

**Lexical Passivization in
Arabic and English**

by

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this peper is to find evidence as to whether passivization should be treated as a lexical rule or as a syntactic rule. The data used in this paper is from Standard Arabic (SA). By comparing the Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) and the Relational Grammar (RG) treatments of passivization. I will ergue in this paper that SA provides evidence supporting the lexical treatment of passivization.

This evidence has to do with a process of word formation in SA that operates on the passivized form of the verb and changes it into an adjective. I will call this proocess "adjectival conversion" (AC). Given that the processes of word formation, according to the lixicalist hypothesis (Chomsky 1970), are considered lexical rules, one might infer that the process of AC is a lexical rule. And, given that lexical rules apply in the lexicon, the passivized verb form (i.e. the input

of the AC rule) must be available in the lexicon, so that the AC rule can apply. This means that the passivized verb form should be represented in the lexicon to feed the AC rule. It cannot be a consequence of syntactic passivization.

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More significantly, I will show that the AC rule in SA applies to intransitive constructions which do not passivize. Since intransitive verbs in SA do not passivize, the availability of the passivized forms of these verbs in the lexicon must be independent of passivization. Hence, the passive rule in SA, like the AC rule and other lexical processes, must operate on the passivized verb forms in the lexicon, and therefore it should be treated as a lexical rule. Thus, SA provides further evidence that passiveization should be treated lexically rather than syntactically.

Lexical Passivization in Arabic and English

Within the RG framework, passivization in SA is a syntactic process which can be briefly described as an advancement of "2" to "1".

Within the framework of LFG, passivization is treated as a lexical rule which can be simply stated as follows:¹

(subj.)-----> \emptyset /(by obj.)
(obj.)-----> (subj.)
V -----> V (Part)

This lexical rule of passive operates on lexical forms in the lexicon. In LFG terms, two lexical entries are associated with the predicate in (2), namely an active entry and a passive one. Both entries are related by the passive rule presented above. Consider those entries:

- 1- a. Kataba: V, "Kataba (subj., obj.)"
agent pat.

- b. Kutiba: V, (part), "Kataba (by obi) ,(subj.)"
agent pat.
(\emptyset)

The lexical treatment of passive might seem more advantageous, since relevant morphological changes are automatically addressed by the lexical rule. However,

Pst.

"The glass was broken by Ahmad."

- 3.d. Fataḥa Aḥmad-u lba:b-a
 open - Pst. A. - Nom. the door-Acc.
 "Ahmad opened the door.
- b. futiḥa lba:b-u (biw.Aḥmad-i)
 open-Pst. the door-Nom. by A. - Gen.
 passive
 "The door was opened by Ahmad."
- c. in-fataḥa lba:b-U (biw.Aḥmad-i)
 passive,open the door -Nom. by A. Gen.
 pst.
 "The door was opened by Ahmad."
- 4.a. Sakaba Aḥmad-u llaban - a
 pour out, Pst. A.-Nom. the milk-Acc.
 "Ahmad poured out the milk."
- b. Sukiba llaban-u (biw, Aḥmad-i)
 pour out the milk-Nom. by A. Gen.
 Pst. passive
 "The milk was poured out by Ahmad."
- c. in-sakaba llaban-u (biw-Aḥmad-i)
 passive-pour out the milk - Nom. by A. Gen.
 Pst.
 "The milk was poured out by Ahmad."

Now, compare the data in (2-4) above with (5-7) below:

- 5-a. ḡakara Aḥmad-u lgissat-a
 mention, pst A. - Nom. the story-ACC
 "Ahmad mentioned the story."
- b. ḡukirat ulgissat-u (biw.Aḥmad-i)
 mention, pst the story-Nom. by A. Gen.
 passive, fem.
 "The story was mentioned by Ahmad."
- c. *inḡakarāt ulgissat-u (biw. Aḥmad-i)
 passive-mention the story - Nom. by A. Gen.
 past. fem.
 "The story was mentioned 'by Ahmad."
- 6.a. Ṣaddaqa Aḥmad-u nnaba?-a
 believe, pst. A. Nom. the news-Acc.
 "Ahmad believed the news."
- b. Ṣuddiqa nnaba?-u (biw-Aḥmad-i)
 believe the news-Nom. by A. Gen.
 Pst. passive
 "The news was believed by Ahmad."
- c. *in-ṣaddaqa nnaba?-u (biw.Ahmad-i)
 passive-believe the news-Nom. by a Gen.
 past
 "The news was believed by Ahmad."

- 7.a. Faggala Aħmad-u šša:y-a
Prefer/like pst. A. - Nom. the tea - Acc.
"Ahmad preferred/liked the tea."
- b. Fuddila šša:y - u (biw. Aħmad-i)
prefer/like the - Nom. by A. - Gen.
pst, passive tea
"The tea was preferred/liked by Ahmad."
- c. *in-faggala šša:y-u (biw. Aħmad-i)
passive prefer/ the - Nom. by - A -Gen.
like, pst. tea
"The tea was preferred/liked by Ahmad."

The obvious question that arises, then, is: how to account for the distribution of passive allomorphy and free variation found in the preceding examples. A related task is to see if this phenomenon of passive variation helps in determining whether SA passive is best viewed as a syntactic or lexical process. In order to do so, I will classify transitive verbs in SA into two classes, depending on the semantic features of these verbs. I will call verbs such as those in (2-4) "Kasara verbs", where the object of such verbs necessarily undergoes a "change of state". (Fillmore, 1970). On the other hand, I will call verbs such as those in (5-7) "ḍakara verbs", where objects of such verbs do not necessarily undergo a "Change of state".² Thus, verbs will be marked as belonging to either "Kasara class" or "ḍakara class", where "Kasara verbs" allow for the variation "u--i

--- "in-", while "dakar verbs" allow only for the "u--i" passive pattern.

This means that in order to rule out the ungrammatical "in-" constructions like those in (5-7), one has to resort to lexical semantics. At first glance, this necessity of referring to lexical semantics in order to handle the phenomenon of passive variation in SA seems to motivate the treatment of passive as a lexical rule. The reason for this is that passivization in theories like LFG takes place in the lexical component of the grammar. Besides, the semantic properties of predicates (e.g. argument selection and semantic roles associated with arguments) are referred to in the lexicon. In theories like RG, on the other hand, the passive rule applies in the syntactic component without reference to the semantic properties of predicates.

However, this need for considering lexical semantics in order to account for passive variation in SA does not seem to be compelling evidence for treating passive lexically, rather than syntactically. The reason for this is that syntactic theories like RG could refer to the semantic properties of predicates in the lexicon, and still treat passive as a syntactic rule. Besides, the variations in (2c-4c) could be analyzed as inchoative, rather than passive variations. From this perspective, I will turn to another phenomenon that might present strong evidence supporting the treatment of passive as a lexical rule.

This phenomenon involves an instance of word - formation processes that operate on the passivized verb form as its input. The reason such instance would present strong evidence supporting the treatment of passive lexically is that word-formation processes, according to the lexicalist hypothesis, Chomsky (1970), are generally agreed to be accomplished by lexical rules. For instance, Chomsky (1970) rejected the position that nominals like Bill's decision to go are derived transformationally (i.e. syntactically) from S's like Bill decided to go; and he proposed, instead, that such nominals are generated by base rules (i.e. lexically).

The process of word formation that will be investigated here operates on the passivized verb form as its input, and changes it into an adjective. Thus, I will call this process "adjectival conversion" (AC). The data below illustrate this process. Verbs involved in this data are non - trilateral (i.e. each contains four, five, or six consonants). It should be noted here that the passive alternations mentioned before (i.e. "in- ~ u---i") are exclusively associated with perfective verbs. Passive alterations associated with imperfective verbs are "an- ~ u---a". Only the "u-----a" pattern is involved in the following data. Consider the following construction:

- 8.a. Y - ustaxdam - u 1-kita:b - u
imp. - use, Passive - Indic. the - book - Nom.

3, m.s.

"The book is/has been used."

b. ?al-kita:b-u l-m-ustaxdam-u
the - book - Nom. the - AP - use, Passive - Nom.
"The used book."

c. ?an i - kita - i ?al - m - ustaxdam - i
about the book Gen.the - AP - use, Passive - Gen.
"About the used book".

9.a. y-ustahdaθ- u nniḏa:m - u
Imp - innovative - Passive - Indic. the - System -
Nom.
"The system is innovated".

b. ?a - nniḏa:m - u 1 - m - ustahdaθ- u
the - system - Nom.the - AP - innovate, Passive -
Nom.
"The innovated system".

c. ?an - ?i-nniḏa:m - 1 - m - ustahdaθ- i
about the - system - Gen. the - AP - innovate -
Passive - Gen.
"About the innovated system"

10.a. y-ustahabb - u ha:ḏa 1 - mašru:b - u
Imp. - prefer, this the - drink - Nom.
Passive - Indic.
3, m.s.
"This drink is/has been preferred."

- b. ha:da 1 - mašru:b - u 1 - m - ustahabb - u
 this the - drink - Nom. the-AP- prefer, Passive-
 Nom.

"This preferred drink."

- c. ʔan ha:da 1 - masru:b - i 1 - m - ustahabb - i
 about this the - drink - Gen. the -AP-prefer, Passive-
 Gen.

"About this preferred drink"

The data in (8-10) illustrate the AC of the Passivized verb stem. The underlined elements in (8a-10a) are the passivized verbs, while the underlined elements in (8b-10b) are the derived adjectives. Each of the passivized verbs in (8a-10a) consists of three elements: the imperfective prefix y-, the passivized verb stem, and the marker of the indicative mood -u. On the other hand, each of the derived adjectives in (8b-10b) consists of four elements: the definite article ʔal (optionally, depending on its presence in the modified nominal), the adjectival prefix m-, the passivized verb stem, and the marker for the nominative case -u. My assumption here is that the lexical rule derives the adjectival form from the passivized verb stem by substituting the adjectival prefix m- for the imperfective prefix y-.

The question, then, is: what is the empirical evidence that the underlined derived elements in (8b-10b) are adjectives in SA? The answer is quite simple. Adjectives in SA must: (a) agree in case, number, gender, and definiteness with the nouns they modify, and (b) follow

the nouns they modify, as for as the linear order is concerned, Now, considering the underlined derived elements in (8b-10b), one notes that each of these elements modifies the noun that used to be the subject of the passivized verb, before the application of the adjectival conversion rule. It is evident that the derived element agrees with the noun it modifies in case, number, gender, and definiteness. In (8c-10c), the modified noun is in the genitive case, by virtue of being the object of a preposition; accordingly, the derived adjective is in the genitive case. On the other hand, the derived element always follows the modified noun in linear order. Thus, the derived elements in (8b-10b) must be adjectival forms, not verbal forms.

In sum, the data in (8-10), and the discussion that followed show that the passivized verb stem-based on the lexicalist hypothesis above - is operated on by a lexical process of word-formation. This lexical process takes the passivized verb stem as its input, and converts it into an adjective, as shown above. This means that the passivized verb stem must be represented in the lexical component of the grammar. It cannot be considered as a consequence of syntactic passivization, since syntactic processes cannot feed lexical derivational processes. Stated differently, the AC rule in SA stipulates that the passivized verb stem must be represented in the lexicon. Thus, the passivized verb stem cannot be considered as a consequence of syntactic passivization. Based on this evidence, one can conclude

an adjective, just as it operates on the passivized form of intransitive verbs in (8-10). It is significant to note here that the passivized form of the intransitive verbs in (11-13) is not a morphological consequence of syntactic passivization as claimed in RG, since intransitive constructions such as those in (11-13) do not passivize in the first place. Rather, the passivized forms of intransitive verbs must be represented in the lexicon, so that the lexical AC rule operates on them.

To conclude, the lexical AC rule in SA operates on passivized forms of both transitive and intransitive verbs (8-10 and 11-13, respectively). Since the AC rule is a lexical derivational process, the passivized forms of both transitive and intransitive verbs must be represented in the lexicon, so that the AC rule can apply. It follows, then, that the passive rule in SA - like the AC rule and other lexical processes - must operate on the passivized verb stem in the lexicon, and consequently it should be treated as a lexical rule. Thus, SA provides strong evidence that passivization should be treated lexically, rather than syntactically.

FOOTNOTES

* I would like to thank farrell Ackerman for his helpful comments on this paper.

1. With respect to formalism here, I mostly relied

on J.Bresnar(1982).

2. This is Just a tentative account of the semantics of the verbs involved here, since the investigation of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.
3. According to this analysis, "Kasara" verbs behave like such English verbs as break, freeze, melt....

e.g. John $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{broke} \\ \text{froze} \\ \text{melted} \end{array} \right\} X \Rightarrow X \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{broke} \\ \text{froze} \\ \text{melted} \end{array} \right\}$

In other words, such verbs allow for causative and inchoative usages in both SA and English. The only difference is that inchoativization in SA is morphologically marked, while in English it is not.

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