

Episode 068 – Grammar

Impersonal passive constructions

The passive voice is a verb form that is used to describe actions or conditions. It changes the perspective of an action or event. While the active sentence emphasizes the subject carrying out an action, a passive construction places emphasis on the action carried out. The agent in a passive sentence is less important, perhaps not even named. The action itself is in the foreground. To form the passive, German uses the helping verb "werden" and a past participle. The helping verb is conjugated and the past participle remains unchanged. In a simple declarative sentence, the helping verb is in the second position and the past participle goes to the end of the sentence.

Example:

*Harry **wird operiert.***

The personal passive voice

When a passive sentence includes the person or thing to which the action is being done it is called a personal passive statement. The subject of a passive sentence is the accusative object in the corresponding active sentence.

Examples:

Active: Dr. Anderson operiert **Harry.**

Passive: **Harry** wird operiert. - ***Wer oder was** wird operiert? - **Harry.***

Harry – gefangen in der Zeit

Begleitmaterialien

The impersonal passive voice

If no-one or no-one in particular is named as the subject in a passive sentence, then it is called an impersonal passive statement. Such sentences frequently begin with the word "es" in place of a noun or personal pronoun. An impersonal passive statement can also begin with a different part of the sentence, in which case the "es" is omitted. Impersonal passive constructions are one of the rare instances in which a German sentence has no subject.

Examples:

Active: *Man arbeitet nicht mehr unter Tage. (oder: Wir/Sie arbeiten nicht mehr unter Tage.)*

Passive: **Es wird** nicht mehr unter Tage **gearbeitet**.

Unter Tage wird nicht mehr **gearbeitet**.

Active: *Wir suchen ein Bergwerk, in dem noch jemand arbeitet.*

Passive: *Wir suchen ein Bergwerk, in dem noch **gearbeitet wird**.*