included in this study, Li and Thompson (1976) considered Indo-European language as a subject-prominent language and East Asian language as a topic-prominent language. Mastering an effective writing style to navigate between these two strands of linguistic features seems to be particularly complex for Indonesian scholars. Basthomi (2006) asserted that Indonesian students do not struggle in mastering some English language features such as phonology, morphology, and syntax, yet they hardly attain cultural properties including rhetorical conventions. He further states that Indonesian authors tend to bring their L1 rhetoric indirectness when they write in English. By implication, their argument is presumed to be weak as they hide their identity behind the use of the third person's point of view in their academic writing. This is closely related to PV construction, which employs third-person references that might hinder their power of argument in the text.

Passive Voice in Different Sections of a Research Article

Considering the impact of AV and PV on authorial voice within a text, for example, guidelines provided by Elsevier, as outlined in their Author Services, suggest that authors should strategically employ these voices in distinct sections of a manuscript. In this case, the rationale behind the use of AV and PV does not simply aid in explaining what we want to emphasize in a sentence but to ensure compliance of the journal's requirement (Azar, 2002; Tarone et al, 1981) that might increase publication opportunity in the journals.

PV is used to emphasize the person or thing being acted on (Jutel, 2007), which is more important to be highlighted than the person who performs the action. Therefore, Horbowicz et al. (2019) suggested that authors should use PV more frequently in the 'Methods' section than in the other sections of a research article because the action, procedure, instruments, or design applied in the research are more important than the author (Ding, 2002; Johnson-Laird, 1968; Sword, 2012; Tarone et al, 1998). Ahmad (2012) analyzed the frequency of PV in some scientific research articles (Medical and Natural Science) and found that the authors mostly employed PV in the 'Method' section to show impersonal findings. However, PV may also occur in the 'Result' section to show the objectivity of the result (Dastjerdi et al. 2021).

Passive Voice and the Issue of Conciseness and Clarity

The construction of PV has also been classified in many different ways. For example, Wang (2010) divided PV into three subcategories based on Quirk et al's (1972) view, as displayed in Table 1.

Passive voice sentences (PV) are often longer than their active voice (AV) counterparts. This is because they involve the use of the verb «be» before the past participle and the preposition «by» after it to introduce the actor, as demonstrated in example (1) in Table 1. This characteristic makes PV less

Table 1

Quirk et al's (1972) Passive Voice Form

Types	Example	Description
Type 1: Central passive and true passive (1) With agentive phrase (2) Without agentive phrase or agentless passive	(1) Each essay was scored by two trained raters (2) Adolescent writers are expected to know vocabulary effectively	Agent represents the person or a thing that performs the action. In (1): it is important to know that the *two trained raters* (as the agent) who performs the action. In (2): The writers are expected (by someone). It is not important to know who expects the writers to know vocabulary effectively.
Type 2: (3) Semi passive or mixed passive	(3) We are interested in the types of mediation provided by the researchers.	*Semi passive* is a type of passive that has an active equivalent and the past participle behaves, to a greater or lesser extent like an adjective. In (3): *We are interested* in the types of mediation *by something*. Thus, the researchers are described as "*interested researchers*".
Type 3: Pseudo passive (4) With current copula verbs, e.g., *feel, look, seem, etc.* (5) With resulting copula verbs, e.g., get*, become, grow*	(4) The problem *seems complicated* (5) I came to you late at night because I got frightened	Pseudo-passive is a verb construction that has a passive form but either an active meaning or rather a resultant state. In (4): it is the current situation that the *problem is complicated* In (5): *I got frightened* means that "*my fear*" is as a result of something or something was frightening me.

concise compared to AV. However, in instances where the actor is omitted, such as in a short passive (example 2), a semi-passive (example 3), and a pseudo-passive (example 4), PVs are not longer than their AV equivalents. Minton (2015) discovered that long PVs is outnumbered by short PVs in academic and journalistic writing when he investigated Longman Spoken and Written English (LSWE) corpus. In summary, it is still equivocal to claim that PV generally leads to longer sentence structure.

The clarity issue in PV may occur since the doer of an action is not mentioned in the sentence as in example (2) Table 1. Siegel (2009) prompted authors to use more AV to strengthen arguments by presenting clarity in a research article. However, we sometimes want to highlight the action or the object since to the reader, knowing the doer is not important, as he or she can be implied based on the context. It indicates that using PV and AV deals with the purpose of what we want to emphasize in a sentence (Azar, 2002). Therefore, we argue that the repeated use of both PV and AV can potentially make the text wordier and more difficult to understand, especially when used in long sentences. Hence, to achieve clarity does not necessarily require expunging PV, but avoiding too many repetitions of PV in a sentence.

METHOD

Corpus Selection

The present study employed two primary criteria for the selection of research articles, namely, the journals country of origin and the authors affiliation. In relation to the country criterion, the journals were categorized into two groups. Group A comprised two distinguished journals originating in Indonesia as a non-English speaking country. Notably, JOI did not provide explicit statements regarding the use of AV

and PV. The chosen journals were considered reputable attaining national accreditation as «Rank 1» and international indexing as «Rank 2»in Scopus, signifying their preeminent standing among EFL journals originating from Indonesia during the period of this study.

The reputation was based on the evaluation conducted by the Scholarly Journal Accreditation Team in Indonesia, which categorized scholarly journals into six groups (Putera et al., 2021; Lukman et al., 2018): rank 1 (score 85-100 or indexed in Scopus), rank 2 (score 70-85), rank 3 (score 60-70), rank 4 (score 50-60), rank 5 (score 40-50), and rank 6 (score 30-40). Top of Form Group B consisted of two journals sourced from Elsevier that originated from the United Kingdom, classified as English-speaking countries (JOE). Notably, this journal explicitly endorsed the frequent use of AV in their articles.

The second criterion hinged on the author's affiliation. In Group A, the articles were authored by individuals connected with Indonesian universities, whereas in Group B, authors were linked to universities in countries where English serves as the first spoken language. It is noteworthy that the selected journals shared a common scholarly domain, (ie. English language studies) ranging from English language teaching to applied linguistics.

By employing the aforementioned criteria, we eventually obtained 34 out of 66 articles (17 articles from each group) which were the most currently published articles at the time of data collection. Table 2 shows the summary of journals and articles included in this study.

Corpus Analysis

The corpus analysis focused on the 'Introduction' and the 'Method' sections in which AVs were predominantly found in the introduction, while PVs are prevalent in the method (Mil-

lar et al., 2013). Hence, we excluded the abstract, findings, discussion, and conclusion section from the analysis. Additionally, peripheral segments, such as titles, headings, captions, footnotes, tables, and appendices, were also omitted.

The analysis was carried out in two ways after exporting the .pdf into .txt files to calculate the number of words and PV in each article. Initially, we utilized a Passive Voice Detector available on datayze.com, which highlighted PV sentences through predictors such as S + to be + past participle (by) as

in sentences 1-7 (see Table 3) and summed them automatically. We then undertook a careful reading to analyze PV clauses since the software could not identify other PV forms as observed in sentences 8-13 (see Table 3). Moreover, a human rater can perform a more accurate analysis than a non-human rater (Maamuujav, 2021). To mitigate potential fatigue-induced decision-making biases, we restricted the review of articles to a maximum of five at a time, a practice well below the threshold recommended by Mahshanian and Shahnazari (2020).

Table 2

Summary of Journals and Articles

Group	Journals	Article Volume	Code	Total Articles	Selected Articles
A	Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia (TEFLIN Journal)	Vol 32, No 1 (2021)	JOI-1	8	4
	Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)	Vol 11, No 1 (2021)	JOI-2	24	13
B	Journal of Second Language Writing (JoSLW)	Vol 53 (2021)	JOE-1	8	3
		Vol 52 (2021)		9	5
	Assessing Writing (AW)	Vol 49 (2021)	JOE-2	8	5
		Vol 48 (2021)		9	4
TOTAL				66	34

Table 3

Passive Voice Sentences

Sentences	Passive Forms	Example
Simple sentence	Basic *(be + Ven)*	(1) Academic language is defined as. . .
	Progressive *(be + being + Ven)*	(2) The assessment information is being gathered...
	Perfective *(have + been + Ven)*	(3) Two types of dynamic assessment have been employed in previous research.
	Modal *(modal + be + Ven)*	(4) This cultural knowledge can be consciously used by children
	Modal perfective *(modal + have + been + Ven)*	(5) the above-mentioned studies' findings might have not yet been associated with the context. . .
	To-infinitive (to + be + Ven)	(6) Next, the knowledge and skills of teachers and headmasters need to be enhanced for further GLS implementation success
	Non-finite –ing *(being + Ven)*	(7) . . . long, straight and stout, being caudally directed with no significant dorsal projection.
	Bare *(Ven)*	(8) . . . with the lowest prices accepted by sellers in actually concluded trades.
	Pseudo-passives	(9) The problem *seems complicated*
Complex sentence	Relative clause	(10) . . . which is logically related to avoidance of writing. . .
	Adverbial clause	(11) When failure is anticipated, a threat appraisal serves as a risk to self-worth and leads to lower engagement. . .
	Reported clause	(12) Evidence suggests that students who are motivated are likely to produce better outcomes. . .
	Nominalized clause	(13) A limitation of the present study is + that the data were collected from a single source. . .

To simplify our analysis in computing the percentage of PV with the number of words in each article, we only counted the verbs from two forms of PV in the articles: simple sentences and complex sentences. For instance:

> **Excerpt 3:** When a set of language operations has been **acquired** in L1, they should also be available within L2 contexts. (JOI-113)

> **Excerpt 4**: The issues such as the skyrocketing tuition fee, cheating, bribery, and corruption are **depicted** satirically and **consumed** comically by a large global popular culture's audience. (JOI-102)

> **Excerpt 5**: Deductive coding was **used** since specific questions were **designed** to elicit students' metacognition surrounding the office memo in accordance with the model. (JOE-203)

From the three excerpts above, we considered the word *acquired* in excerpt 3 as one PV. Similarly, although excerpt 4 contained two verbs *depicted* and *consumed* in the sentence, we also considered them as one PV because it was a simple sentence with *the issues* as the subject. Meanwhile, in excerpt 5, we considered the words *used* and *designed* as two PVs because it was a complex sentence where *deductive coding* became the subject in the main sentence and *specific questions* was the other subject in the clause.

Statistical Analysis

We used SPSS Statistics version 23 to conduct a t-test with a 0.05 confidence interval, aiming to assess the variance in the average frequency of PVs between JOI and JOE. Prior to the analysis, the percentage of PV occurrence was calculated in relation to the total number of sentences in the 'Introduction' and 'Method' sections, using the formula below:

$$PVs\ percentage = \frac{Total\ PV}{Total\ Sentences}\ x\ 100$$

RESULTS

In this section, we organized and discussed the results to directly address the three research questions guiding our study, presented as follows:

The Frequency of Passive Voice in Research Articles Published by JOI

Table 4 shows that the mean of PVs in the 'Introduction' ($M = 27.65$) was higher than that in the 'Method' ($M = 20.06$) section. However, when we counted the percentage of PVs with

Table 4

Frequency of Passive Voice in Journals Originated in Indonesia (JOI)

No	Article Code	Total PVs		Total Sentences		Percentage of PVs	
		Intro	Method	Intro	Method	Intro (%)	Method (%)
1	JOI-101	18	12	48	29	37.50	41.38
2	JOI-102	27	14	65	36	41.54	38.89
3	JOI-103	15	24	57	45	26.32	53.33
4	JOI-104	42	15	113	24	37.17	62.50
5	JOI-201	57	22	86	40	66.28	55.00
6	JOI-202	23	13	37	46	62.16	28.26
7	JOI-203	16	46	33	55	48.48	83.64
8	JOI-204	16	31	54	69	29.63	44.93
9	JOI-205	38	23	90	31	42.22	74.19
10	JOI-206	20	17	45	21	44.44	80.95
11	JOI-207	42	16	79	32	53.16	50.00
12	JOI-208	19	8	64	25	29.69	32.00
13	JOI-209	17	41	37	53	45.95	77.36
14	JOI-210	64	9	115	9	55.65	88.89
15	JOI-211	16	22	53	35	30.19	62.86
16	JOI-212	14	17	34	33	41.18	51.52
17	JOI-213	26	12	58	20	44.83	60.00
	MEAN	27.65	20.06	62.82	35.47	43.32	57.98

the total number of sentences in each section, we found that the mean in 'Introduction' (M = 43.32%) became lower than that in the 'Method' (M = 57.98%) section. This alteration was influenced by the number of sentences in both the 'Introduction' and the 'Method' sections.

Frequency of Passive Voice in Research Articles Published by JOE

In contrast to the frequency of passive voices (PVs) in JOI, Table 5 illustrates a consistent pattern in the frequency of PVs in JOE. The 'Introduction' section exhibited a lower total number of PVs and a lower percentage of PVs (M = 34.06%) compared to the 'Method' section (M = 46.92%), despite the 'Method' section having a lower total number of sentences than the 'Introduction' section.

Comparison between the Frequency of PVs in Research Articles Published by JOI and JOE

Table 6 shows that the mean frequency of overall PVs in JOI (M = 50.65%) surpassed than that in JOE (M = 40.49%). Furthermore, the findings highlight that PVs occurred more frequently in the 'Method' section (M = 52.45%) compared to the 'Introduction' (M = 38.69%) section across all journals.

We undertook a further investigation by calculating the t-test to see if the mean difference between the frequency of PVs in JOI and JOE reported in the descriptive statistics was significantly different. Table 7 shows a significant difference between the frequencies of PVs in the 'Introduction' section $t(2.037) = 2.296$, $p = 0.28$ while PVs in the 'Method' section of both journals were the same, $t(2.037) = 1.813$, $p = 0.79$.

DISCUSSION

Our findings align with those reported by Millar et al. (2013), showing a clear tendency for the use of active voice (AV) in the 'Introduction' and passive voice (PV) in the 'Method' sections of research articles. This pattern indicates a calculated choice by authors to use AV for a forceful presentation of research premises and the significance of their work, thereby emphasizing their contributions. On the other hand, the use of PV in describing methods points to a deliberate focus on the technical aspects of the research rather than the researchers' roles, reflecting a common academic practice that prioritizes methodological detail over personal attribution. This nuanced use of AV and PV aligns with recommendations from leading publishers, such as Elsevier, who suggest that authors carefully consider voice to effectively convey their message while adhering to journal style guides.

Table 5

Frequency of Passive Voice in Journals Originated in English Country (JOE)

No	Article Code	Total PVs		Total Sentences		Percentage of PVs	
		Intro	Method	Intro	Methods	Intro (%)	Method (%)
1	JOE-101	57	46	146	66	39.04	68.18
2	JOE-102	28	8	69	54	40.58	14.81
3	JOE-103	41	12	169	31	24.26	38.71
4	JOE-104	56	20	89	43	62.92	46.51
5	JOE-105	16	27	102	61	15.69	44.26
6	JOE-106	27	78	70	93	38.57	83.87
7	JOE-107	21	22	48	47	43.75	46.81
8	JOE-108	30	16	100	49	30.00	32.65
9	JOE-109	40	57	99	93	40.40	61.29
10	JOE-201	35	35	130	80	26.92	43.75
11	JOE-202	21	30	93	68	22.58	44.12
12	JOE-203	24	37	60	75	40.00	49.33
13	JOE-204	28	22	124	77	22.58	28.57
14	JOE-205	43	34	123	76	34.96	44.74
15	JOE-206	23	34	46	99	50.00	34.34
16	JOE-207	21	29	88	74	23.86	39.19
17	JOE-208	19	75	83	98	22.89	76.53
	MEAN	31.18	34.18	96.41	69.65	34.06	46.92

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of PVs Frequency in the Introduction and the Method

Section	Journal	Mean (%)	SD	N
Introduction	JOI	43.32	11.41	17
	JOE	34.06	12.09	17
	Total	38.69	12.42	34
Method	JOI	57.98	18.26	17
	JOE	46.92	17.31	17
	Total	52.45	18.40	34
Total	JOI	50.65	16.76	34
	JOE	40.49	16.05	34
	Total	45.57	17.05	68

Table 7

Independent Sample t-Test of Frequency of PVs in JOI and JOE

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Introduction	.220	.642	2.296	32	.028	9.26	4.03
Method	.479	.494	1.813	32	.079	11.06	6.10

This approach, as discussed by Azar (2002) and Tarone et al. (1981), is crucial for ensuring that a manuscript meets editorial standards and enhances its chance of acceptance.

The lower frequency of PVs observed in the Journal of English (JOE) compared to the Journal of Inquiry (JOI), is a significant finding that sheds light on the impact of journal guidelines on authors' language choices. This indicates that authors are more inclined to adhere to the recommended stylistic preferences outlined by journals, such as the encouragement to use AV over PV, as evidenced by prior research conducted by Leong (2014) and Millar et al. (2013). The result of this study suggest that journals explicitly endorsing AV usage may influence authors to minimize the use of PVs in their manuscripts, potentially due to a desire to align with editorial expectations and increase their chances of publication. This underscores the importance of authors being aware of and responsive to journal guidelines, as it could enhance the overall quality and suitability of their submissions for publication.

Furthermore, our study suggests that PV occurrences in JOI may be influenced by the cultural and linguistic norms associated with the country of origin of the journal, as noted by Izunza (2020). This observation aligns with the framework of language typology, as proposed by Li and Thompson (1976), which distinguishes between subject-prominent and topic-prominent languages. The correlation between voice usage and linguistic typology stems from the inherent struc-ture of these languages, wherein active voice tends to align with subject-prominent languages such as those spoken in English-speaking countries, while passive voice is more closely associated with topic-prominent languages like Indonesia. Moreover, the inclination of Indonesian authors to employ PV in their writings may be influenced by cultural factors. Basthomi (2006) suggests that Indonesian authors often incorporate indirect rhetorical strategies from their native language (L1) when composing in English. Consequently, this may result in their arguments being perceived as weaker, as they conceal their identity behind third-person perspectives in academic prose. This reliance on PV, characterized by its use of third-person references, could potentially diminish the persuasive impact of their arguments within the text.

We find the journals' guidance to completely avoid PVs somewhat limiting, as it overlooks the nuanced role PVs play in conveying meaning within sentences. Our analysis indicates that authors encounter difficulties in adhering strictly to this recommendation, as PVs often serve a vital function in structuring and contextualizing their intended message. In line with the viewpoints of Bush (1981) and Millar et al. (2013), we argue that simply converting PVs to AV forms does not necessarily result in improved writing quality.

In some instances, PV could make the text wordier and unclear while AV construction tended to make the text more readable and comprehensible (Riley, 1991). A common issue

associated with clarity pertained to dangling modifiers. Dangling modifier occurred when a word or phrase modified a missing subject from the sentence and instead another subject appeared in its place. For instance, in the mentioned excerpt (6), there is ambiguity about the subject responsible for the observation. The sentence implies that «*it*» conducts the observation. To enhance clarity, we could revise the sentence to AV, indicating who performed the action, such as «***we*** *found out that students did not*.»

> **Excerpt 6:** During the observation, it **was found out** that students did not complete the list of the types and subtypes of the word formation processes. (JOI-206)

In addition, the usage of PV occasionally resulted in lengthy and verbose sentences, making it challenging for readers to discern the intended meaning. In excerpt (7), the authors excessively employed PV to create a single complex sentence, presenting redundant information about *a ministerial policy* and *which has been known worldwide bearing the name of its author*, which may be unnecessary for the readers.

> **Excerpt 7:** At the national level, this concern **has been translated** into a ministerial policy in the form of the Ministry of Education and Culture decree **entitled** *Permendikbud* (*Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*) no. 22, 2016, which stipulated that students should develop critical thinking skills in school, **guided** by the taxonomy which **has been known** worldwide bearing the name of its author, Benjamin Bloom. (JOI-101)

In certain cases, PVs are essential for achieving conciseness, helping to prevent an overreliance on AV constructions, which can lead to monotony and lack of variety in writing style. Therefore, while we acknowledge the importance of clarity in communication, we advocate for a balanced approach that recognizes the utility of PVs alongside AVs in scholarly writing. For instance, the utilization of AV occasionally resulted in a distortion of the author's intended message, as noted by Ferreira (2021). Furthermore, when attempting to convert certain bare-passive clauses like into non-passive forms, it often led to the creation of unnaturally lengthy sentences that deviated from conventional writing norms. This exemplifies the complexity of relying solely on AV, particularly when it comes to maintaining conciseness in scholarly communication. Consider the following examples:

> **Excerpt 8:** Though used as a motivational tactic, fear appeals can elicit either a challenge or a threat appraisal. (JOI-205)
>
> Comparison for excerpt 8:
>
> Though **we** used fear appeals as a motivational tactic, **it** can elicit either a challenge or a threat appraisal.

In the above example, the passive voice construction in the original sentence («*used as a motivational tactic*») is more concise than the corresponding active voice construction («***we*** *used fear appeals as a motivational tactic,* ***it*** *can elicit*»). Despite being more concise, the passive voice effectively communicates the intended message and maintains clarity. Top of Form

Furthermore, the selection between AV and passive structures depends on where the author places emphasis in the sentence. Take a look at the following examples:

> Excerpt 9: Agentive passive
>
> These clause-combining strategies are used by academic writers to achieve efficiency and to build logico-semantic relationships. (JOI-103)

Agentive passive as in the excerpt 9, although written in the PV, the author(s) highlighted that academic writers use these clause-combining strategies, emphasizing their importance to the reader rather than focusing on the writers themselves. This choice suggests an intentional emphasis on the strategies rather than the actors involved.

> Excerpt 10: Semi passive
>
> They were interested in improving on the basis of automated feedback. (JOE-105)

In excerpt 10, the sentence is written in the passive voice as it lacks a grammatically active equivalent, despite conveying an active meaning. The doer, «they,» is mentioned at the beginning of the sentence. This construction highlights an active intention behind the action, even though it is expressed in the passive voice.

> Excerpt 11: Pseudo passive
>
> I just hope that it gets interpreted well. (JOE-208)

Pseudo passive as in the excerpt 11, although written in the active voice, the sentence conveys a passive meaning. Despite this, we agree with Riggle (1998) that writing instruction or handbooks should promote general principles for the appropriate use of both active and passive voices, rather than outright discouraging authors from using the passive voice.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our research makes a substantial addition to the ongoing discussion about the use of AV and PV in scholarly writing. Expanding on previous studies, we verified a purposeful allocation of these voices throughout various sections of research papers, with active voice being prevalent in 'Introduction' sections for its confident portrayal of research premises, while passive voice predominated in 'Method' sections, emphasizing methodological precision. This strategic approach to voice selection corresponds with guidance from prominent publishers and demonstrates authors' awareness of journal style guidelines, as illustrated by the notably lower occurrence of passive voices in journals such as JOE compared to JOI.

However, we advise against strict adherence to journal rules that insist on avoiding PV entirely. Our study shows that PV constructions play an important role in organizing and explaining authors' messages, especially when using AV might make sentences too long or unclear. While AV is good for making text easier to understand, whether it is suitable depends on the situation. Sometimes, PV is better for making sentences shorter and clearer. Additionally, our analysis of different PV constructions shows their subtle roles in academic writing.Top of Form

Moving forward, we advocate for a balanced approach that recognizes the value of both AV and PV in academic writing. Rather than imposing strict rules, writing guidelines should encourage authors to consider the intended emphasis and clarity of their sentences when selecting between AV and PV constructions. Embracing this balanced approach will enable scholars to maintain effective communication while preserving the richness and diversity of their writing styles. Additionally, future research endeavors should aim to broaden the scope of analysis by incorporating a more extensive range of research articles, while educators should emphasize the importance of clarity in teaching AV and PV

usage to students, advising against unnecessary repetition that may impede comprehension.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Humairah Fauziah: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Yazid Bashtomi: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Software; Validation; Visualization; Writing – original draft.

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