REMARKS ON THE PASSIVE VOICE IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN[1]

Abstract: *The authors of the present paper attempt a detailed presentation of the main usage differences between the manifestation of the Passive in English and Romanian, starting from the specific recurrences, exceptions, difficulties, pitfalls and idiosyncrasies that can form the basis for an efficient didactic approach. Given that the syntactic structures pertaining to the scope of the Passive can sometimes pose problems for foreign learners of English, and the English structures can be said to be comparatively more complicated, the need is felt to distinguish between the two systems, mainly as the more recent editions of the grammar books published in Romania have drastically and fundamentally reconsidered a lot of issues belonging to this field. After sketching the theoretical scope of the issue, the authors compare the main structures, quirks and restrictions, as well as the semantic, functional and communicative implications of the passive constructs in English and Romanian, with due examples and discussion. A list of English verbs (selected from an English monolingual dictionary), which are only, or usually, used in the passive, is provided. There follows a section including a number of further comparative usage notes concerning the Passive. The final section of the paper contains the (mainly didactic) conclusions to the presentation, stressing the need for more resolute attempts at generating better didactic and theoretical materials in teaching ESL in this country.*

Key-words: *passive voice, passive constructions, contrastive analysis.*

1. **Preliminary Remarks**. In the present contribution, the authors do not propound studying or going into detail about the differences between the two sets of passive constructions, in English and Romanian, from the specific standpoint of their hierarchies and grammatical-semantic conceptualizations (mainly considering the fact that the latest edition of *Gramatica Academiei*, GALR, has determined a genuine "geological resettling" as far as the category of Voice is concerned), but rather their usage, with the specific recurrences, exceptions, difficulties and pitfalls (including those in the nature of frequency, which are directly and statistically, if need be, observable), as well as their idiosyncrasies – involving, not exactly as a subsidiary matter, linguistic registers and style. The didactic, educational dimension of this significant issue / chapter of English and Romanian grammar was considered, in addition to the comparative and contrastive remarks proper, be it only as a somewhat subordinate aspect.

Anyway, we may ask ourselves, as educationalists, why is the issue of the Passive Voice so persistently ground into the minds of students of English, and why is it that most manuals published in English-speaking countries devote it such

[1] **Constantin MANEA**, University of Pitesti, Romania
kostea_m@yahoo.com

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

an ample space? The following remarks will provide, we believe, some of the main reasons that can serve to justify taking that course of action. To begin with, the syntactic structures themselves that pertain to the scope of the Passive are rather intricate for foreign learners of English – at least, in the elementary and intermediate stages; then, we should add its comparative frequency, and its quite numerous idiosyncrasies and interpretive quirks.

In view of the fact that the passive construction is used more frequently in English, especially in the formal, or technical and scientific style, comparative-contrastive interest is associated, on Romanian TESLs' part, with didactic and methodological interest. Additionally, English has structures that can be said to be comparatively more complicated, being the result of the concurrent application of mood, aspect and tense auxiliaries, hence combinations which can at times be, or prove to be, rather difficult in practice (and are, at any rate, rather rarely used); as well as associated grammatical-semantic-structural classes (causatives, the impersonal, the reflexive, ergativity), integrated in a bewildering network – so, one cannot naturally expect too much structural homogeneity and comparability in relation to Romanian… To make things more difficult, the more recent editions of the books of grammar published in Romania drastically and fundamentally reconsidered a lot of issues pertaining to the (extended) field: the former "reflexive voice", the problems of transitivity, the impersonal category / voice (Rom. *diateza impersonală*), etc.

1.1. Voice (Rom. *diateză*) is a syntactic and pragmatic category that involves both the verb, and the whole of the sentence, in that it engages the verb and its actants (with their roles and functions): the Subject-Agent and the Object-Patient. Syntactically, it expresses the relationship Verb–Subject–Direct Object, respectively Verb–Subject, and, pragmatically, it performs a shift in communication focus, from the Agent-Subject (the active voice) to the Patient-Subject (the passive voice), and the process itself, with no reference to the actants / arguments (the impersonal voice) (GALR, I, p. 480). The passive structures, like the impersonal ones, involve the entirety of the construction (the verb and its arguments / actants); hence, they are considered special types of verbal constructions, which capture, on the one hand, the relation with the active structure, and, on the other hand, their mutual relationship. (GALR, II, p. 131).

As we can see, the theoretical definitions of the Passive as provided by Romanian grammars take into account the actant structures in the sentences, especially the relation Subject-Verb, Direct Object-Verb, and also the pragmatic dimension of communication, by shifting communicative interest towards one of the components of the sentence.

2. **Voice** is a grammatical / morphological category, which expresses the *relationship between the subject* of the verb *and the action or event* expressed by it, or else the relation between the subject and the direct object in a sentence. (Here is

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

a simple dictionary definition of the category of Voice …: "a category of the verb or verbal inflections that expresses whether the relation between the subject and the verb is that of agent and action, action and recipient, or some other relation" – COLL).

The main distinctions operated concern the following types of voice: **Active** ("denoting a voice of verbs used to indicate that the subject of a sentence is performing the action or causing the event or process described by the verb, as *kicked* in *The boy kicked the football*" – COLL). **Passive** ("denoting a voice of verbs in sentences in which the grammatical subject is not the logical subject but rather the recipient of the action described by the verb, as *was broken* in the sentence *The glass was broken by a boy*. In English there are two voices: the *Active Voice* and the *Passive Voice*." – COLL). **Middle** "(esp. in Greek and Sanskrit grammar) denoting a voice of verbs expressing reciprocal or reflexive action" – COLL).

And here is the more detailed theoretical presentation of the overall picture of Voice, as its main elements are defined in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*: "**voice**. A grammatical category which in English provides two different ways (ACTIVE and PASSIVE) of viewing the action of the verb. Voice is applicable to verbs, verb phrases, and entire clauses or sentences. The names *active* and *passive* are linked to meaning in that the subject of an active verb is often the actor, or 'doer' of the verbal action, as in: *The early bird caught the worm*. Some languages (e.g. Greek) also have a *middle voice*, which includes verbs of REFLEXIVE meaning". Similarly, for the corresponding subclasses: "**passive**. *(adj.)* Designating the VOICE of the verb whereby the grammatical subject 'suffers', 'experiences', or 'receives' the action of the verb; also, (of a verb) in the passive voice; (of a construction) involving a passive verb. Contrasted with ACTIVE". Also: "**middle verb**. One of a small group of apparently transitive verbs that do not normally occur in the passive. The term is not in very general use, but is a way of classifying verbs such as *have* (in its possessive meaning: *We have a house* does not have a passive **A house is had by us*), *consist of*, *lack*, *possess*, *resemble*, and some other verbs in certain of their meanings, e.g. **You are suited by blue*. **I am not fitted by this jumper*. **Twenty is equalled by 4 times 5*. The term is adapted from Greek grammar, which has a middle voice distinct from both active and passive" (*ibidem*, *s.v.*). Other similar verbs are *to become*, *to let*, *to like*.

To put it rather scholastically, one can say that there are two voices proper, in both English and Romanian: (1) the active voice, which shows that the action is performed by the grammatical subject, or else the grammatical subject is the doer / the performer of the action expressed by the verb, e.g. *John killed* a bird., *Mr. Jones invited all his friends to his birthday party*. (2) The passive voice indicates that the action is suffered by the grammatical subject, or else the grammatical subject of the sentence is not the doer / the performer of the action expressed by the verb, but the receiver / the patient of that action, e.g. *The bird was killed by John*., *Mr. Jones's friend were all invited to his birthday party*. Thus the division into voices is based

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

on the relation between the action (expressed by the predicate verb), and the doer or patient / recipient of the action (expressed by the subject).

In English, the passive form is made up with the auxiliary *to be*, conjugated in the required mood, aspect, tense or form, plus the Past Participle form (or V_3) of the verb to be conjugated. So, the direct object of the verb in the active construction becomes the grammatical subject of the passive structure. The subject of the respective active construction becomes what is commonly called an object of instrument / object of agency, preceded by the preposition *by*; as a matter of fact, this object (or *Agent*) is the logical subject of the new passive construction: *He cut the white loaf into equal shares → The white loaf was cut into equal shares by him*.

Hence, the *Passive transformation* is based, in English no less than Romanian, on the use of the verb *to be* (cf. Romanian *a fi*), which is conjugated in the respective tense, mood and aspect, and followed by the *Past Participle* form of the verb (V_3), e.g. *The glass is broken; The glass is being broken; The glass will be broken; The glass will have been broken; The glass has been broken; The glass was broken; The glass was being broken; The glass would be broken*, etc. (Compare the above forms with Romanian: *Paharul este spart / a fost spart / era spart / fusese spart / va fi spart / va fi fost spart / ar fi spart*). Sometimes, the Agent is left unmentioned. Special constructions with the Past Participle, such as the Nominative + Infinitive structure, are based on the Passive Transformation, e.g. *Cora was said to be a diligent student* (<= *They / People said Cora was a diligent student*).

In Romanian, the formal mark *to be* has a strong specificity – cf. the morphemes of the compound verbal forms, e.g. Romanian *perfect compus*, future, conditional, *prezumtiv*, so that there are even (authorized) voices that deny its very quality as a free mobile morpheme. (GALR, II, p. 134). However, it functions as the sole bearer of the marks / signals of predication.

By and large, the main types of Passive transformation in English are the following: (a) Sam took the toy. => The toy *was taken* by Sam. (b) Fred *gives* the pupils some tests. => (1) *The pupils are given* some tests by Fred. (2) *Tests are given* to the pupils (by Fred). (c) They / You *sent for* the nurse. => The nurse *was sent for* (by them / you). (d) They *elected* him *president.* => He *was elected president*.

The situation in Romanian is, at first sight, quite similar, except for the passive transformations illustrated in (b) (1) and (d).

Cartea este citită (de (către) Maria). Casa a fost distrusă (de cutremur). Cartea i-a fost dată lui Marius.

Teodor a fost numit ambasador. Leon a fost ales director.

3. **Main diverging points**. The grammatical category of voice is an important (and sometimes ticklish) grammar aspect, especially as English is an analytical (or 'predominantly syntactic') language, in which structures and word order (i.e. *syntax*) are all-important. The passive voice occurred from the earliest

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

times (as early as Old English), and since then it has undergone various changes, and posed various problems. However, there were no passives in early English comparable to the extremely frequent patterns that we are familiar with in Modern English.

The passive voice is very much used in English as compared to Romanian, particularly in scientific and technical English, where the very nature of the communication act involves drawing the reader's attention to the bearer or patient of the action, rather than the doer of the action: *They make twenty thousand cars a year here*. → *Twenty thousand cars are made a year here*. (Cf. Romanian *Aici se fabrică douăzeci de mii de maşini anual*).

It should be noted that, although there is no reflexive proper in English (unlike Romanian, where the reflexive constructions are demonstrably more numerous), the reflexive pronouns are used after transitive verbs. We think they typically function as direct objects in an English sentence rather than mere reflexive voice markers. The English passive forms are frequently (or at least quite regularly) rendered by Romanian reflexives. Unlike some other languages that form their passive structures only from transitive verbs, the English language forms them from intransitive and prepositional verbs, as well: *She was being looked after while I was out*. *The mansion had not been lived in for one century*; *Everything will be well taken care of*. Such constructions are also common with prepositional verbs (or verbs with an inherent preposition) like *to comment on*, *to depend on/upon*, *to dispose of*, *to laugh at*, *to operate on* "to treat or process in a particular or specific way", *to provide for* "to supply means of support (to), esp. financially".

As seen above, in English, there are situations when certain verbs are followed in the active voice by an indirect non-prepositional object as subject: *George gave Paul a toy car*. → *Paul was given a toy car (by George)*. In Romanian, the same situation is conceivable only if a Dative noun is used in front position, e.g. *Lui Paul i-a fost dată o maşinuţă de jucărie (de către George)*. A variant transformation (which does not however fall under the scope of the 'standard passive') can use the 'reflexive-passive': *Lui Paul i s-a dat o maşinuţă de jucărie (de către George)*.[1]

Very much as in Romanian, the passive mark can be deleted (through ellipsis), especially in relative clauses, e.g. *By order from the police, all cars*

[1] The assertion above – actually part of a tentative approach – does not mean that the authors of the present paper disregard the fact that Romanian turns *only the Accusative* into the subject of the passive transformation. It just emphasizes (for contrastive and didactic reasons) the logic behind the grammatical structure corresponding to Eng. *Paul was given a toy*. We believe that the Romanian 'reflexive-passive' structure could be seen, mainly in view of its being inherently impersonal, as an intermediate case in the overall fuzzy chart of *Passiveness*. Therefore, very much as *Paul* is the passive subject of *Paul a fost premiat* (and the *Beneficiary* of the action denoted by the verb), the same noun *Paul*, in *Lui Paul i s-a dat / i-a fost dată o maşinuţă*, can be seen, again, as a *Beneficiary* – though by no means as a grammatical subject.

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

illegally parked (= that have been illegally parked) have been craned out by trucks and taken to a special parking lot.

Let us compare the above sentence with Romanian *Tânărul pianist, temeinic pregătit de (către) celebrul compozitor austriac, a câştigat un premiu special.* This allows us to say that passive information is actually carried by the semantic matrix of the past participle, and thus is external to the verb *to be* / Rom. *a fi* (v. GALR I, p. 134).

Perfect semantic synonymy between the active construction and its passive counterpart is prevented by sentence stress. When using the passive, the speaker concentrates his / her attention on the person or thing acted upon (*The witnesses have been heard by the prosecutor*), or implies that the 'actor' in the situation is not really important (*The Alpine mists can be admired late in the evening*).

3.1. In English, the use of the Passive Voice instead of the Active Voice may be imposed, or merely favoured, by usage (i.e. in those situations where the passive form is felt to be the natural mode of expression), when: ● the active subject is difficult to establish: *Apparently that house had not being lived in for many years*; ● the active subject is an indefinite or vague pronoun or noun, or is clear from the context: *This house was built three hundred years ago*. *The window has been left open. It is assumed that the committee will do something about it*; ● for some reason, the active subject is not worth mentioning: *They were shown round the garden first, and then they were invited into the house*; ● the speaker wants the statement to sound impersonal for some social reasons (tact, delicacy of feeling, embarrassment, etc.): *It has been decided that your allowance will be cut down*. *You have been told so many times not to handle these tools roughly*; ● in formal, usually written statements, containing requests, directions, instructions or prohibitions, for greater effect: *Students are forbidden to smoke in the classroom. This room must be tidied up. Boys are required to come to school in proper uniforms*; ● when the accent falls on the object rather than the subject of the action: *The suspect was arrested three days later*; ● if the passive subject is the dominant element in the sentence (e.g. in technical and scientific English): *The rocker arms are activated by the push rods, which in their turn are pushed by the crankshaft. By angular displacement of a rotating body during any time interval is meant the angle described during that interval by any line parallel to the plane of rotation. Amplification is, in this case, regarded as positive. The motions of bodies may be divided into three classes. A body is said to have a motion of translation when it moves on continuously in the same direction. The same motion is repeated again and again*, etc.

We think that the mere translation of the above illustrative sentences will lead us to the same conclusions as far as the Romanian passive (forms) is / are concerned: ● *Casa e nelocuită de mulţi ani*. / *Nu s-a mai locuit de mult în casa asta*. ● *Casa a fost construită acum 300 de ani*. *Fereastra a fost lăsată deschisă. Se*

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

presupune că se vor lua măsuri de către comitetul executiv. ● Au fost purtaţi prin toată partea de la etaj a casei. Li s-au arătat toate exponatele din muzeu. ● S-a hotărât să vi se reducă indemnizaţia. Se cer eforturi mai serioase pentru a se putea obţine acreditarea. Ţi s-a spus de atâtea ori să nu umbli cu instrumente ascuţite. ● Elevilor din anii mici li se interzicea / le era interzis să folosească scara principală a liceului. ● Suspectul a fost arestat după trei zile. ● În acest caz, amplificarea se consideră (ca fiind) pozitivă. Tija superioară este pusă în mişcare de mecanismul de bază. Mişcările corpurilor se pot împărţi în trei categorii.

One can easily notice that, out of the 14 sentences above (including 16 variants), only 7 are representative of the 'standard' passive, while the remaining 9 variants illustrate the 'reflexive-passive' type.

Some 'rules of thumb', which focus on particular contexts of use and particular verbs, might be useful mainly for didactic purposes. Hence, one should use passive constructions: ● to describe processes, e.g. *The beans are picked in late summer and are left to dry in the sun*; ● in various formal (often academic) styles of discourse, e.g. *It is sometimes argued that money does concur to people's happiness*. *A distinction can be made between Darwinism proper and evolutionary theory*; ● to describe procedures, in formal reports of scientific experiments, e.g. *Eight subjects were tested in the first round of the experiment*; ● to avoid the implication of personal involvement or responsibility, e.g. *The jug got broken, Mum*. *I'm afraid the work on your computer won't be completed today*; ● with certain verbs, which are used when the person who did the action is generally unimportant; such verbs often describe claiming, blaming, acts of destruction or emotional reactions, e.g. *John is alleged / rumoured to be in a mental institution. We have been inundated with requests coming from the most unexpected quarters*.

Sentences in the active voice are generally, though not always, clear and more direct than those in passive voice. In most non-scientific writing situations, active voice is preferable to the passive. Even in scientific writing, overuse of passive voice, or using the passive voice in long and complicated sentences can cause readers to lose interest or to become confused. (Compare the following sentences: *The entrance exam was failed by over one third of the applicants to the school.*, and: *Over one third of the applicants to the school failed the entrance exam.* Similarly: *Your bicycle has been damaged.* [agent omitted]; and: *I have damaged your bicycle*).

Sentences in the active voice are also more concise than those in the passive voice, because fewer words are required to express the action in the active voice than in the passive voice: *By then, the sound track will have been completely remixed by the sound engineers*; vs. *By then, the sound engineers will have completely remixed the sound track*.

On the other hand, passive constructions tend to be favoured when the new or important information is / concerns: ● what happened to the subject: *I have been sacked*; ● who or what did it: *The letter was written by Paul*; ● how it was done:

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

The conference was badly organized. One also chooses them when the agent is unknown or unspecified, e.g. *No one was injured*. (see also above).

In addition, one tends to favour passive constructions in order to avoid very long subjects – a passive construction allows us to put a long and / or complex phrase at the end of a clause, where it is easier to understand, than at the beginning, e.g.: *Many people have been refused help by the new commission, which was set up to look into possible abuses in the allocation of council housing*.

Using the 'full' passive construction generally changes the focus / the emphasis of a sentence, e.g. *The prize was won by Jim*. (vs *Jim won the prize*).

3.2. **Not menntioning the Agent**. Nevertheless, there are cases when the agent is left unmentioned. In English very much as in Romanian, agent constraints are at work in a variety of contexts. The *by*-phrase, containing the Agent of a passive clause (and corresponding to the Subject in an active clause), is required in specific cases. It seems that only about one in five English passive clauses have an agent that is expressed in the surface structure. The passive is especially associated with what we may call the *impersonal* and *formal* style, e.g. scientific and official writing. Here the question of *who* is the agent (i.e. who performs the action described by the verb) is often unimportant and need not be stated, e.g. *The matter will be dealt with at the beginning of today's meeting*. Also, the passive may be a convenient construction to choose when one does not know who the performer of an action is, e.g. *A police officer was killed last night in a road accident*. Usually, grammar handbooks and similar materials refer to the following cases of not mentioning the Agent: (1) Unknown agent, e.g. *My purse has been taken*; (2) Generalised agent, e.g. *Bicycles are widely used in the city instead of public transport*; (3) Obvious agent, e.g. *Linda has been arrested!* [by the police]; (4) Unimportant agent, e.g. *I was advsed to obtain a visa in advance*; (5) Impersonality, e.g. *It has been decided to reduce all salaries by 10%. Then the packets are packed into boxes of twenty-four*. (Vince, Sunderland, 34). Virtually, the same picture is true of the Romanian counterparts: ● the active subject is "indefinite", or "not determined", e.g. *Mi-a fost sortit / ursit / scris să trăiesc şi asta!* ● the active subject has a 'generic' value, e.g. *Este ştiut că în astfel de situaţii se minte mult.* ● when the active subject, though left unexpressed, is retrievable from the common knowledge of the (inter)locutors, e.g. *Legea a fost promulgată ieri*. ● when the active subject is devoid of interest from the point of view of its communicative information, so it can remain non-lexicalized, e.g. *Au fost vândute toate biletele*. (GALR, I, p. 132)

3.3. **Passivals**. As far as the Passive is concerned, a special category of verbs is represented by the so-called *Passivals*. A passive sense may be implied in certain English verbs, although they are not in the passive voice. The grammatical

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

object of a transitive verb becomes the grammatical subject of the sentence without a passive tranformation of the verb; the form thus obtained is a 'passival', e.g. *This book reads easily* (instead of *One reads this book easily* or *This book can be read easily*) , cf. Romanian: *Cartea se citeşte repede*). Similarly: *The field did not flood*. *The car drove into the garage*.

These constructions are actually the result of an incomplete process of passivization. The object takes the place of the former subject, but the verb form does not change, e.g. *They sell ginger ale best in summer*. [active]. vs. *Ginger ale sells best in summer*. (passival)

4. **Remarks on usage**. In Romanian, the inherent (and, more often than not, conflictive, in theoretical terms) difficulty of the category of Voice is given by its specifically syntactic manifestation, by the analytic character of its typical marks, the extreme degree of selectivity as far as the classes of lexemes of the language are concerned (whole classes of verbs are excluded from the voice oppositions), and also (or more especially) by the major differences of its manifestation from one term of the category to the next.

The variety of the overall picture in English assumes many more form classes than it does in Romanian: the specific progressive, modal, as well as nominal structures, are added, which are far more numerous and typical in point of functioning. Let us compare: Eng. *I am suspected*, *I am being suspected*, – Rom. *(eu) sunt suspectat*; Eng. *it was washed*, *it was being washed*, – Rom. *era spălat*; Eng. *it had been washed, it had been being washed*, Rom. – *fusese spălat*; *it must have been washed*, *it must have been being washed*, Rom. – *trebuie să fi fost spălat*, etc. (Still, it will be useful to note, speaking of the tense restrictions in English, that – mainly for practical reasons – the perfect continuous tenses are not normally used in the passive, primarily because these structures tend to be rather unwieldy: they are consequently replaced by the corresponding tenses of the common aspect; forms like *It will have been being washed* or *It should have been being washed* are hardly ever used).

4.1. **Further usage remarks.** Here are a number of further comparative usage notes concerning the passive:

4.1.1. As mentioned before, the Passive Voice is quite extensively used in Modern English. The truth is that the passive voice (and passive constructions) are far more frequently used in English than in Romanian, particularly in scientific and technical texts. It should be added that more passive forms are used in contemporary English not only in comparison with Romanian, but also in comparison with the earlier stages of the English language itself: there is a growing

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

tendency to make the person or thing spoken of the subject of the verb in the passive voice.

The so-called *passive-reflexives* in Romanian are frequently, if not regularly (or else, in an overwhelming number of cases) rendered into English by passive forms: "se zice / spune că", "se crede / consideră că", "se ştie / cunoaşte că", "se bănuieşte că" become, respectively: "it is said / reported (that)", "it is thought / considered" , "it is known", "it is believed", "it is supposed". E.g. *Houses are usually built from stone in this region*. – Rom. *În această regiune, casele se construiesc de obicei din piatră*.

Let us compare the following cases typical of common contexts in the two languages: (a) *Se construieşte un bloc pe strada noastră. A block of flats is being built in our street.*

(b) *Structurile acestea se compun din adverbe şi particule. These structures are made up of adverbs and particles.*

(c) *Importanţa acestei reguli se poate vedea mai ales în practică. The significance of this rule can be seen especially in practical matters*.

(d) *Se poate presupune / bănui că Gutenberg ştia despre existenţa tiparului la chinezi*. *It may be supposed that Gutenberg knew about the existence of the craft of printing in China*.

(e) *Se crede că lamantinii au inspirat unele dintre legendele despre sirene. It is thought that dugongs inspired some of the legends about sirens*.

(f) *Se zărea / Se putea vedea un munte în depărtare. A mountain could be seen in the distance*.

(g) *Se ştie că Shakespeare a scris 37 sau 38 de piese. Shakespeare is known to have written 37 or 38 plays*.

(h) *Se auzea vocea lui dinspre capătul tunelului. His voice was heard coming from the far end of the tunnel*.

(i) *În Evul Mediu se credea că unii stejari produc gâşte. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that a species of oaktrees produced geese*.

We can remark the note of detachment or distancing (as in *(b)*), the sense of impersonality (as in *(d)*, *(f)*, *(h)*), the generic sense (as in *(a)*, *(e)*, *(g)*, *(i)*), or the 'ex-cathedra attitude' (as in *(c)*) of the constructions in both languages. It would also be interesting to note that, in *(i)* the English language uses both the mark of the Passive (the auxiliary *to be*), and that of the impersonal (*it*): *it was believed that*…

4.1.2. **Voice Constraints**. Although it is held, as a general rule, that transitive verb sentences can be either active or passive, there are a number of exceptions where there is no simple paraphrase relation. Consequently, several kinds of 'voice constraints' can be distinguished – in association with the verb, the object, the agent, meaning, and frequency of use. The first constraint that comes to mind, mainly when one considers the matter from the standpoint of a Romanian (student), is transitivity: "Only transitive verbs can have passive forms, since the

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

grammatical subject of a passive verb corresponds to the object of an active verb. Even so, not all active structures have a passive counterpart: Blue suits you. *You are suited by blue. These people lack confidence. *Confidence is lacked by those people" (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*, p. 285).

4.1.3. When it comes to voice constraints which affect particular verbs, one comes across English and Romanian verbs that are either only active, or only passive. Not surprisingly, there are greater restrictions on verbs occurring in the passive than in the active voice. In addition to ergative and intransitive verbs, which can never take the passive, some transitive verbs (at least in certain uses) do not occur in the passive, e.g. *They have a nice house. He lacks confidence. The auditorium holds 1,800 people. This dress becomes her. The coat does not fit you. Will this suit you? John resembles his father. The car cost him a fortune.* In English, it is typically the verbs of 'incomplete predication' (e.g. *be*, *resemble*, *last*, *have*, *signify*, *seem*, *sound* "seem", *taste* (as in *He seems tired.*, *The tea tasted sour*) which cannot be used in the passive. The verb *to have* with durative association is only to be found in the active form, e.g. *He has a house*. *We have about two hundred albums in stock*. However, with perfective association, *have* is sometimes used in the passive, e.g. *There was nothing to be had*.

In a most similar way, in Romanian, the general restrictions affecting the passive regard the ergative or unaccusative verbs (e.g. *Intervine o schimbare.*, *Steagul flutură.*, *Fântânile seacă.*), the verbs of weak transitivity (e.g. *O am pe bunica la mine*., *Vreau casa, nu livada*.), and the non-Agent transitive verbs (*Mă ustură / furnică tălpile.*, *Mă încap / strâng pantalonii*., *Mă mir / uimeşte situaţia.*, *Întreaga informaţie o cuprinde rezumatul*, *Metoda reprezintă o noutate*). The common feature, in the two languages considered, seems to be the effects of weak and strong transitivity (cf. the classes of English verbs that do not form passive constructions). Here is what the official Romanian grammar (GALR) says about these kind of restrictions: "Apart from the unaccusative (ergative) verbs, even within the category of the transitivity verbs there are different degreees of transitivity, i.e. strong and weak" (GALR, I, p 344). In Romanian, the possibility of passivisation is one of the criteria or features of strong / *forte* transitivity – added to the possibility for the verb to form constructions with an Accusative pronoun clitic, and the possibility of duplicating the Direct Object through the clitic form, by anticipating or resuming the object.

Conversely, many passive voice sentences do not have an Active Voice counterpart, i.e. with some verbs only the passive is possible. "There are also passive constructions which do not have active counterparts: *They are said to be very intelligent*. (**People say them to be very intelligent*)" (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*, *ibidem*). Here are some more examples: *John was reputed to be a good teacher*. **They reputed him to be a good teacher*. (Note that *to repute* can be used in the active with 'be' and 'have', e.g. *They reputed him to have the*

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

means to do it. They reputed him to be the one who did it). Similarly, **They said him to be a good teacher*. *Shakespeare was born at Stratford. This notion is based on a gross misconception. It is alleged that the thief entered the house through the window*).

4.1.4. **Practical and didactic materials**. As educationalists, we think that a list (an exhaustive one, if possible) should be drawn by didacticians, namely ESL teachers, in this country – and duly used in learning and teaching English grammar, i.e. utilized in a differentiated manner. It is hoped that integrated interactive materials will be generated by pedagogues, and extensively used in classroom activities (of course, in a selective and gradual manner).

The list below was compiled by the authors of the present contribution based on the *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus. Version 1.0. Collins Electronic Dictionary Data*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.

Verbs that are usually or solely passive: (1) Transitive (or, rarely, intransitive) verbs that are usually passive: ***abash*** "to cause to feel ill at ease, embarrassed, or confused; make ashamed"; ***addict*** "to cause (someone or oneself) to become dependent (on something, esp. a narcotic drug)"; ***adjudge*** "1. to pronounce formally; declare: *he was adjudged the winner*. 2. (a) to determine judicially; judge; (b) to order or pronounce by law; decree: *he was adjudged bankrupt*; (c) to award (costs, damages, etc.); 3. *Archaic*. to sentence or condemn"; ***ally*** "to connect or be related, as through being similar or compatible"; ***associate*** "(tr.; usually passive) to consider in conjunction; connect: *rainfall is associated with humidity*"; ***bias*** "(usually passive) to cause to have a bias; prejudice; influence"; ***blast off*** "(adv,; when tr., usually passive) (of a rocket, spacemen, etc.) to be launched"; ***bomb out*** "to make homeless by bombing: *24 families in this street have been bombed out*"; ***consternate*** "to fill with anxiety, dismay, dread, or confusion"; ***contraindicate***: "*Med*. to advise against or indicate the possible danger of (a drug, treatment, etc.)"; ***embay*** "1. to form into a bay. 2. to enclose in or as if in a bay. 3. (esp. of the wind) to force (a ship, esp. a sailing ship) into a bay"; ***enamour*** or *U.S*. ***enamor*** "(foll. by of) to inspire with love; captivate; charm"; ***enroot*** "1. to establish (plants) by fixing their roots in the earth. 2. to fix firmly, implant, or embed: *to enroot an idea in the mind*"; ***example***. "(tr.; now usually passive) to present an example of; exemplify"; ***fame***: "(tr,; now usually passive) to make known or famous; celebrate: *he was famed for his ruthlessness*"; ***gunge*** "(foll. by up) to block or encrust with gunge; clog"; ***have up*** "to cause to appear for trial: *he was had up for breaking and entering*"; ***hackney*** "to make commonplace and banal by too frequent use"; ***garment*** "to cover or clothe"; ***interstratify*** "to arrange (a series of rock strata) in alternating beds"; ***podzolize*** "to make into or form a podzol: *podzolized soil*"; ***put upon*** "(intr., prep., usually passive): 1. to presume on (a person's generosity, good nature, etc.); take advantage of: *he's always being put upon*. 2. to impose hardship on; maltreat: *he was sorely put*

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

upon"; ***repute*** "to consider (a person or thing) to be as specified: *he is reputed to be intelligent*"; ***rive*** "1. to split asunder: *a tree riven by lightning*. 2. to tear apart: *riven to shreds*. 3. *Archaic*. to break (the heart) or (of the heart) to be broken"; ***rumour*** "(…) 1. to pass around or circulate in the form of a rumour: *it is rumoured that the Queen is coming*"; ***signpost***: "1. to mark with signposts. 2. to indicate direction towards: *the camp site is signposted from the road*"; ***subtitle*** "to provide a subtitle for"; ***suffuse*** "to spread or flood through or over (something): *the evening sky was suffused with red*"; ***urbanize*** or ***urbanise*** "(tr). 1. a. to make (esp. a predominantly rural area or country) more industrialized and urban; b. to cause the migration of an increasing proportion of (rural dwellers) into cities".

(2) Verbs, or particular meanings of verbs, which are often passive: ***bruit*** "to report; rumour: *it was bruited about that the king was dead*"; ***catch up*** "(…) to absorb or involve: *she was caught up in her reading*"; ***exercise*** "(…) to occupy the attentions of, esp. so as to worry or vex: *to be exercised about a decision*"; ***involve*** "(…) 3. (often passive; usually foll. by *in* or *with*) to concern or associate significantly: *many people were involved in the crime*. 4. to make complicated; tangle: *the situation was further involved by her disappearance*"; ***mix up*** "(…) 3. to put (someone) into a state of confusion: *I'm all mixed up*. 4. (foll. by *in* or *with*; usually passive) to involve (in an activity or group, esp. one that is illegal): *why did you get mixed up in that drugs racket?*"; ***oblige*** "(…) 1. (tr,; often passive) to bind or constrain (someone to do something) by legal, moral, or physical means. 2. (tr.; usually passive) to make indebted or grateful (to someone) by doing a favour or service: *we are obliged to you for dinner*"; ***phase***: "1. to execute, arrange, or introduce gradually or in stages: *a phased withdrawal*"; ***reconcile*** (…) 1. (often passive; usually foll. by to) to make (oneself or another) no longer opposed; cause to acquiesce in something unpleasant: *she reconciled herself to poverty*"; ***snooker*** "(…) 3. to thwart; defeat"; ***stretch*** "(…) 14. (tr.; often passive) to extend, as to the limit of one's abilities or talents"; ***subject*** "(…) 2. (often passive; foll. by to) to expose or render vulnerable or liable (to some experience): *he was subjected to great danger*"; ***try*** "(…) 4. (tr.; often passive) to give pain, affliction, or vexation to: *I have been sorely tried by those children*"; ***want*** "(…) 8. (tr,; often passive) to seek or request the presence of: *you're wanted upstairs*".

(3) Verbs possessing one meaning, or several (usually figurative) meanings that are used passively: ***barricade*** "(…) 3. to obstruct; block: *his mind was barricaded against new ideas*"; ***bemire*** "to stick fast in mud or mire"; ***benumb*** (…) 2. to make inactive; stupefy (the mind, senses, will, etc.)"; ***bless*** "(…) 6. to endow with a talent, beauty, etc.: *she was blessed with an even temper*"; ***build up*** "to cover (an area) with buildings"; ***bunker*** "(…) (passive) to have one's ball trapped in a bunker"; ***burn out*** "to destroy by fire"; ***calculate*** "(…) 3. to design specifically; aim: *the car was calculated to appeal to women*"; ***carry away*** "(…) 2. to cause (a person) to lose self-control. 3. to delight or enrapture: *he was carried away by the music*"; ***commit*** "(…) 4. to pledge or align (oneself), as to a particular cause, action, or attitude: *a committed radical*"; ***congest*** "(…) 3. to block (the

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

nose) with mucus"; ***couch*** "*Formal.* to express in a certain way: *The offer was couched in legal jargon*"; ***cut out*** "(…) 3. to suit or equip for: *you're not cut out for this job*"; ***debauch*** "(…) 1. (when tr., usually passive) to lead into a life of depraved self-indulgence"; ***deliver*** "(…) 4. d. (passive; foll. by of) to give birth (to offspring)"; ***disjoint*** "(…) 4. to end the unity, sequence, or coherence of"; ***distress*** "(…) 2. to subject to financial or other trouble"; ***dominate*** "(…) 3. to predominate in (something or someone)"; ***embarrass*** "(…) 2. to involve in financial difficulties"; ***enwrap*** "(…) 2. to engross or absorb: *enwrapped in thought*"; ***equip*** "(…) 2. to provide with abilities, understanding, etc.: *her son was never equipped to be a scholar*"; ***etch*** "(…) 4. to imprint vividly: *the event was etched on her memory*"; ***famish*** "(…) 1. (now usually passive) to be or make very hungry or weak"; ***fate*** "(…) tr.; usually passive) to predetermine; doom: *he was fated to lose the game*"; ***finger*** "(…) 6. to arrange the keys of (a clarinet, flute, etc.) for playing in a certain way"; ***flush***[1] "(…) 6. to excite or elate"; ***funk*** "(…) 2. to make afraid"; ***generalize*** "(…) 3. to cause to become widely used or known"; ***grill***. "2. to torment with or as if with extreme heat: *the travellers were grilled by the scorching sun*"; ***hunt*** "(…) to persecute; hound"; ***indicate*** "(…) 5. to recommend or require: *surgery seems to be indicated for this patient*"; ***invest*** "(…) 6. (tr,; usually passive; foll. by in or with) to provide or endow (a person with qualities, characteristics, etc.): *he was invested with great common sense*"; ***jumble*** "(…) 2. to remember in a confused form; muddle"; ***lace*** "(…) 5. (tr,; usually passive and foll. by with) to streak or mark with lines or colours: *the sky was laced with red*"; ***lade*** "(…) 2. (tr,; usually passive and foll. by with) to burden or oppress. 3. (tr,; usually passive and foll. by with) to fill or load"; ***lap*** "(…) to envelop or surround with comfort, love, etc.: *lapped in luxury*"; ***lose*** "(…) to absorb or engross: *he was lost in contemplation*; (usually passive) to cause the death or destruction of: *two men were lost in the attack*"; ***necessitate*** "(…) 2. to compel or require (someone to do something)"; ***overspend*** "(…) 2. to wear out; exhaust"; ***parch*** "(…) 2. to make very thirsty: *I was parched after the run*"; ***pocket*** "(…) 3. to enclose or confine in or as if in a pocket"; ***press*** "(…) 13. to have little of: *we're hard pressed for time*"; ***promise*** "(…) to engage to be married; betroth: *I'm promised to Bill*"; ***puff*** "(…) 2. (tr,; often foll. by out; usually passive) to cause to be out of breath"; ***put about*** "(…) 3. to disconcert or disturb: *she was quite put about by his appearance*"; ***put on*** "(…) 2. to adopt (an attitude or feeling) insincerely: *his misery was just put on*"; ***reckon*** "(…) 3. to consider or regard: *he is reckoned clever*"; ***revolt*** "(…) 2. to feel or cause to feel revulsion, disgust, or abhorrence"; ***ride*** "(…) 14. to tyrannize over or dominate: *ridden by fear*"; ***run down*** "(…) 3. (tr., usually passive) to tire, sap the strength of, or exhaust: *he was thoroughly run down and needed a holiday*"; ***season*** "(…) 3. to make or become mature or experienced: *seasoned troops*"; ***seize*** "(…) 10. (passive; usually foll. by of) to be apprised of; conversant with"; ***sequester*** "(…) 2. to retire into seclusion"; ***shoot*** "(…) 16. to variegate or streak, as with colour"; ***snow*** "(…) 2. (tr,; usually passive, foll. by over, under, in, or up) to cover or confine with a heavy fall of

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

snow"; ***spare*** "(…) 5. (esp. of Providence) to allow to survive: *I'll see you again next year if we are spared*"; ***specialize*** "2. (usually passive) to cause (organisms or their parts) to develop in a way most suited to a particular environment or way of life or (of organisms, etc.) to develop in this way"; ***steep*** "(…) 2. to saturate; imbue: *steeped in ideology*"; ***straiten*** "1. to embarrass or distress, esp. financially"; ***strand*** "(…) 2. to leave helpless, as without transport or money, etc."; ***strike*** "(…) 16. to afflict with a disease, esp. unexpectedly: *he was struck with polio when he was six*"; ***suspend*** "(…) 2. (tr,; passive) to cause to remain floating or hanging: *a cloud of smoke was suspended over the town*"; ***take*** "(…) 54. to charm or captivate: *she was very taken with the puppy*"; ***transmit*** "(…) 4. to pass (an inheritable characteristic) from parent to offspring"; ***transport*** "(…) 3. to have a strong emotional effect on"; ***trouble*** "(…) 5. to agitate or make rough: *the seas were troubled*"; ***unhorse*** "(tr). 1. to knock or throw from a horse".

(4) Meanings belonging to various registers and stylistic levels: ***bring down*** "(…) 2. *Slang*. to cause to be elated and then suddenly depressed, as from using drugs"; ***buck*** "(…) *Informal*. to cheer or encourage: *I was very bucked at passing the exam*"; ***burn*** "(…) *Informal*. to cheat, esp. financially"; ***chew up*** "(…) 2. *Slang*. to cause (a person) to be nervous or worried: *he was all chewed up about the interview*"; ***choke up*** "(…) 2. *Informal*. to overcome (a person) with emotion, esp. without due cause"; ***chuff*** "(…) *Brit. slang*. to please or delight: *he was chuffed by his pay rise*"; ***clem*** "(when tr., usually passive) *English dialect*. to be hungry or cause to be hungry"; ***cut up*** "(…) 3. *Informal*. to affect the feelings of deeply"; ***erode*** "(…) 3. *Pathol*. to remove (tissue) by ulceration"; ***counterstain*** "*Microscopy* (…) to apply (one of a series of stains) to a specimen to be examined: *haematoxylin is counterstained with eosin*"; ***fixate*** "(…) 4. *Informal*. to obsess or preoccupy"; ***flabbergast*** "*Informal*. to overcome with astonishment; amaze utterly; astound"; ***gen up*** "*Brit*. *informal*. to brief (someone) or study (something) in detail; make or become fully conversant with: *I can only take over this job if I am properly genned up*"; ***invalid*** "(…) 2. (usually foll. by out; often passive) *Chiefly* Brit. to require (a member of the armed forces) to retire from active service through wounds or illness"; ***hang up*** "(…) (tr.; usually passive; usually foll. by on) *Informal*. to cause to have an emotional or psychological preoccupation or problem: *he's really hung up on his mother*"; ***have*** "(…) *Slang*. to cheat or outwit: *he was had by that dishonest salesman*"; ***intussuscept*** "*Pathol*. to turn or fold (an organ or a part) inwards; invaginate"; ***knacker*** "(…) *Slang*. to exhaust; tire"; ***lay up*** "(…) 2. *Informal*. to incapacitate or confine through illness"; ***moither*** or ***moider*** "*Dialect* to bother or bewilder"; ***pair*** "(…) 5. (when tr., usually passive) *Parliamentary procedure*. to form or cause to form a pair: *18 members were paired for the last vote*"; ***pitch*** "(…) (*music*) (of a wind instrument) to specify or indicate its basic key or harmonic series by its size, manufacture, etc."; ***place*** "(…) (passive) *Brit*. to cause (a racehorse, greyhound, athlete, etc.) to arrive in first, second, third, or sometimes fourth place"; ***poop***[2] "*U.S. and Canadian slang*. 1. to cause to become exhausted; tire: *he was pooped after the race*";

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

rejuvenate "(…) 2. *Geography* to cause (a river) to begin eroding more vigorously to a new lower base level, usually because of uplift of the land; to cause (a land surface) to develop youthful features"; ***relegate*** "(…) 2. *Chiefly Brit*. to demote (a football team, etc.) to a lower division"; ***say*** "(…) *Irish*. to persuade or coax (someone) to do something: *If I hadn't been said by her I wouldn't be in this fix*"; ***sclerotize*** or ***sclerotise*** "*Zoology*. to harden and darken (an insect's cuticle)"; ***shag*** "*Brit slang*. (…) 2. (tr,; often foll. by out; usually passive) to exhaust; tire"; ***steam up*** "(…) 2. *Slang*. to excite or make angry: *he's all steamed up about the delay*"; ***stick*** "(…) 15. *Informal*. to cause to be at a loss; baffle, puzzle, or confuse: *I was totally stuck for an answer*"; ***tape*** "(…) 3. *Brit. informal*. to take stock of (a person or situation); sum up: *he's got the job taped*"; ***transcribe*** "(…) *Biochem*. to convert the genetic information in (a strand of DNA) into a strand of RNA, esp. messenger RNA"; ***translate*** "(…) 6. *Biochem*. to transform the molecular structure of (messenger RNA) into a polypeptide chain by means of the information stored in the genetic code"; ***tucker***^{2} "(tr,; often passive; usually foll. by out) *Informal, chiefly U.S. and Canadian*. to weary or tire completely"; ***whack*** "(tr). 2. *Brit. informal*. to exhaust completely".

(5) Verbs, or meanings of certain verbs, which are used reflexively or passively: ***couch*** "(…) 2. (when tr., usually reflexive or passive) to lie down or cause to lie down for or as for sleep"; ***give up*** "(…) 4. (tr,; usually reflexive) to surrender: *the escaped convict gave himself up* (…) 7. (tr,; often passive or reflexive) to devote completely (to): *she gave herself up to caring for the sick*".

A special case is, in effect, the verb *to attach*: " (…) 2. (reflexive or passive) to become associated with or join, as in a business or other venture: *he attached himself to the expedition*; (…) 6. (usually passive) *Military*. to place on temporary duty with another unit; 7. (usually passive) to put (a member of an organization) to work in a different unit or agency, either with an expectation of reverting to, or while retaining some part of, the original working arrangement".

4.1.5. **Passive Participles vs (Genuine) Adjectives.** It will be fair to admit that, in both English and Romanian, it is rather difficult to (theoretically) trace the border between passive Past Participle forms and Adjective forms. Compare: Eng. (*to be*) *famed*, (*to be*) *mixed up*, (*to be*) *obliged*, (*to be*) *indicated*, etc. (as in *He was famed for his ruthlessness*, *We are obliged to you for dinner*, *Surgery seems to be indicated for this patient*), and Rom. *Uşa asta e vopsită., Balamalele sunt (bine) unse., Suntem (cât se poate de) deschişi pentru orice acţiune de acest fel.*

There are cases when a Past Participle form of a verb loses its verbal value and is felt as an adjective preceded by a link verb. In such a case, the respective construction should be taken as a predicate with a "complex subject complement", e.g. *The ancient temple was built of marble blocks* (predicative).

As a general rule, confusion between the Passive and other type of constructions (in the combination *to be* + Past Participle) will be solved, in

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

practical terms, as follows: (a) A passive: when an adverbial modifier characterizes the action, e.g. *This dictionary is always used by Peter*; or when the verb is in the continuous aspect, e.g. *This dictionary is being used by Peter*; (b) A compound nominal predicate, e.g. *Sheila is used to getting up early, because she has to be at the office early in the morning*; this combination indicates the state in which the subject is, it characterizes the subject, so the structure is clearly that of a compound nominal predicate. (We should add that, in the latter case, (b), the very pronunciation of the *-ed* form, i.e. [ju:zd], can indicate its adjectival status – vs. the Aspect auxiliary structure *I used to wake up early when I was a child*).

Similar Romanian participial structures can pose problems in disambiguating the constructions in question, e.g. *Frontonul e zugrăvit*. (*The pediment is painted*). Does it mean that: (1) *Frontonul este zugrăvit de către cineva (acum)*. "The pediment is (just being) painted (by someone)"; or (2) *Frontonul nu este (lăsat) nezugrăvit*" "The pediment is not unpainted / was not left unpainted"? We think the difference essentially consists in the semantic-grammatical description of the participial component, as, respectively, (1) "process"; (2) "description (of quality)", "opinion".

4.1.6. We believe that a comparison concerning the cases of ellipsis in English and Romanian would be very useful, i.e. highly revealing and instructive (especially if based on statistical data – extracted from corpora of occurrences in the two languages considered). It is true that some cases of ellipsis in Romanian are rather infrequent / marginal; compare English "He *appears* / *seems* [to be] *intimidated* / *surprised* (by…), and Romanian "Revista *trebuie* [a fi] *citită.*, Tava *vine* [a fi] *tapetată* pe fund.

4.1.7. Interestingly enough, the so-called *reflexive Passive* specific to Romanian (e.g. "Se spune că…, Se cunoaşte / Se ştie că…") is not always, consistently or necessarily, an impersonal construction. (v. GALR, I, p 135: "A complete personal paradigm of reflexive Passive is, in current Romanian, totally exceptional, occurring only in folksy structures like: *Pe unde umbli, de nu te mai vezi deloc?* (…), where *nu te vezi* "nu eşti văzut de alţii"; *Mă cunosc de la o poştă când mint*., *Te cunoşti când spui minciuni*., where *mă cunosc* "sunt cunoscut de alţii", and *te cunoşti* "eşti cunoscut de alţii"). Comparing the two sets of examples, one can notice the clearly impersonal-generic sense of the former example, vs. the "personalized" senses in: *Mă cunosc*…, *Te cunoşti*… Similarly, in older Romanian a generic-passive expression was used, involving the third plural person, arguably under the influence of Slavonic languages, e.g. *Spun că (el) ar fi zis*... ("Se spune că ar fi zis…", Eng. "They say (that) he claimed / said…" / "He is said to have claimed / said…"). This can also be interpreted as the ellipsis of the subject proper: *ei* / *oamenii spun*). In this respect, one should refer to similar constructions in

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

Slavonic languages (e.g. Russian Как тебя *зовут*? – literally: "How *do* (they) *call* you?"). Incidentally, there was a time when most experts in Romance studies, including most Romanian linguists, considered the clear prevalence of the reflexive, and the reflexive Passive in Romanian as another proof of the Slavonic influence (considering the great number of reflexive verbs like *a se naşte*, *a-şi da seama*, etc.). Later linguists (e.g. Eugeniu Coşeriu) argued that the reflexive construction is present – and fairly abundantly, too – in other Romance languages besides Romanian, even as "impersonal reflexives", e.g. in Italian (*svegliarsi*, *vendesi*, and, respectively, Questo non *si sa*), in French (*s'en aller*, *se rire*, *se jouer*, and Cela *se voit* de loin), in Spanish, etc.; hence, Slavonic influence in this domain used to be (and still is) invoked in an excessive manner. Also compare: *M-am născut*…, *Sunt născut la*… and the obsolete intransitive, non-reflexive form: *Nasc şi la Moldova oameni*.

Anyway, the preference, in Romanian, for the reflexive passive constructions can be best substantiated in the quite numerous passive subjects of "non-individual" reading, e.g. *În România se vânează* ***urşi***., *Aici se vinde* ***miere***., *Se caută* ***dactilografă*** (as opposed to the "individual" reading, e.g. *La Galeria ART a fost vândut deja* ***Luchianul expus***) (GALR, I, p. 136).

4.1.8. The specific range of issues pertaining to the Romanian Passive intersects and overlaps, to a certain extent, with that of transitivity and ergativity (v. also above), and also that of the *impersonal voice*. The same can be said, by and large, about the English Passive – which is also semantically and logically treated as akin to the category of the causative verbs like *to get* and *to have*. The problems that such verbs usually pose for Romanians / Romanian learners mainly pertain to usage (e.g. the *get* passive is generally rare, and restricted primarily to conversation, except for *get married*; v. also *get* + *hit*, *involved*, *left*, *stuck* – mainly with negative connotations; while the *have* + direct object + past participle construction is used to express sentences of the type 'I hired / employed someone to do something for me'; colloquially, *have* can be used to replace a passive verb, usually one concerning some accident or misfortune: *They had their strawberries stolen before they had a chance to pick them*. = *Their strawberries were stolen before he had a chance to pick them*).

4.1.9. An interesting use of the (reflexive) impersonal structure is related to the 'absolute' meaning (or complementation pattern) of the respective verb: "*Nu se mai întreabă până la următoarea deschidere* [a computerului]".

5. **Concluding Remarks.** We believe that the comparative linguistic and theoretical materials presented in the considerations above entitle us to *conclude*

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

that: (1) using the Passive involves, as far as today's English is concerned, a more obvious bias towards formality; (2) the interpenetration of the various, often highly divergent forms, patterns and shades is both more visible, and more permissive in English than it is in Romanian (v. the rather infrequent similar cases in Romanian, which are really marginal, and end to remain so in the vast majority of the occurrences that can be provided or construed); (3) the exceptional cases, and the various idiosyncrasies seem to be far more numerous in English, while they tend to be rather marginal (and all the more unpredictable, i.e. *lexical*) in Romanian; (4) the cases of ambiguity seem to be equally numerous in both languages; however, they pertain, in English, rather to the interpretation of the syntactic structures, whereas in Romanian they are generated by, or have recourse more to, the semantic and lexical compartments of the language.

As can be seen, ever more strenuous and determined efforts, both scientific and didactic, are needed in order to facilitate and condition the correct acquisition and use of the passive voice and passivisation, in living / real-life, as well as realistic contexts.

We propose to attempt, in a future contribution, a study on the manifestation of the passive (voice) within the scope of expressing the "generic" category, and also on the various manifestations of the reflexive, in both English and Romanian. We also firmly believe that efforts should be made with regard to positive findings based on statistical, corpus research.

Bibliography:

Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", 2005, *Gramatica limbii române – I – Cuvântul*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, (GALR, I).
Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", 2005, *Gramatica limbii române – II – Enunţul*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, (GALR, II).
Alexander, L.-G.,1994, *Longman English Grammar*, London, Longman Group UK, Ltd.
Avram, M.,1986, *Gramatica pentru toţi*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
Bantaş, A. et alii, *English for Advanced Students*, 1993, Iaşi, Editura Institutului European.
Bejan, D., 1996, *Gramatica limbii române. Compendiu*, Cluj, Editura Echinox.
Chalker, S., , E., 1994, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar*, OUP.
Cobb, T., Gardiner, R., 1994, *Today's English Grammar*, Bucureşti, Ed. Prietenii Cărţii.
Collins COBUILD English Grammar, 1994, Harper Collins Publishers.
Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1992, Version 1.0. Collins Electronic Dictionary Data, Harper Collins Publishers.
Cornilescu, Al., 1995, *Concepts of Modern Grammar*, Editura Universităţii Bucureşti.
Cornilescu, Al., 1982, *English Syntax – Volume two*, Universitatea din Bucureşti.
Crystal, D., 1992, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, Blackwell Reference, Padstow,T. J. Press.
Crystal, D., 1990, *Linguistics*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.
Crystal, D., 1988, *The English Language*, London,Penguin Books.
Ducrot, O., Schaeffer, J.-M. et alii, 1996, *Noul Dicţionar Enciclopedic al Ştiinţelor Limbajului*, Bucureşti, Editura Babel.
Eastwood, J., 1994, *Oxford Practice Grammar*, Oxford University Press.

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)

Enciclopedia limbii române (coord. Marius Sala), 2001, Bucureşti,Editura *Univers enciclopedic*.
Freeborn, D., 2000, *A Coursebook in English Grammar*, Macmillan.
Gălăţeanu-Fârnoagă, G., Comişel, E., 1996, *Gramatica limbii engleze*, Bucureşti, Editura *Omegapres* & Editura *Lucman*.
Gethin, H., 1996 *Grammar in Context*, London, Longman.
Graver, B.D., 1979, *English Advanced Studies*, Oxford University Press.
Greenbaum, S., Quirk, R., 1984, *A University Grammar of English*, London, Longman.
Haegeman, L., Gueron J.,2000, *English Grammar*, Blackwell Publishers.
Harmer, J., 1997, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, London, Longman.
Iarovici, E., 1973, *A History of the English Language*, Bucureşti, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică.
Irimia, D., 1997, *Gramatica limbii române*, Iaşi, Editura Polirom.
Leech, G., Svartvic, J., 1990, *A Communicative Grammar of English*, London, Longman.
Leech, G., 1996, *A-Z of English Grammar and Usage*, London, Longman.
Levitţchi, L., Preda, I., 1994, *Gramatica limbii engleze*, Bucureşti, Editura *Gramar*.
Levitţchi, L., 1996, *Gramatica limbii engleze*, Bucureşti, Editura *Teora*.
Manea, D., 1990, *Consideraţii asupra verbelor fals tranzitive româneşti*, în *SCL*, XLII, nr. 4 /1990, p. 333-335.
Manea, D, 1990, *Probleme ale tranzitivităţii în limba română (I). Verbele cu două obiecte*, în *SCL*, nr. 5-6 /1990, p. 447-461.
Murphy, R., 1998, *English Grammar in Use*, Cambridge University Press.
Palmer, G., 1976, *A Grammar of Spoken English*, Cambridge University Press.
Pană-Dindelegan, G., 1974, *Sintaxa transformaţională a grupului verbal în limba română*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
Parrott, M., 2000, *Grammar for English Language Teachers*, Cambridge University Press.
Radford, A., 1992, *Transformational Grammar*, Cambridge University Press.
Schisbye, K., 1965, *A Modern English Grammar*, Oxford University Press.
Swan, M., 1997, *Practical English Usage*, Oxford University Press.
Swan, M., & Walter, C., 1997, *How English Works - A Grammar Practice Book*, Oxford University Press.
Şerban, D., 1982, *English Syntax – Volume one*, Universitatea din Bucureşti.
The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 2001,Oxford University Press.
The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar, 1994, Oxford University Press.
The Wordsworth Dictionary of English Usage, 1995, Wordsworth Editions Limited.
Vasiliu, E., 1992, *Introducere în teoria limbii*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
Vince, M., & Sunderland, P. 2003,, *Advanced Language Practice with Key*, Oxford, Macmillan.
Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1994, New York / Avenel, Gramercy Books.
Weiner, E.S.C., & Delahunty, A., 1993, *The Oxford Guide to Correct English*, Bucureşti, Editura *Teora*.
Zdrenghea, M., & Greere, A., 1999, *A Practical English Grammar with Exercises*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura *Clusium*.

BDD-A13349 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.77 (2026-11-18 10:56:04 UTC)