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**The Difficulty in Detecting Passive and Stative Forms in EST Discourse.**

**The Case of 1<sup>st</sup> Year Master Students, University of Constantine**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master  
in Applied Language Studies

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## **Dedication**

To my parents with love.

To my sisters and brothers.

To all my teachers with great respect.

To my dear friend Nora.

To all my classmates.

## **Acknowledgements**

This work would not be achieved without the help, patience and care of my great supervisor, Dr. Nacif LABED, who did not save efforts to help me succeed. I appreciate each second he spent in guiding and directing me during the achievement of this work, and I would like to express my sincere thanks for his incisive and invaluable feedback on the work in progress.

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I would like to thank the first year Master students, Group Two, for their help and seriousness.

## **List of abbreviations**

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

EST: English for Science and Technology

NP: Noun Phrase

pp: Past Participle

Q: Question

VP: Verb Phrase

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## **Abstract**

This study is about investigating and stating the major difficulties that a foreign language student may face in differentiating the passive, more specifically the agentless passive, and the stative constructions, passive-like constructions, in an EST discourse. So it is hypothesized that the students will detect the two mentioned forms if they are aware of the occurrence of both forms in an EST discourse and their relation to the rhetorical functions. One experiment has been conducted in order to test the above hypothesis. The experiment is a test directed to a sample of thirty one first year Master students of English selected by simple random sampling from a population of about (180) in the English department. The students were asked to analyse a text taking into consideration the occurrence of the two forms mentioned above in relation to the rhetorical function of a given sentence. Moreover, they were asked to answer a set of questions which aim at knowing the students' attitudes towards the different modules they have, more specifically their preferences and attendances to EST theory and practice courses and grammar courses, besides to their awareness (knowledge and noticing) of the tow forms. The results obtained show that the majority of the students may face problems in differentiating the two forms because of either their unawareness or inappropriate interpretation of the meaning expressed in a given sentence, or not paying full attention.

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# **General Introduction**

## **1. Introduction**

The present study attempts to explore the main factors that lead students to find difficulties in detecting or differentiating the agentless passive and the passive-like or what is called stative construction. In this study we will try to know whether non native students, Algerian first year Master students, have problems in distinguishing between passive and stative forms that are similar in the form but different in function and meaning. We will direct a test and a questionnaire to a sample of 31 students chosen by simple random sampling.

## **2. Aim of the research**

This work aims at locating and diagnosing the students' problems in detecting and identifying the homophone forms, passive and stative constructions. It aims also at knowing whether knowing the rhetorical function helps in specifying the function of the wanted form. Moreover, it aims at exploring whether the students could learn a given form when they are left in their own device.

## **3. Statement of the problem and hypotheses**

Scientific writings are characterized by their impersonal style. To achieve this impersonality, writers use different grammatical aspects, such as the nominalization or the passive voice. The passive voice is a more prominent feature in any EST discourse which has the form of 'to be +pp'. However, in EST discourse, other forms that have the surface structure of the passive but differ from it in function and meaning may occur. This similarity in form may lead students to confuse whether the form refers to the passive or to the stative constructions particularly when the doer of the action is not easily detected.

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\*In this study the pronoun 'he' will be used to refer to either male or female.

Hence, we will try to investigate whether the students have difficulty not to differentiate between passive and stative constructions because of the similarity of the forms or because they are unaware of the co-occurrence of both ones? And by that, we state the following hypothesis:

If students are aware of the existence of both constructions and know the function of each one they are expected to identify and distinguish between passive and stative forms that are similar in appearance but different in function and meaning.

#### **4. Methodology**

Our sample, of thirty-one students, is selected from a general population of about (180) English first year Master students, Applied Language Studies, of the Department of Languages of the University Mentouri Constantine. We will administrate them one set of questionnaire (Appendix#01) entitled students' questionnaire which intends to know the main factors that may lead students not to differentiate passive and passive like constructions in an EST discourse; it aims also to diagnose the difficulties that a student may face in analysing an EST discourse, as it, the questionnaire, was also put to see the students' attitudes towards the different subject they have, more precisely towards EST theory and practice courses and grammar course. Besides, we will direct a test to see whether the students could detect and differentiate the two desired forms and to locate the students' problems when they could not differentiate passive and stative constructions.

Because of time constraints, and in order to test our hypothesis and collect data, we select a sample from a population of first year Master students. We select (group 2), thirty one (31) students, by using the technique of simple random sampling among four groups (1, 2, 3, and 4) of Applied Language Studies Option. The questionnaire and the test were handed out to students in their Written Expression session. Concerning the session we chose Written Expression session because teachers of other sessions either did not finish the program, or

their sessions are based on presentations and there are many students who have not present yet. Moreover, we know that all the students attend this session, because the attendances or absences are taken into consideration. By that we guarantee that almost all the students will be present. Moreover, we chose 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students because they have lectures about how to analyse the EST texts and they know the characteristics of an EST discourse whereas, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students do not have such lectures.

## **5. Structure of the study**

The present study consists of three basic chapters, chapter One, and Two are concerned with the research theoretical background of the basic concepts of this study which are EST discourse, more specifically, the main characteristic, that concerns this study, of the EST discourse which is rhetorical functions and passive and stative forms. The subsequent chapter, chapter Three, describes the study conducted on a group of 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students. It is also devoted to the analysis of the data obtained.

The first chapter is about EST discourse (its main characteristics) with focuses on the main rhetorical functions. It will also discuss the role of passive and stative constructions and their occurrence in rhetorical functions.

The second chapter is concerned with the use of passive and stative forms. Then it will focus on the function and distinction of the two similar forms (To be+ past participle). Finally, the third chapter is about the description of the questionnaire and the test. It also discuss tabulate and analyse the results obtained.

# **Chapter One: The EST Discourse**

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Background and definition

1.3. Main characteristics of EST discourse

1.3.1. Rhetorical functions

1.3.1.1. The rhetorical function of definition

1.3.1.2. The rhetorical function of description

1.3.1.3. The rhetorical function of classification

1.3.1.4. The rhetorical function of instruction

1.3.2. Passive-stative constructions and rhetorical functions

1.4. Conclusion

# Chapter One: The EST Discourse

## 1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we will try to give a general overview about the position of EST among the other types of English, as we will try to state a brief definition of EST discourse from the viewpoint of Trimble, Halliday and Martin. Then we will try to demonstrate the main characteristics of an EST discourse, more specifically, focusing on the specific rhetorical functions which are definition, description, classification, and instruction. At the end of this chapter, we will focus on the relation between passive-stative forms and the specific rhetorical functions in an EST discourse.

## 1.2. Background and definition

EST (English for Science and Technology) has been viewed by Hutchinson and Waters (2006) as a sub-category of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is in turn, emerged from EFL (English as a Foreign Language) a branch of ELT (English Language Teaching). In the ELT tree (p.17) communication and learning are the roots and the base of all kinds of English and by that of EST.

EST has two main sub-categories the first one is EAP (English for Academic Purposes) which deals with English for medical studies and the second one is EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) which is concerned with English for technicians (Trimble, 1990; Hutchinson & Waters, 2006).

EST discourse is that type of written transactional and instructional discourse that extends from the peer writing to technician writing Kirkman asserted that “the aim of technical writing is to transmit information accurately, quickly, and economically from one person to another” (1999, p.2). It focuses on giving more explicit account of procedures and evidence rather than emphasizing human actions and emotions (Trimble, 1990). Trimble defined EST discourse as:

“It covers that area of written English that extends from the peer writing of scientists and technically oriented professionals to the writing aimed at skilled technicians. EST writings [...] Has as its purpose the transmission of the information (fact or hypotheses) from writers to readers”. (1990, pp.5-14).

EST is directly linked with scientific English and incorporates a greater content of scientific language than the other types of English. There is a great variation among scientific writings and scientific English; the variation is due to “field”, whether, extending, transmitting or exploring knowledge in physics or biology or social sciences, in term of who the addressee is or what Halliday and Martin call “tenor”. In other words, whether it is addressed to specialists, learners or laymen, whether within the same group as from specialists to specialists, or across group such as lecturer to student, and in term of mode whether “phonic” or graphic channel (Halliday & Martin, 1993).

### **1.3. Main characteristics of EST discourse**

EST discourse should be analysed by taking into consideration the different characteristics of a discourse such as the cohesive markers, rhetorical techniques, grammatical features and rhetorical functions. In this study we are concerned only with the rhetorical functions and their relation of the stative and the passive forms.

#### **1.3.1. Rhetorical functions**

EST discourse is concerned with the transmission of specific and particular kinds of information such as presenting facts and hypotheses, and describing experiments and observations. Thus, it does not make use of those types of rhetorics which create emotions and poetic images (Trimble, 1990).

Trimble (1990) stated three main rhetorical concepts that should be studied when analysing any scientific and technical English discourse which are: the nature of an EST paragraph, the rhetorical techniques and the rhetorical functions, that are most frequently used.

In this study, we are concerned only with one rhetorical concept which is rhetorical function. Functions represent the intention of the writer or speaker such as advising, warning, describing, and so on. They are concerned with social behaviour as Hutchinson & Waters (2006) defined them.

There are many types of rhetorical functions that many occur in a scientific and technical text such as warning, explanation, definition, description, exposition, hortatory and polemic, etc. (Halliday & Martin, 1993). These functions are imposed by the nature and the purpose of the discourse. For instance, the rhetorical function of definition is more frequently used in writings for students new to a field (Trimble, 1990). Trimble listed five major rhetorical functions (definition, description, classification, instruction and visual verbal relationship) which are according to him more prominent in an EST discourse. These functions are specific rhetorical functions that develop the general rhetorical functions of the EST discourse; because, and according to Trimble, an EST discourse has various levels of organization such as the overall aim of the discourse, the general rhetorical functions that develop the objectives and the specific functions besides to rhetorical techniques that provide relationships within and between the specific rhetorical functions.

We will focus in this study on four rhetorical functions: Definition, Description, Classification, and Instruction as we will list them in no importance of order.

### 1.3.1.1. The rhetorical function of definition

In an EST discourse, writers need to define new concepts or new visions of the ideas and describe a new technology. Thus, the rhetorical function of definition is a necessity in any scientific and technical text.

Definition, from a linguistic point of view, is a special type of sentence that gathers and binds the relevant aspect of a lexeme's meaning. By that, it makes the lexeme understandable (Crystal, 1995). For instance, in the following definition:

- (1) “Catalases [...] are the class of enzymes which catalyze the decomposition of hydrogen peroxide to oxygen and water”

(Kacem-Chaouch, Maraihi, Destain & Thonart, 2005).

The writer stated that catalases are a class of enzymes which means that it is not, for instance, a hormone. Then he added that it decomposes or catalyses the hydrogen peroxide to oxygen and water by this, he differentiates the enzyme from other kinds of enzymes. Hence, a catalase is not, for example, an amylase which decomposes polysaccharide. The word ‘enzymes’ is a general term to which the ‘catalases’ belongs, and ‘hydrogen peroxide decomposition’ is a specific feature that distinguishes the word ‘catalases’.

In EST discourse, definitions are usually short and belong to one of the following categories:

- Formal definitions which give the most precise information has usually the form: Term = class + differences (Trimble, 1990). Crystal mentioned that “the basic structure of a definition sentence consists of two factors, a general category to which a word belongs, and the specific features or attributes which distinguish that word [concept] from related words”. (1995, p.169). There would appear many different attributes in one sentence definition. Thus, the definition word will be clearly distinguished from other concepts.

- Semiformal definition: is that type of definition that consists of the term that being defined and the statement of difference. It is considered to give less information than the formal definition.
- Non-formal definition: is that type of information that gives neither complete nor precise information as do formal and semi formal definitions. It is usually made either by giving a synonym or antonym of the term.

### **1.3.1.2. The rhetorical function of description**

Description is a statement that represents something in words. It records information about the structure or function of a particular device or material as it highlights the major stages or steps of a given procedure or process (Trimble, 1990). Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger defined description as “the process of defining, classifying or categorizing phenomena of interest.”(2006, p.16).

Trimble (1990) stated that there are three main categories of description that are more frequent in an EST discourse. Function description gives the reader information about the purpose and what a given device is used for, whereas process description is detailing the series of stages. The stages may group several steps which must be presented in a chronological order and must be all included (Michigan Proficiency Exam, 2006). Physical description gives information about the physical appearance or characteristics of an object. It includes information about size, shape, colour, volume, as it includes the spatial position of a given thing in relation to other things and measurement (Trimble, 1990).

### **1.3.1.3. The rhetorical function of classification**

Classification is another rhetorical function that is highly used in scientific and technical texts. According to Trimble, there are three main types of classification. There is the

complete classification which must provide the reader with the items being classified, the class to which the items belong, and the basis for classification. The second is partial classification in which the bases for classifying are left out. The third kind of classification is implicit classification. This classification appears in a paragraph that does not have classification as its rhetorical function, but contains the classifying information which need rearrangement to be well understood (Trimble, 1990).

#### **1.3.1.4. The rhetorical function of instruction**

The rhetorical function of instruction is frequently used in experiment articles particularly in the method section. There are two major types of instructions. The first one is direct instructions which have the form of vertical list that tells someone to do something. The second one is indirect instruction which has the form of a paragraph but makes the reader follow the orders or directions (Trimble, 1990).

#### **1.3.2. Passive-stative constructions and rhetorical functions**

The passive always indicates an action or activity whether the agent is stated or not whereas stative constructions (verbs or adjectives) indicate a state or a condition of something.

Passives and statives are the grammatical elements that are closely related to the rhetorical functions of a text. Both forms passive or stative, can frequently be found in the rhetorical function of description and less frequently in the rhetorical function of instruction because instructions are directions to a person given in an imperative form (specifically direct instructions). Since stative constructions describe a state, they occur in physical descriptions; whereas passives are generally used to describe process or function description (Trimble, 1990).

To illustrate this, Biber, Courd & Reppen (2002), investigated the frequent occurrence of the verb tense and voice in relation to the general structure of the scientific experimental articles. They found that agentless passive is highly used in methodology sections and it is used to describe the procedures used in an experiment. Kirkman (1999) who is one among those who discouraged the overuse of the passive in scientific writings stated that “it is frequently difficult to avoid using the passive when describing processes or procedures”, because the use of the passive in the description of the procedures properly puts emphasis on the experiment or process being described, not on the researcher. Moreover, readers (since we are concerned with written EST discourse) are interested in what are and how the procedures are carried out rather than in who carried them out.

Consider the following examples which are taken from texts analysed and proposed by 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students in EST practice courses (2009-2010)

- (2) Tumor metastases *are made up* of the same type of cells as the original or primary tumor (Conrad, 2010).
- (3) The right lungs has three lobes, while the left one *is divided* into two lobes and a small structure called the lingual that is the equivalent of the middle lobe (Conrad, 2010).
- (4) The heart cavity *is divided* down the middle into a right and left heart, which is in turn *are subdivided* into chambers (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010).
- (5) In the mammals the midbrain *is greatly reduced*, serving primarily as a connecting link between the hindbrain and the forebrain (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010).
- (6) The hindbrain *is composed* of the medulla oblongata and the pons (Baily, 2010).
- (7) Joints may *be fixed* or movable (Glendinning, E.H. & Glendinning N., 1995).

In the above examples, the sentences (2), (3), (4), (5), and (6) have the function of physical description in which the italicized words seem as agentless passives but they function as stative constructions which describe a state and not an action. In sentence (7) which is a partial classification the terms “be fixed, be movable” indicate the state and condition of the joints. However, in the examples below, all the italicized words indicate the passive whether the agent is stated or not and all verbs indicate an action

(8) The red cells *are produced* in the bone marrow (O'Neil, 2010).

(9) The reactor *is used* to convert nuclear energy into heat.

(10) The nuclear chain reaction *can be controlled* by using neutron poisons and neutron moderators to change the fraction of neutrons that will go on to cause more fission.

(11) The heat *is carried* away from the reactor and *is then used* to generate steam.

(Wikipedia, 2010).

(12) The purely liquid portion of the cytoplasm *is called* the cytosol.

(Zuba, Pearson & Vance, 1995).

Sentence (8), (9) and (10) serve the function description; (11) is a process description; and (12) is a non-formal definition. In (8), (9), (10) and (11) the interest is, successively, in what is it produced in the bone marrow, what is it carried away, and what is it used to convert nuclear energy. For that, the use of the passive in these sentences is to emphasize the patient. In the non-formal definition sentence, a fact or let's say an accepted knowledge is stated by someone who is unknown or it is worthless to state who is it in comparison to the importance of the information stated.

#### **1.4. Conclusion**

To sum up, the aim of an EST discourse is to transmit the information from a writer to a reader (as we are concerned, in this study, with written discourse). These information are

structured and organized in specific ways, depending on who writes the discourse, to whom and for what purpose it is written, to convey the intended meaning. For that, different rhetorical functions may be used in an EST discourse such as definition, description, classification and instruction. In an EST discourse, grammatical elements are used in a particular way to serve for the appropriate and accurate transmission of the information; passive and stative constructions are the grammatical elements that are closely related to the rhetorical functions of an EST discourse. The passive can be used in any rhetorical function, be it definition, description or instruction. However, statives are frequently used in the rhetorical function of description, particularly in physical description, than the other functions.

## **Chapter Two: Passive and Stative Constructions**

2.1. Introduction

2.2. The passive

2.2.1. Definition

2.2.2. The form of the passive voice

2.2.3. The use of the passive constructions

2.3. The stative constructions

2.3.1. Definition

2.3.2. The form of the stative constructions

2.3.3. The use of the stative constructions

2.4. Passive-stative distinction

2.5. Conclusion

## **Chapter Two: Passive and Stative Constructions**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims at mentioning the differences between passive and stative constructions (the forms that look like the passive i.e. have the same form of the passive). We will start by demonstrating what the passive is, focusing on the passive that has the verb 'to be' as an auxiliary. Then, we will give a brief view about the form and the uses of the passive. After that, we move to define the stative form that concerns this study and demonstrate the uses of this form. We end the chapter by the distinction between the two forms and mentioning the difficulties that a foreign language student may face in differentiating between the two different forms.

### **2.2. The Passive**

As it is stated in the background and definition of EST discourse, EST discourse is concerned with the presentation of facts and evidence as it has less emphasis on the human agent's actions. For that, the passive is the most prominent morphosyntactic structure in an EST text.

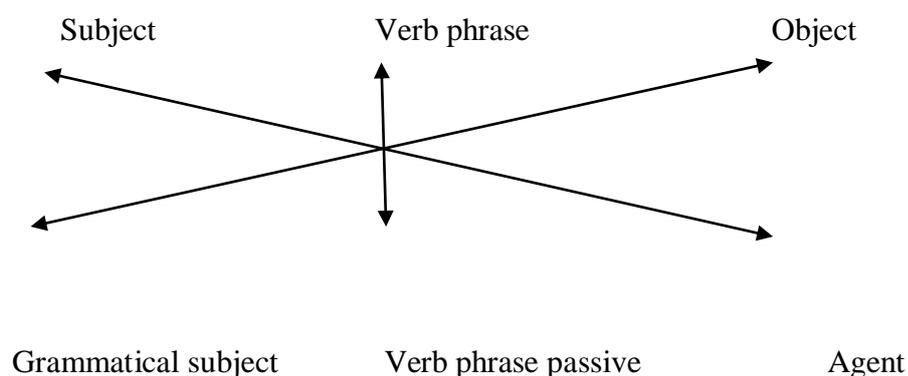
#### **2.2.1. Definition**

The passive voice is viewed as a deviation from the active voice. This means that it is a change in the world order of the active voice; more precisely, it is the inversion of subject-object position; by that, it is meant that the subject takes the place of the object and the object takes the place of the subject and by that the object functions as the grammatical subject of the passive sentence. It is also viewed as a change in the case making which means that the emphasis move from the subject to the object; as it is viewed as a change in a verbal morphology this is by the occurrence of the auxiliary 'to be' (the case of our study) plus the past participle of the active verb, moreover, a new word 'by' may occur (Swiewiersk, 1984).

The voice means the way in which the relation between the verb and the noun phrase is expressed (Crystal, 1995; Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It is worth mentioning that the movement from the active to the passive does not lead to change in meaning but a change in emphasis (Swiewiersk, 1984, Richard & Schmidt, 2002). However, Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman (1999) stated that a change in meaning may occur when changing from the active to the passive when numerals or quantifiers are used. They clarified this point by the following example.

(13) Everyone in the room speaks two languages. (i.e. each person in the class speaks any two languages.)

(14) Two languages are spoken by everyone in the room. (i.e. each person speaks two specific languages.)



**Figure 1: Active- passive inversion (Crystal, 1995, p.225)**

### 2.2.2. The form of the passive voice

The passive voice can be formed by using either the verb “to be” or “to get” or “to have” (Thomson & Martinet 1986; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999). In this research we are concerned only with the passive that is formed by the verb “to be”.

The passive is formed by putting the verb "to be" into the same tense of the active verb and then adding the past participle of the active verb. The subject of the active verbs takes the place of the object and by that it is called agent which is preceded by "by" (Thomson & Martinet, 1986, p.263). In passive sentences, and since the emphasis is on the patient rather than the agent, the agent should not be mentioned and the object of the active sentence occupies the initial position, position of the subject (Siewierska, 1954; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.544).

### **2.2.3. The use the passive construction**

Although some commentators discouraged and criticized the overuse of the passive in scientific writings and preferred the use of the active voice whenever possible (Pearson 1985; Cornelis, 1997; Kirkman, 1999), Pruitt (1968) have said that the "passive voice should be avoided by research writers" (cited in Dudley-Evans, 1998, p.136). Writers of scientific documents prefer the use of the passive since scientific writing do not focus on the doer of the action rather than on the action itself as they should be written in impersonal style. Webster stated "a few commentators find the passive useful in scientific writing (one even believes it to be necessary) because of the tone of detachment and impersonality, that it helps to establish" (1993, p.721). Crystal (1995) asserted that passive constructions are common in writing informative prose where context demands an objective and impersonal style, especially in scientific publications. The passive, in scientific writing, is a helpful way of ensuring a smooth flow of ideas and it is the best way that allows objects to receive prominence.

Moreover, the passive is an important tool for writers, particularly when they do not want to accuse someone or when the doer of the action is unknown or not important. Ewer and Glatore (1969) agreed that whenever there is little interest in or knowledge of the doer of

the action but there is more interest in what happens to the receiver of the action, the passive is preferred. The following examples illustrate this later point.

(15) Other branches of mathematics *are used* in many sciences.

(Ewer and Glatorre, 1969, p.7)

(16) [Epiphytes] *are found* growing upon the higher branches of the large trees in tropical forests (Pearson, 1985, p81)

In the above examples, the writer is not interested in who did the action i.e., who used the branches of mathematics nor he is concerned with who found where Epiphytes grow. Sometimes scientific writers do not wish to specify who performs the action despite the fact that they know the doer of the action. Ewer and Glatorre clarified this point, consider the following example:

(17) Attempts *are* constantly *made* to deceive the ordinary citizen. (p.9)

Agentless passive constructions are hedging signals as they are seen by (Dudley-Evans 1998) since constructions like “it is concluded that”, “it was found that”, “the suggestion is made that”. “It should be emphasized that” imply obviously that there is someone who concludes, finds, suggests or emphasizes, but writers feel safer by not mentioning themselves.

The problem with using such constructions is ambiguity. Indeed, it is not clear whether writers acknowledge the previous work or they are just reporting an accepted fact (Dudley-Evans1998).

## **2.3. Stative constructions**

### **2.3.1. Definition**

Not any form of “to be + past participle” indicates or refers to the passive. In an EST text, constructions which have the form of the passive but have different functions

and meaning may occur. Those constructions are known as passive-like or stative constructions. They differ from the passive, although they have the same surface form, in that they never indicate an activity but describe a state or a condition which may exist over a period of time. Stative passives are verb-like words that follow the verb ‘to be’ in a sentence and function as adjectives. (Cornelis, 1997).

### **2.3.2. The form of the stative constructions**

In this study we are interested in the stative construction which looks like the agentless passive this means that the VP has the form to ‘be + past participle’ in which the verb ‘to be’ is the main verb of the sentence and the participle function more like adjective.

The stative constructions are, in fact, actives by themselves that is to say there would be no active voice from which the statives could be derived. (Siewierska, 1984). The ‘to be +pp’ constructions, as statives, are formed by the association of the verb ‘to be’ as a main verb, not as an auxiliary, and a participle or real adjective as it was exemplified by Trimble (1990).

(18) The RS-5 system *is composed* of an undersea acoustic beacon, [...]. The sensor *is housed* in a support assembly ...when the gear *is down* and *locked*. (p. 116)

In the above example, “is composed”, “is housed”, “is down” and “[is] locked” refer to stative constructions rather than the passive. “composed”, “housed” and “locked” are participles derived from the verbs ‘to compose’, ‘to house’, and ‘to lock’ and serve here as adjectives whereas “down” is a real adjective.

### **2.3.3. The use of the stative constructions**

Because of the nature of an EST material, descriptions occur in a wide range in EST texts, particularly physical description (Trimble, 1990). And since stative constructions describe a state, they are frequently used to fulfil the function of description.

State verbs like 'is contained', 'is limited to', 'is increased', 'is composed of', 'is made up', etc., are known as structurally passive. They do not always describe an activity but provide physical description (Dudly-Evans, 1998, p.138).

### **2.4. Passive-stative distinction**

Non native language students may face problems in distinguishing between passive and stative (passive-like) constructions. Trimble has asserted that "when non native students are faced with stative the problem is almost invariably one of the misidentification. They assume not with a certain logic, that any form of 'to be+ past participle' is a passive" (1990, p.138). Moreover, when students are faced with agentless passive sentences they try to change them into active, by using 'someone' or 'something' as a subject for the active sentences (Trimble, 1990).

To illustrate the distinction between the function and the meaning of stative and passive construction, consider the following example.

(19) The wells were located by two engineers.

(20) The wells were located near the edge of the revere. (Torn, n.d.)

The verb located appears in both sentences (19) and (20), but two different meaning are being expressed. Sentence (19) has a doer-engineers- and it tells us that the doers carried out an action which is the discovering of the wells. However, sentence (20) does not have a doer; it gives the reader the location of the wells. There is no action performed in this case.

Sometimes the distinction between the passive and stative forms may be obvious, but in some circumstances it would be impossible to state whether an agentless passive is functioning as a stative construction or as passive i.e., whether the participle is functioning as a past participle of a given verb or as an adjectival participle (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). They illustrate this point by the following example.

(21) The windows were broken.

This sentence can be interpreted as if it is a description of the state of the windows, or as a result of an action which is a state, too, or as an action and by that one can interpret sentence (21) as:

(22) The windows were broken by the force of explosion.

Siewierska (1984) argued that, some ambiguity may occur when facing with agentless passives as in:

(23) The glass was broken.

(24) His bills are paid.

(25) Mike was frightened.

In these sentences, again, it is difficult to decide whether they describe just a state or they could be as a passive.

To make a distinction between the two forms, Celce-Murcia & Larson-Freeman (1999) show that the only way is to state the agent however Siewierska (1984) stated that the passive always depicts both an action and resulting state and it is derived from a transitive verb; whereas stative constructions verb is always intransitive and the NP in the sentence indicate the real or true subject. Moreover, stative constructions have never been dynamic they never indicate an action or have a progressive form; the fact that passive clauses may occur in the progressive is another indication that the “be” passive cannot be

regarded as stative constructions. So, we can advocate that the construction refers to state when the verb “be” is the main verb.

Trimble (1990) noted that in order to distinguish passive from stative constructions, one should take in consideration the meaning of the construction in context rather than in isolation. So, the constructions like “at the bottom *was attached* a sharp steel cutting blade. And the upper end of the *tube was threaded* into the base of a cone.” (Trimble, 1990, p.117) can be treated as passives from the first reading but a close and deep reading to the whole paragraph (Trimble, 1990, p.117) shows that the writer is describing a result of an action rather than the action itself.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Passive and stative constructions are the grammatical features that are more prominent in an EST discourse. The passive is defined in relation to the active voice that it is derived from and it always indicates an action whether the agent is stated (true passive) or not (agentless passive). However, stative constructions are actives by themselves and indicate a state or a condition. Non native students, as the case of our students, may face problems in distinguishing these two forms, more specifically in differentiating between the agentless and the stative construction. They think that the stative form is the passive where the agent is not stated and by that they may have confusion in the interpretation of sentences where the stative occurs.

## Chapter Three: The Experiment

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## Chapter Three: The Experiment

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting and analysing the data obtained from the questionnaire and the test. This analysis will permit us to build our viewpoint about the probable factors that may lead students to have problems in differentiating the passive-like form from the passive. Then, we will analyse the answers obtained from the test to locate the problems of the students.

### 3.2. Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire given to the students is a list of seventeen questions organized in four sections. The first one is about the students' attitudes towards the different subjects they study concerning module preferences and attendances. The second section aims at testing the students' awareness of their problems in analysing an EST discourse and what they see in class. The third section is about their awareness or knowledge concerning the differences between the passive and the passive-like constructions. Finally, the last is inserted to test whether the students have noticed before that both forms may occur in the different rhetorical functions. (cf. Appendix# 01)

### 3.3. Analysis of the questionnaire

#### 3.3.1. Module preferences

|            | Written Expression | Translation theory | EST practice | Grammar | EST theory | Sociolinguistics | Total |
|------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|---------|------------|------------------|-------|
| Number     | 13                 | 1                  | 9            | 5       | 1          | 1                | 31    |
| Percentage | 41.93%             | 3.22%              | 29.03%       | 16.12%  | 3.22%      | 3.22%            | 100%  |

Table 1 Module preferences

The students have different preferences concerning the modules or subjects they study. Some of them prefer Written Expression, others Translation Theory or Pragmatics or Sociolinguistics etc. What have been noticed is that only (16.12%) of the students answered that they prefer grammar courses; this means that (83.88%) of them do not prefer this module. (29.03%) of them prefer EST practice course i.e. the rest (70.96%) do not prefer this course. Moreover, only one student who represents (3.22%) of the whole sample answered that they prefer EST theory courses which means that (96.78%) of the students do not prefer this module.

### 3.3.2. The attendances

We have asked the students three different questions concerning the attendances. (Q2) is about the attendances of all modules, (Q3) is about the attendances to the EST theory courses and (Q4) is about the attendances to the EST practice courses. The aim of asking the three questions is to emphasize the accuracy of the students' answers.

#### 3.3.2.1. The attendances to all modules

|            | Yes    | No     | Total |
|------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Number     | 22     | 9      | 31    |
| Percentage | 70.96% | 29.03% | 100%  |

Table 2 The attendances to all modules

This question is a yes-no question. Followed by another one in which the students who do not attend regularly are asked to justify their answer and to state which modules they do not attend. The majority of the students i.e. (70.96%) attend all the modules and only (29.03%) of them do not attend all the modules.

The students who did not attend the courses regularly gave different reasons for their irregular attendances. They do not attend the courses which are programmed at 08.00 o'clock not because of the transport problems; but, as stated by one student, because he does not like waking up early. Three students do not attend French course because they think that they get no benefit from it. One student does not attend sociolinguistics because, in his point of view, it is a boring subject. One student does not attend many modules because he has a job, as he stated. The four last students did not give any reason for their irregular attendances.

What is important here is that only one student (3.22%) among 31 students (the whole sample) stated that he do not attend EST theory course. No one stated that he do not attend EST practice course or grammar course which means, normally, they will not have problems in dealing with the test given to them, as we expect.

### 3.3.2.2. EST theory courses attendances

|            | Regularly | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Total |
|------------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Number     | 25        | 0     | 5         | 1      | 31    |
| Percentage | 80.64%    | 0%    | 16.13%    | 3.22%  | 100%  |

Table 3 EST theory attendances

Concerning this module, EST theory, the majority of the total respondents, (80.64%) stated that they attend the courses regularly. Only one student (3.22%) answered that he does not attend EST theory courses and he emphasized that he rarely attends this course. (16.13%) of the students sometimes attend the courses.

### 3.3.2.3. EST practice courses attendances

|            | Regularly | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Total |
|------------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Number     | 27        | 2     | 2         | 0      | 31    |
| percentage | 87.10%    | 6.50% | 6.50%     | 0%     | 100%  |

Table 4 EST practice attendances

Here again, the students show a regular attendance to this module in that we find that (87.10%) of the students attend the courses regularly, against (6.50%) of them attend the courses often and equal percentage of them i.e.; (6.50%) answered that they sometimes attend this module. No one of them said that he rarely attends this module.

### 3.3. 3. Dealing with the characteristics of an EST discourse in the classroom

|                       |            | Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never  | Total |
|-----------------------|------------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|
| Rhetorical functions  | Number     | 26     | 3         | 2      | 0      | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 83.87% | 9.67%     | 6.45%  | 0.00%  | 100%  |
| Rhetorical techniques | Number     | 27     | 3         | 1      | 0      | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 87.09% | 9.67%     | 3.22%  | 0.00%  | 100%  |
| Cohesive markers      | Number     | 18     | 11        | 1      | 1      | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 58.06% | 35.48%    | 3.22%  | 3.22%  | 100%  |
| Grammatical elements  | Number     | 4      | 8         | 15     | 4      | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 12.09% | 25.80%    | 48.38% | 12.90% | 100%  |

Table 5 Dealing with the characteristics of an EST discourse

By asking this question, we want to know how often the students practice and at what extend they are familiar with the different characteristics of an EST discourse. From the answers obtained, we find that they always deal with rhetorical functions (83.87%) of the students asserted this point; rhetorical techniques; (87.09%) of the students confirmed this point and cohesive markers; (58.06%) of the students stated that they always deal with them. However, (48.38%) of the total respondents asserted that they rarely deal with grammatical characteristics of an EST discourse.

### 3.3.4. The focus of the EST courses concerning the grammar of an EST discourse

|                      |            | Focus  | Not focus | Total |
|----------------------|------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Long sentences       | Number     | 22     | 9         | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 70.96% | 29.03%    | 100%  |
| Tenses               | Number     | 7      | 24        | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 22.58% | 77.41%    | 100%  |
| Passive              | Number     | 19     | 12        | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 61.29% | 38.70%    | 100%  |
| Stative construction | Number     | 2      | 29        | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 6.45%  | 93.54%    | 100%  |

Table 6 The focus on the grammar of an EST discourse

This question was directed to the students to know whether they are aware or not of what they have in the class concerning the grammar of an EST discourse (70.96%) of the students said that the focus of the course is on the long sentences; for (61.29%) The passive comes in the second position; then comes the study of tenses with (22.58) and at the last rank

comes the stative constructions; only (6.45%) of the whole sample stated that they have focused or at least dealt with stative constructions.

### 3.3.5. The problems that the student may face when analysing an EST discourse

|                       |            | Have problems | Not have problems | Total |
|-----------------------|------------|---------------|-------------------|-------|
| Rhetorical function   | Number     | 25            | 6                 | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 80.64%        | 19.36%            | 100%  |
| Rhetorical techniques | Number     | 4             | 27                | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 12.90%        | 87.10%            | 100%  |
| Cohesive markers      | Number     | 7             | 24                | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 22.58%        | 77.42%            | 100%  |
| Grammatical elements  | Number     | 1             | 30                | 31    |
|                       | Percentage | 3.22%         | 96.78%            | 100%  |

Table 7 The students' problems in analysing an EST discourse

This question is asked to know what types of problems the student may face, or let's say he may suffer from in analysing an EST discourse. Since we are concerned with the distinction between the passive and stative forms; we are interested in knowing whether the students have problems in detecting the grammatical features of an EST discourse. In addition, we want to know whether the students have difficulties in detecting the rhetorical functions of the discourse because we want to state whether they are aware of the relation between the two forms and the different functions.

As the table above demonstrate, (80.64%) of the students have problems in detecting the rhetorical functions, (12.90%) of them face problems in detecting rhetorical techniques, only (22.58%) of them have difficulties in detecting cohesive markers, and only one student, who represents (3.22%), among thirty one students stated that he have problems in detecting the grammatical characteristics of an EST discourse i.e. (96.78%) do not have any difficulties.

### 3.3.6. Do you have problems in detecting the grammatical elements of an EST discourse

|            | Yes   | No     | Total |
|------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Number     | 3     | 28     | 31    |
| Percentage | 9.67% | 90.32% | 100%  |

Table 8 Do you have problems in detecting grammatical elements of an EST discourse

This yes-no Question is inserted purposely to infirm or confirms the answers of (Q7) particularly those that concern the detection of the grammatical elements. Almost all the students (90.32%) insisted that they have no difficulties in detecting grammatical elements. Only three students (9.67%) stated that they have problems in detecting grammatical elements.

### 3.3.7. Passive-stative distinction

In this section; we aim at knowing whether the students are aware of the passive and the stative constructions differences or not. For that; we have asked the students multiple choices questions.

### 3.3.7.1. What his form 'to be+ PP' refers to

|            | Passive only | Stative only | Passive/stative | Active | Total |
|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------|-------|
| Number     | 2            | 1            | 27              | 1      | 31    |
| Percentage | 6.45%        | 3.22%        | 87.09%          | 3.22%  | 100%  |

Table 9 To be +pp refers to passive/stative or both

Four students who represent (12.90%) of the whole sample did not choose the right answers in that; two students (6.45%) answered that the form given refers only to the passive. However, one student (3.22%) stated that the form refers only to the stative constructions only. And another one (3.22%) answered that the form indicates an active voice. The rest of the students (87.09%), the majority, stated that the pp could refer to both, either passive or stative constructions.

### 3.3.7.2. What the PP refers to

|            | Passive and adjective | Passive only | Adjective only | State verb | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|------------|-------|
| Number     | 15                    | 12           | 3              | 1          | 31    |
| Percentage | 48.38%                | 35.48%       | 12.90%         | 3.22%      | 100%  |

Table 10 What the pp refers to?

This is another multiple choices question in which the students were asked to choose whether the past participle refers to the passive only, adjectives only, state verbs or passive and adjectives. This question is inserted to elicit whether the students really know the differences between the passive and stative constructions, i.e. whether they emphasize their answers concerning the (Q9) in the questionnaire or not.

Less than half of the total respondents (48.38%) stated that the pp refers to both passive and adjective. (35.48%) said that this form refers only to the passive. Three students i.e. (12.90%) claimed that the pp refers only to the adjective. And one student (3.22%) stated that the form refers to stative verb.

### 3.3.7.3. How could you distinguish the passive from the passive-like form

|  |            | Yes    | No     | Total |
|--|------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Looking for the meaning                                    | Number     | 23     | 8      | 31    |
|  | Percentage | 74.19% | 25.80% | 100%  |
| Looking for the doer                                       | Number     | 5      | 26     | 31    |
|  | Percentage | 16.66% | 83.34% | 100%  |
| Changing to the active                                     | Number     | 14     | 17     | 31    |
|  | Percentage | 45.16% | 54.83% | 100%  |
| Look for the information between the form and the function | Number     | 4      | 27     | 31    |
|  | Percentage | 12.90% | 86.67% | 100%  |

Table 11 How you could differentiate the passive from the passive like form

This question is numbered (11) in the questionnaire; it is another multiple choices question that aimed at knowing whether the students really know the difference between passive and stative constructions.

From the results, a high proportion of the sample (74.19%) selected chose to look for the meaning of the whole sentence to distinguish between the two forms. (16.66%) answered that they look for the doer of the action. This shows that the students do not know that the stative construction has no doer but it has a real subject. (45.16%) of them answer that the

only thing to do is to change the sentence to the active voice; this, again, shows that the students do not know that in the sentences where occurs the statives are actives by themselves. Only four students (12.90%) among the 31 respondents stated that they look for the relation between the two different forms and the rhetorical functions. This later result can be interpreted in that the students do not notice, before we gave the questionnaire, that both forms may occur in an EST discourse and they have direct and great relation to the rhetorical functions of the EST discourse. What is markedly noticed here is that the majority of the students try to look for the meaning as main step to distinguish the forms.

#### **3.3.7.4. How could you differ agentless passive from passive-like construction**

We have purposely asked the same question as in question (11) but in a different way to elicit the accurate answer of the students; and to see whether they emphasis their answers concerning question (11). Moreover, we wanted to know whether they really know the differences between the passive and the stative forms and whether they could verbalize the rules they know concerning the two wanted forms. We do not take all the answers because some of them are similar answers. The answers of the students were as follows.

S<sub>1</sub>: 'I read the whole sentence to find the meaning then, I distinguish them depends on what I have understood'

S<sub>7</sub>: 'turn the sentence to the active and then look for the doer'

S<sub>6</sub>: 'Agentless passive is without 'by', however, passive-like construction its past participle acts as adjective'

S<sub>9</sub>: 'I try to add an agent and see if it works'

S<sub>10</sub>: 'look for the function of the sentence'

S<sub>11</sub>: 'in the agentless passive there is an action and in the passive-like construction there is a state'

S<sub>24</sub>: 'in the agentless passive there is no doer of the action'

S<sub>26</sub>: 'we cannot turn the agentless passive in the active because the doer is absent'

S<sub>27</sub>: 'I will turn it to the active because passive form constructions have an active voice, the other [passive-like construction] not'

S<sub>30</sub>: ‘whether the form is the main verb or not’

The other students answer either like S<sub>1</sub> answer or S<sub>7</sub> answers or they have no answer. From the students' answers, we understand that the majority of them do not really know the differences between the agentless passive and the passive-like form. Only one (3.22%) student stated that he looks for the relation between the rhetorical function and the form given. Each one of S<sub>6</sub>, S<sub>11</sub>, S<sub>24</sub>, S<sub>26</sub>, and S<sub>27</sub> gives in his answer a main characteristic that could help in distinguishing the two forms. S<sub>9</sub> reported that he will add an agent.

### 3.3.7.5. The passive always indicates

|                       | Action | State  | No answer | Total |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Number of the student | 20     | 10     | 1         | 31    |
| Percentage            | 64.51% | 32.25% | 3.22%     | 100%  |

Table 12 What the passive indicates

The students were asked to choose whether the passive indicates an action or a state. The students' answers are summarized in table (12). (64.51%) stated that the passive indicate an action. And (32.25%) said that the passive indicate a state. Only one student (3.22%) did not answer the question maybe he forget to do so or he do not know the answer

### 3.3.7.6. The stative construction always indicates

|                       | Action | State  | No answer | Total |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Number of the student | 1      | 29     | 1         | 31    |
| Percentage            | 3.22%  | 93.54% | 3.22%     | 100%  |

Table 13 What the stative construction indicates

The majority of the students (93.54%) answered that the stative construction indicates a state. Only one student (3.22%) said that this construction indicates an action not a state.

### **3.3.8. The occurrence of the passive and stative constructions in rhetorical functions**

#### **3.3.8.1. Do you think that knowing the rhetorical functions helps in distinguishing the two forms**

|            | Yes    | No     | Total |
|------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Subjects   | 19     | 12     | 31    |
| Percentage | 65.51% | 38.70% | 100%  |

Table 14 Knowing the function helps in distinguishing the two forms

This question is a yes-no question; and it is asked to know whether the student are aware or not of the direct relation between both forms and the types of the rhetorical functions. From the results obtained; (65.51%) of the students stated that knowing the rhetorical function of a sentence helps in distinguishing the passive and the passive like construction. And (38.70%) claimed that knowing the function does not help in the distinction of the two forms.

### 3.3.8.2. The passive occurs in

|                      |            | Not occurs | Occurs | Total |
|----------------------|------------|------------|--------|-------|
| Definition           | Number     | 11         | 20     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 35.50%     | 64.50% | 100%  |
| Function description | Number     | 12         | 19     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 38.71%     | 61.29% | 100%  |
| Physical description | Number     | 9          | 22     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 29.04%     | 70.96% | 100%  |
| Process description  | Number     | 15         | 16     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 48.39%     | 51.61% | 100%  |
| Instruction          | Number     | 22         | 9      | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 70.97%     | 29.03% | 100%  |
| Classification       | Number     | 17         | 14     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 54.84%     | 45.16% | 100%  |

Table 15 The occurrence of the passive in the rhetorical functions

A high percentage of the students (70.96%) noticed that the passive occurs in the rhetorical function of physical description. And (70.97%) of the students stated that the passive do not occur in instruction. (64.50%) said that the passive occurs in the rhetorical function of definition and approximately an equal percentage (61.29%) stated that it occurs in the function description. Concerning classification and process description, the viewpoint of the students are in between, successively, occurs (45.16%), (51.61%) and not occurs (54.84%), (48.39%).

### 3.3.8.3. The stative occurs in

|                      |            | Not occurs | Occurs | Total |
|----------------------|------------|------------|--------|-------|
| Definition           | Number     | 19         | 12     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 61.30%     | 38.70% | 100%  |
| Function description | Number     | 22         | 9      | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 70.97%     | 29.03% | 100%  |
| Physical description | Number     | 7          | 24     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 22.59%     | 77.41% | 100%  |
| Process description  | Number     | 23         | 8      | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 74.29%     | 25.80% | 100%  |
| Instruction          | Number     | 22         | 9      | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 70.97%     | 29.03% | 100%  |
| Classification       | Number     | 18         | 13     | 31    |
|                      | Percentage | 58.07%     | 41.93% | 100%  |

Table 16 The occurrence of the stative form in the rhetorical functions

As it is mentioned in the table, (77.41%) of the students are aware of the occurrence of the stative constructions in the rhetorical function of physical description. (38.70%) stated that the stative occurs in the rhetorical function of definition. (29.30%) said that it occurs in the function description and (25.80%) claimed that it occurs in process description. The majority (70.97%) said that it does not occur in the instruction. Concerning the occurrence of the stative in the rhetorical function of description, the answers of the students oscillate between it occurs (41.93%) or not occur (58.07%).

### **3.4. The test**

#### **3.4.1. Description of the test**

The test is a text consists of four paragraphs. The first paragraph is composed of five sentences. In the second sentence which serves as a non formal definition occurs an agentless passive 'is called'. The third sentence serves as classification and contains two stative constructions 'be fixed' in which fixed is a pp function as adjective, and 'movable' which is a real adjective. In sentence four which is a physical description, we find a true passive where the doer of the action is mentioned 'by a thin layer'. The last sentence in this paragraph is a function description in which a stative construction occurs 'are fixed'.

The second paragraph consists of eight sentences. The third sentence serves as physical description and includes the stative construction 'are modified' in which modified is a pp function as an adjective. The fifth sentence which serves as a physical description, too, contains a stative construction 'are made up of' which does not indicate an action but a state.

The third paragraph contains six sentences. The first sentence which is a statement contains an agentless passive 'are protected', and it is only by reading carefully the whole paragraph that one could state that this form is an agentless passive and not a stative construction. In sentence number six occurs the passive voice 'are held' where the doer of the action is mentioned 'by strong fibrous tissues'. This sentence serves as a physical description.

The fourth and the last paragraph consist of five sentences. In the first one which is a classification, two stative forms 'are sprained, [are] dislocated' occur. The second sentence is physical descriptions in which occur two stative forms 'are torn and [are] stretched'. Sentence three contains the passive voice 'are treated' and it serves as function description. The last sentence, which is an instruction, contains the passive 'should be treated' where the doer of the action is mentioned 'by a physician'.

The student were asked to identify each form, whether it is true passive voice where the doer is stated or it is an agentless passive where the doer is not mentioned or; it is a stative construction. Moreover, they were asked to indicate the rhetorical functions of the sentences in which each form occurs.

### 3.4.2. The analysis of the test

The test was given to a sample of 31 first year Master students selected randomly. It was expected from the student to analyse the text in about 20 minutes. However, and during fifteen minutes all the students, without any exception, were unable to deal with the text because they did not know what a stative construction is. This leads us to give them a brief definition and explanation about the differences between the passive and stative constructions.

The students were asked to underline any form of 'to be+ pp' in the text then to classify each form underlined in a table taking in consideration the sentences' rhetorical function (c.f. Appendix #02). The results were as follows.

**Paragraph 1 sentence 2:** it is a non formal definition, *is called* is an agentless passive.

|            | Agentless passive | True passive | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Definition        | Definition   |                              |       |
| Number     | 26                | 3            | 2                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 83.87%            | 9.67%        | 6.45%                        | 100%  |

Table 17 The results obtained from answering sentence 2 paragraph 1

From the table above we notice that the majority of the students (83.87%) succeeded in identifying the form and the function. Only two students (6.45%) among 31 tested do not succeed in noticing the form in the text. Three students i.e. (9.67%) stated that the form given refers to the passive which is a right answer, too, but they did not pay attention that the doer

of the action is not stated and by that this is an agentless passive. Only (6.45%) did not identify the form in the text and by that they did specify neither the sentence function nor the class of the form.

Although, we do not specify the type of the rhetorical function of the definition occurred in the text the majority of the students succeeded in identifying appropriately the function of the sentence by stating that it is a non formal definition.

**Paragraph 1 sentence 3:** this sentence serves the function of classification in which two stative constructions, *be fixed* and *[be] movable*, occur. Fixed is a pp functions as adjective and movable is a real adjective.

|            | Stative construction |                      | Agentless passive    | Not underlined or classified | Underlined not classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
|            | Classification       | Physical description | Physical description |                              |                           |       |
| Number     | 12                   | 13                   | 3                    | 2                            | 1                         | 31    |
| Percentage | 38.70%               | 41.93%               | 9.67%                | 6.45%                        | 3.22%                     | 100%  |
|            | 80.64%               |                      |                      |                              |                           |       |

Table 18 The results obtained from answering sentence 3 paragraph 1

(80.64%) of the total respondents (N=31) identify the form i.e. they stated that it is a stative construction although (41.93%) did not succeed in identifying the function of the sentence; they claimed that the sentence serves the rhetorical function of physical description which is a right answer if we take a part of the sentence but not the whole which is a classification. Only one student (3.22%) did not notice the construction and by that he did not specify the function of the sentence. Three students (9.67%) stated that the sentence function is a physical description and the construction is an agentless passive.

**Paragraph1 sentence 4:** it serves the function of physical description in which a true passive voice occurs where the doer of the action is mentioned.

|            | The passive          |            | Stative construction | Agentless passive    | Total |
|------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------|
|            | Physical description | Definition | Physical description | Physical description |       |
| Number     | 25                   | 2          | 1                    | 3                    | 31    |
| Percentage | 80.64%               | 6.45%      | 3.22%                | 9.67%                | 100%  |
|            |                      | 87.09%     |                      |                      |       |

Table 19 The results obtained from answering sentence 4 paragraph 1

Here again, the majority of the students (87.09%) identified the structure and stated that it is a passive voice although two students among them (6.45%) failed in specifying the rhetorical function; they stated that the sentence function is a definition. Only three students (9.67%) answered that the form refers to an agentless passive this means that they do not concentrate when analyzing the text at the point that they do not notice that the agent of the sentence is clearly stated and it is preceded by (by). Only one student (3.22%) said that the form refers to a stative construction.

**Paragraph 1 sentence 5:** it serves the function description and it includes the stative construction ‘*are fixed*’ in which fixed is a pp functions as adjective.

|            | Stative construction |                      | Agentless passive    |            |                      | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Function description | Physical description | Function description | definition | Physical description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 3                    | 9                    | 5                    | 2          | 10                   | 1                         | 1                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 9.67%                | 29.03%               | 16.12%               | 6.45%      | 32.25%               | 3.22%                     | 3.22%                        | 100%  |
|            |                      | 38.70%               |                      | 54.83%     |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 20 The results obtained from answering sentence 5 paragraph 1

All the students who failed in detecting the function of the sentence stated that it is a physical description (61.29%). This is true by taking a part of the sentence not the whole of it. One student (6.45%) said that the sentence function is a definition. Moreover, (54.83%) of the students classify the form ‘are fixed’ as agentless passive. Two students (6.45%) did not specify whether the form refers to the passive, stative or agentless passive.

**Paragraph 2 sentence 3:** it serves the function of physical description in which a stative construction ‘are modified’ occurs.

|            | Stative construction |                      |            |                | The passive | Agentless passive    | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Physical description | Function description | definition | Classification | definition  | Physical description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 8                    | 1                    | 1          | 1              | 1           | 9                    | 4                         | 5                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 25.80%               | 3.22%                | 3.22%      | 3.22%          | 3.22%       | 29.03%               | 12.90%                    | 16.12%                       | 100%  |
|            | 35.48%               |                      |            |                |             |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 21 The results obtained from answering sentence 3 paragraph 2

The students who failed in detecting the functions stated that the sentence serves as a definition (6.45%) or a function description (3.22%) or a classification (3.22%).what is important here is that all the students failed in identifying the stative construction stated that it refers to an agentless passive (29.03%). (16.12%) of the students neither underlined the form in the text nor classified it. This means that they were unable even to notice the form. However, (12.90%) noticed the form in the text, they underlined it, but they were unable to classify it. We notice also that only (35.48%) of the students could identify the form although (9.67%) did not detect the function of the sentence.

**Paragraph 2 sentence 7:** it serves the function of physical description in which the form ‘are made up of’ is a stative construction.

|            | Stative construction |            | Agentless passive    | Passive              | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Physical description | Definition | Physical description | Physical description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 3                    | 1          | 18                   | 3                    | 5                         | 1                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 9.67%                | 3.22%      | 58.06%               | 9.67%                | 16.12%                    | 3.22%                        | 100%  |
| 12.90%     |                      |            |                      |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 22 The results obtained from answering sentence 7 paragraph 2

The majority of the students (67.74%) did not succeed in detecting the form. Moreover, they think that the form used in the sentence refers to an agentless passive (58.06%) or passive (9.67%). Five students i.e. (16.12%) underlined the structure but they did not classify it, however, only one student (3.22%) did not notice the structure since he did not even underline it and by that they did not specify the sentence function.

**Paragraph 3 sentence 1:** this is a statement in which the form ‘are protected’ is an agentless passive. To state that this form is an agentless passive, one should read the whole paragraph carefully i.e. one should go beyond the meaning of the single sentence.

|            | Stative construction | Agentless passive |                      |                      | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Physical description | statement         | Physical description | Function description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 5                    | 1                 | 13                   | 8                    | 3                         | 1                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 16.12%               | 3.22%             | 41.93%               | 25.80%               | 9.67%                     | 3.22%                        | 100%  |
| 70.96%     |                      |                   |                      |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 23 The results obtained from answering sentence 1 paragraph 3

(70.96%) of the total respondents could identify the form and they stated that it refers to the agentless passive although the majority of them (60.73%) did not succeed in identifying the function. (16.12%) stated that the form refers to a stative construction. Three students (9.67%) noticed the form in the text but they did not classify it whether it is passive, stative or agentless passive. Only one student could neither notice nor classify the form.

**Paragraph 3 sentence 6:** it serves the function of physical description in which the passive voice is used. The doer of the action is stated and preceded by (by).

|            | The passive             |                         | Age<br>ntless passive   | Stative<br>construction | Underlined not<br>classified | Total |
|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Physical<br>description | Function<br>description | Physical<br>description | Physical<br>description |                              |       |
| Number     | 25                      | 1                       | 2                       | 1                       | 2                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 80.64%                  | 3.22%                   | 6.45%                   | 3.22%                   | 6.45%                        | 100%  |
|            | 83.86%                  |                         |                         |                         |                              |       |

Table 24 The results obtained from answering sentence 6 paragraph 3

Again, we find that the students (83.86%) have no problems in detecting the passive voice when the agent is stated. The students who failed in identifying this form state that it refers to either an agentless passive (6.45%) or a stative form (3.22%). Two students (6.45%) noticed the construction in the text, they underlined it, but they did not classify it. Concerning the sentence function, all the respondents, specified correctly the function except one student (3.22%) who stated that the function used in the sentence is a function description.

**Paragraph 4 sentence 1:** it serves the function of classification. The constructions ‘*are sprained* and [*are*] *dislocated*’ are statives.

|            | Stative construction |                      |            | Agentless passive    |                |                      | The passive          |                | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Classification       | Physical description | Definition | Physical description | Classification | Function description | Physical description | Classification |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 4                    | 7                    | 1          | 10                   | 3              | 1                    | 1                    |                | 2                         | 1                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 12.90%               | 22.58%               | 3.22%      | 32.25%               | 9.67%          | 3.22%                | 3.22%                | 3.22%          | 6.45%                     | 3.22%                        | 100%  |
|            | 38.70%               |                      |            | 45.16%               |                |                      | 6.45%                |                |                           |                              |       |

Table 25 The results obtained from answering sentence1 paragraph 4

By observing the table above, we find that (38.70%) stated that the form occurred in this sentence refers to the stative construction although, not all of them succeeded in detecting the appropriate function the sentence serves; (22.58%) said that the sentence serves as physical description and (3.22%) said that it is a definition. In contrast, (45.16%) stated that it refers to the agentless passive and only (9.67%) of them, i.e. among (45.16%), stated that the function is a classification. (6.45%) noticed the form in the text but they did not classify it. Only one student (3.22%) among the 31 students respondents did not notice the form.

**Paragraph 4 sentence 2:** it serves the function of physical description. The constructions ‘*are torn or [are]stretched*’ are statives.

|            | Stative construction |                | Agentless passive    |                      | The passive          | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Physical description | classification | Function description | Physical description | Physical description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 5                    | 1              | 1                    | 9                    | 2                    | 9                         | 4                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 16.12%               | 3.22%          | 3.22%                | 29.03%               | 6.45%                | 29.03%                    | 19.04%                       | 100%  |
|            | 19.35%               |                | 32.25%               |                      |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 26 The results obtained from answering sentence 2 paragraph 4

In analysing the results obtained, we find that a great number of the students could not identify the desired form (38.70%), ten students who represent (32.25%) stated that the form refers to the agentless passive; although they (29.03%) succeeded in detecting the function. The other students 41.93% do not detect the form; (19.04%) did not even notice the form in the text (they did not underline it). In contrast, (29.03%) underlined the structure but did not classify it, whether it is agentless passive, passive or stative form. Two students, who represent (6.45%) of the whole sample, stated that the form refers to the passive.

**Paragraph 4 sentence 3:** it serves the function description in which the form ‘*are treated*’ function as passive, and the doer of the action ‘*physiotherapy*’ is clearly stated and preceded by (with).

|            | The passive          |                      | Agentless passive |                      | Stative construction |                      | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Function description | Physical description | classification    | Function description | classification       | Function description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 4                    | 6                    | 1                 | 6                    | 1                    | 1                    | 10                        | 2                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 12.90%               | 19.35%               | 3.22%             | 19.35%               | 3.22%                | 3.22%                | 32.25%                    | 6.45%                        | 100%  |
|            | 32.25%               |                      | 22.58%            |                      | 6.45%                |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 27 The results obtained from answering sentence 3 paragraph 4

Concerning this sentence, we find that a great number of the students (32.25%) did not classify the form although they underlined it in the text. Others (6.48%) did not even underline the form in the text. The students failed in specifying the form claimed that it is either an agentless passive, (22.58%) stated this, or a stative construction (6.45%); they possibly did not notice the doer of the action. Concerning the function that the sentence serves, (22.58%) of the total respondents failed in specifying the appropriate one; (19.35%) said that it is a physical description and (6.45%) said that it is a classification.

**Paragraph 4 sentence 4:** it serves as an instruction in which a true passive ‘*should be treated*’ occurs and the doer of the action ‘by physician’ is clearly stated and preceded by (by).

|            | The passive |                |                      |                      | Stative construction |                      | Agentless passive    | Underlined not classified | Not underlined or classified | Total |
|------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
|            | Instruction | Classification | Function description | Physical description | Physical description | Function description | Function description |                           |                              |       |
| Number     | 6           | 1              | 7                    | 4                    | 1                    | 1                    | 1                    | 9                         | 1                            | 31    |
| Percentage | 19.35%      | 3.22%          | 22.58%               | 12.90%               | 3.22%                | 3.22%                | 3.22%                | 29.03%                    | 3.22%                        | 100%  |
|            | 58.06%      |                |                      |                      | 6.45%                |                      |                      |                           |                              |       |

Table 28 The results obtained from answering sentence 4 paragraph 4

The results obtained show that (58.06%) of the whole students respondents identified the form although; (38.70%) of them failed in specifying the function used in the sentence. (32.25%) did not classify the form whether it is a passive, stative or agentless passive construction although the agent is clearly stated and preceded by ‘by’ this means that the student did not pay a full attention when reading the text. (29.03%) have noticed the form in the text (they underlined it), but they did not classify it.

### 3.5. Discussion of the results

If we concenter the different answers the students gave in the questionnaire, we can say that they are aware, although they have different preferences towards the different modules, of the importance of the attendances to their better understanding of the lessons. From the results obtained concerning the attendances, we can exclude this factor as causing a problem for the students in learning; since almost all the students attend their courses regularly (Tables 1, 2, 3). Besides, and by comparing (Tables 2, 3, 4), we find that the students respondents were accurate in their answers. We have noticed also that the students answers concerning their preferences towards Grammar, EST theory, and EST practice courses are more or less negative answers since we find that ~84% of the students do not prefer Grammar courses and ~94% do not prefer EST theory courses and ~71% do not prefer EST practice courses. This non preference to the mentioned modules may have a direct impact on the students' understanding of the lessons offered in these courses and by that on their ability to differentiate the agentless passive and the passive like construction in an EST discourse.

We find, in contrast to what Halliday and Martin claimed 'the difficulty lies more with the grammar than with the vocabulary' (1993, p.71), that all the students claim that they have no problems in detecting the grammatical elements of an EST discourse (Tables 6, 7). This may mean that either the students master well the scientific English grammar or they are unaware of the difficulty of the EST discourse grammar. However, the results obtained from the test reveal that the students have problems in differentiating the agentless passive and the passive-like from.

The test confirms that the students have problems in detecting the different rhetorical functions that occur in an EST discourse; and this confirms the answers obtained from the questionnaire concerning the difficulties in detecting the rhetorical functions (Table7). By comparing the results shown in (Table 9) with those obtained from (Q9) we find that only 15

students who represent ~56% of the twenty seven students answering (Q9) that the ‘to be +pp’ refers to both forms whether passive or stative reported that the PP refers to both passive and stative constructions which means that~39% of the students change their answers. This leads us to conclude that the students are not really aware that the form ‘to be+ pp’ could be a stative form, this is in one hand. In the other hand, and by comparing the answers obtained from the two questions (Q9) and (Q10), we find that ~35% of the students claim that PP refers only to the passive (Table10). However, only ~6% of them answer that the structure ‘to be +pp’ refers to only passive, this reveals that the students do not know that the PP may function as an adjective.

We find also that the students could specify the true passive though they could not detect the appropriate function the sentence serves. More than half of the total number of the students questioned state that knowing the rhetorical function helps in distinguishing passive and stative constructions (Table14); however, we find that sometimes the students detect the function but fail in detecting the form (Tables 18, 21, 22, 25) or the reverse i.e. detect the form but fail in detecting the function a sentence serves (Table 23). This may mean that the students do not really know the relation between the two forms and the rhetorical functions of the EST discourse; this explanation could be confirmed when we consider the results shown in (Table 11) where only ~13% of the students stated that they look for the relation between the forms and the rhetorical functions.

The most important observation, that we can draw, is that when it comes to statives usually students do not answer, in contrast, when it comes to true passive, i.e. when the agent is stated, the students have no problem in detecting the form and they answer (Table 22). This result confirms the claims of (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) who said that the only way to distinguish the passive from the stative is by stating the agent. We could say that the students who did neither underline nor classify some ‘to be+pp’ forms in the text given to

them, either they did not notice the form in the text or they did not know the appropriate answer. Some students underlined the forms in the text but they did not specify their kinds, whether passive, agentless passive or stative form. This could be explained as either the students did not know the answer, or they forget to answer.

We notice that whenever the students find the stative they consider it, with a certain logic, an agentless passive (Tables 20, 21) this results confirms the claims of (Trimble, 1990). They, maybe, think that stative constructions are passives where the agent is not stated. Furthermore, the results presented in table (22) could be explained as the students may have problems in inferring the intended meaning expressed in an EST discourse in that ~58% of them stated that the form ‘are made up’ is an agentless passive however, the form is a stative one. Maybe, they are misled with the meaning of the verb ‘to make’ and thought that it carries only the meaning of an action.

It was surprising in this study that the students of our sample, 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students, are unaware of the stative constructions (Table 11). This explains one part of the difficulty in differentiating between the two similar, in the form, but different, in function and meaning, structures; as it is stated by Schmidt ‘mistakes in a foreign language are the result of either not knowing the rules, forgetting them or not paying attention’ (1995, p.2). The unawareness of the students of the stative constructions is clearly revealed in their answers concerning Q6 and Q10 where in Q6 stated that the focus in grammar is not on the stative form constructions and in Q10 where the majority state that pp refers to the passive only. This means that the foreign language students will not learn a particular form if they left on their own device as it is stated by Van Patten “certain kinds of form are more difficult to detect than others when learners are left to their own devices.” (1996, p.47).

#### **4. Conclusion**

We have seen that there is a number of factors that lead students, non native student, to confuse between agentless passive and the stative construction that have a similar surface structure to the passive. The unawareness of the occurrence of both forms, particularly of the stative construction and its nature, its form, is the major factor that leads students not to differentiate the two forms. The typical similarity in form of the agentless and stative constructions is the second one, and the difficulty in interpreting or inferring the exact meaning the writer of an EST discourse intends. Besides to the unawareness of the relation between the two forms and the rhetorical functions of an EST discourse.

The results obtained go hand in hand with the hypothesis. Furthermore, they reveal that the students have a big problem in detecting the rhetorical functions of an EST discourse, and show an unawareness of the complexity of the scientific English grammar. These results lead us to think about and suggest the following topics for future research: what are the factors that lead students not to detect the rhetorical functions of an EST discourse although the focus of the courses is on them. Does the unawareness of the complexity of the scientific English grammar have an impact on the understanding and by that in inferring the meaning expressed in an EST discourse.

## **General Conclusion and Recommendations**

This work is devoted to investigate the main factors that lead students not to differentiate passive and stative constructions in an EST discourse. In attempt to locate the main problems a student may face in distinguishing the two forms, we question whether the students, 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students, have problems in differentiating both forms and what are these problems. As initial answer to these questions, we have hypothesized that the students will easily detect the two forms if they are aware about the occurrence of both forms in an EST discourse and their relation to the rhetorical functions.

Before trying to test our hypothesis, we have presented a theoretical background about the most important issues that support the objective of the study. The first chapter deals with EST discourse its definition and main characteristic which is rhetorical functions, focusing on four specific rhetorical functions which are definition, description, classification, and instruction, and the occurrence of passive and passive-like constructions in these functions. The second one is about the passive and the stative forms, their form, use, and the distinction between them. The third chapter is devoted to the description, analysis, and discussion of the data collected and results obtained.

The majority of the students have problems in differentiating the desired forms. These problems are due to the unawareness of the structure of the stative constructions, the identical surface structure of both forms, and the inappropriate interpretation of the intended meaning. In addition, the majority of the students face a great problem in detecting the rhetorical function a sentence serves as they show unawareness of the difficulty of the EST grammar.

In the light of these results, we recommend the following:

- A reconsideration of the way an EST discourse is analysed by the students.
- The focus on both form and meaning of a given structure particularly when the constructions have typical surface structure to avoid the misinterpretation of the discourse.

- The emphasis on the problems the students face in detecting the rhetorical functions that occurs in an EST discourse.

We hope that this study will help the students to overcome their difficulties in differentiating the agentless passive and the passive-like constructions. As we wish that it helps in making teachers aware of the difficulties that a student may face in learning some forms when he is left on his own device.

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# **Appendixes**

## Appendix # 01

Mentouri University-Constantine  
Department of Languages

### Students' Questionnaire

1-Which subject do you prefer more:

Written Expression  Grammar  EST practice

Others .....

2-Do you attend all the modules:

yes  no

If no, which module you do not attend regularly. Say why.

.....

3- Do you attend EST theory courses?

regularly  sometimes  often  rarely

4-Do you attend EST practice courses?

regularly  sometimes  often  rarely

5- How often you deal with the following activities in classroom:

|                             | Always | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Rhetorical functions        |        |           |        |       |
| Rhetorical techniques       |        |           |        |       |
| Cohesive markers            |        |           |        |       |
| Grammatical characteristics |        |           |        |       |



.....  
.....  
.....

13- The passive voice always indicates:

an action

a state

Other suggestions .....

14- The stative form always indicates:

an action

a state

15- Do you think that knowing the rhetorical functions helps in distinguishing between passive and stative constructions?

yes

no

16- The passive may occur in the rhetorical function of:

definition

physical description

process description

function description

instruction

classification

17- The stative construction may occur in the rhetorical function of:

definition

physical description

process description

function description

instruction

classification

Thank you for your collaboration.

## Appendix# 02

### Test

Joint is the place at which two more bones meet in the skeleton of the body. This place is also called an articulation. Joints may be fixed or movable. Fixed joints are seams (lines) between bones that lie directly against each other, or are separated only by a thin layer of connective tissue. The joints of the cranium (skull) are fixed and protect the brain.

There are three main kinds of movable joints: hinge joints, pivot joints, and ball-and-socket joints. Hinge joints are those that permit a forward and backward motion in one plane, like the motion of a door on its hinges. The joints at the knee and fingers are modified hinge joints. Pivot joints give a rotating motion, such as the movement of the head from side to side, or up and down. The elbow has both hinge and pivot joints. Ball-and-socket joints allow the greatest freedom of movement. These joints are made up of a large round end of a long bone that fit into the hollow of another bone. The hip and shoulder have ball-and-socket joints.

Movable joints are protected from wear and tear in several ways. A smooth layer of cartilage covers the ends of bones that move over one another. The elasticity of cartilage can absorb sudden shocks. Also, the smooth quality of the cartilage makes a joints move easily. A liquid called synovial fluid keeps the joints moist and lubricated. Bones are held together at the joint by strong, fibrous tissues called ligaments that attach above and below the joints.

Joints are often sprained or dislocated. A sprain occurs when the ligaments around a joint are torn or badly stretched. Serious sprains are painful, and are usually treated with physiotherapy. Dislocated joints should be treated as soon as possible by a physician. Inflammation of the joints may result from infections or from such disorders as arthritis.

(Glendinning, E.H. & Glendinning, N. 1995)

1. Underline any 'to be + pp' form in the text
2. Classify each form in the table below taking in consideration their occurrence in the appropriate rhetorical function.

|                       | physical description | classification | definition | function description | instruction |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|
| agentless passive     |                      |                |            |                      |             |
| stative constructions |                      |                |            |                      |             |
| passive voice         |                      |                |            |                      |             |