The distinction between the active and passive voice is that the subject acts by means of the active voice verb, and the subject is acted on by means of the passive voice verb.

The extensive usage of the passive voice in research writing probably results from a thematic subject-focused pattern (the protein was isolated) rather than an agent-subject focused narrative pattern (we isolated the protein). Such thematic focus facilitates inter-sentence continuity, because the subject can consistently be the protein (or an equivalent) rather than we…we, which becomes monotonous and egotistical.

The examples of voice misagreement are organised first according to journal article section (Experimental, Contextual) and second according to voice misagreement (active or passive).

**Experimental sections**

**Part 1 – Materials and Methods section: Method**

**Example: Misagreement of active voice**

- Interviews focused on genetic, medical, and family history.

**Revision**

- Interviews were focused on genetic, medical, and family history.

**Notes**

The usage of the active voice phrasal verb focused on with an abstract inanimate subject is a common distraction classifiable as a personification. Revision involves conversion into the passive voice. A classic example of personification is this paper discusses.
### Part 2 – Materials and Methods section: materials

**Example: Misagreement of passive voice**

The system was consisted of six main features: user information, user profile management, query processor, SQL query generation, result refinement, and ontology management.

**Revision 1**

The system consisted of six main features: user information, user profile management, query processor, SQL query generation, result refinement, and ontology management.

**Revision 2**

The system comprised six main features: user information, user profile management, query processor, SQL query generation, result refinement, and ontology management.

**Notes**

Why does was consisted of sound awkward? Although consisted of is probably a phrasal transitive verb with the direct object six main features, usage of the passive voice is ungrammatical. In contrast, the active voice consisted of and comprised are grammatical.

### Part 3 – Results section: results statement

**Example: Misagreement of passive voice**

The concentration of DHA was increased from the maternal to foetal liver.

**Revision 1**

DHA concentration increased from the maternal to foetal liver.

**Revision 2**

There was an increased DHA concentration from the maternal to foetal liver.

**Notes**

In the Example, it appears that the authors were responsible for the increase. That is, there is confusion reading was increased as a passive verb phrase or as a linking verb + adjectival past participle subject complement. The passive verb denotes an external action; the linking verb + past participle adjectival denotes an observation.

In Revision 1, usage of increased involves an intransitive verb. In Revision 2, the existential somewhat wordy there is structure is used. The shift is also from a narrative to a descriptive format, a format befitting an existential observation, which is appropriate for the Results section.

### Contextual sections

#### Part 1 – Introduction section: Hypothesis

**Example: Misagreement of active voice**

β-Catenin may involve early liver development.

**Revision 1**

β-Catenin may be involved in early liver development.

### Schematised misagreement in voice - distractions and revisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active voice misagreement</th>
<th>Passive Voice Misagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials and Methods section:</strong> method (Experimental #1)*</td>
<td><strong>Materials and Methods section:</strong> method (Experimental #2)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews focused on genetic, medical, and family history.</td>
<td>The system was consisted of six main features: user information, user profile management, query processor, SQL query generation, result refinement, and ontology management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation: active → passive voice</td>
<td>Transformation: passive → active voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews were focused on genetic, medical, and family history.</td>
<td>The system consisted of six main features: user information, user profile management, query processor, SQL query generation, result refinement, and ontology management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: hypothesis (Contextual #1)*</td>
<td>Transformation: passive → descriptive pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β-Catenin may involve early liver development.</td>
<td>There was an increased DHA concentration from the maternal to foetal liver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation: active → passive voice</td>
<td>Transformation: narrative → descriptive pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β-Catenin may be involved in early liver development.</td>
<td>There was an increased DHA concentration from the maternal to foetal liver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement: inversion between subject and direct object</td>
<td>*The part number in the Experimental or Contextual section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early liver development may involve β-catenin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*S The part number in the Experimental or Contextual section