

Passive morphology in Classical and Modern Arabic and English

Peter Hallman, University of California, Los Angeles

This study compares passivization in Classical Arabic (CA), modern Lebanese Arabic (LA) and English. LA exhibits a distinction between valency-reducing morphology and anti-agentivity morphology, both of which appear in the passive, whereas passivization in CA is monomorphemic. Though passivization in English is usually analyzed along the lines of CA, it is shown that the English passive is actually like LA.

Passivization in CA is expressed through alteration of the vowel melody of a verb, as in the chart below. *f*, *9* and *l* represent the three radicals of any tri-literal root. The leftmost column is a very rough guide to the meanings of the derived forms. Inchoative verbs cannot be passivized, whence the gaps in the last row. The shaded forms do not exist in LA (i.e. all the passives except the passive participle of the base).

(1)	perfective active	perfective passive	imperfective active	imperfective passive	active participle	passive participle
base	fa9al	fu9il	yaf9al	yuf9al	faa9il	maf9uul
causative	fa99al	fu99il	yufa99il	yufa99al	mufa99il	mufa99al
reciprocal	faa9al	fuu9il	yufaa9il	yufaa9al	mufaa9il	mufaa9al
causative	'af9al	'uf9il	yuf9il	yuf9al	muf9il	muf9al
anti-caus.	tafa99al	tufu99il	yatafa99al	yutafa99al	mutafa99il	mutafa99al
anti-recip.	tafaa9al	tufuu9il	yatafaa9al	yutafaa9al	mutafaa9il	mutafaa9al
anti-caus.	'infa9al	'unfu9il	yanfa9il	yunfa9al	munfa9il	munfa9al
reflexive	'ifta9al	'uftu9il	yafta9il	yufta9al	mufta9il	mufta9al
stative	'istaf9al	'ustuf9il	yastaf9il	yustaf9al	mustaf9il	mustaf9al
inchoative	'if9all		yaf9all		muf9all	

The non-base participles are formed from the imperfective by replacing the imperfective prefix *yu/ya-* with *mu-*. The absence of the imperfective passive in LA therefore explains the absence of the passive participles derived from it. The absence of the imperfective and perfective passive, on the other hand, seems to be a lexical gap. The CA passivizing morpheme whose phonological reflex is a vowel melody alteration has been lost in LA.

Instead, LA expresses the passive through *aux + passive participle* structures. Passive participles come in several forms. One form is the CA *maf9uul* participle, which LA has retained. Note that this form differs prosodically from the corresponding active participle in the heaviness of the final syllable. In fact, since final consonants are extrametrical in Arabic (McCarthy and Prince (1990)), the only forms in the chart above that end in a heavy syllable are *maf9uul* and the inchoatives. Subjects of both these forms are non-agents.

Certain base forms do not fit into the *maf9uul* template due to prosodic restrictions. For example, *w* cannot precede the vowel *u*, whence **mabwuus* (from *bewes* (*kiss*)) and **mashwuuf* (from *shewef* (*see*)) are ill formed. But the participles *minbees* and *minsheef* exist with the passive signification. These are derived with the anti-causative (valency reducing) prefix *n-* and the participial prefix for derived verbs *m-* and the application of the regular process of glide deletion between short vowels. The resulting form, like the *maf9uul* forms and inchoatives, is intransitive, non-agentive and ends in a heavy syllable.

Inherently intransitive verbs never appear in the *maf9uul* or *minfeel* forms. However, non-agentive intransitives often have an adjectival counterpart with the suffix *-een*. E.g. *xewit* (*become crazy*) --> *xewteen* (*crazy*), *za9il* (*become sad*) --> *za9leen* (*sad*), *xarib* (*become destroyed*) --> *xirbeen* (*destroyed*), etc. These adjectives are intransitive and, like *maf9uul*, *minfeel* and the inchoatives, are non-agentive and end in a heavy syllable.

The cooccurrence of the forms *maf9uul*, *minfeel*, *fi9leen* and inchoative 'if9all in the prosodic structure [. . . heavy]_{Word} correlates with intransitivity and non-agentivity, two salient properties of passivization. Note though that it does not necessarily correlate with valency reduction, since *-een* may attach to intransitive predicates preserving their only argument. McCarthy and Prince (1986) argue that pieces of prosodic structure may correlate with grammatical and semantic properties. In this light, the data above implicate the following generalization:

- (2) Predicates that end in a heavy syllable are intransitive and non-agentive.

This principle is validated not only by the data discussed above but by two additional cases, namely the templates *fa9iil* and *fa9l*. Both templates derive stative adjectives, e.g. *Ha'iir* (*despicable*), *mariiD* (*sick*), *jadiid* (*new*), etc., *Helw* (*pretty*), *Sa9b* (*difficult*), etc. These forms are intransitive and non-agentive, fulfilling the implication in (2).

Predicative words that do not end in a heavy syllable and are transitive and/or agentive are numerous, e.g. *keteb* (*write*) --> *keetib* (*writing*), 'etel (*kill*) --> 'eetil (*killing*), but the only way these roots can occur in templates with a heavy final syllable is if they bear de-transitivizing morphology and the agent is unexpressed, fulfilling (2) (viz. *maktuub* (*written*) and *ma'tuul* (*killed*)). There are no forms like **katiib*, **katb*, etc. that license an agent, i.e. that mean *writing*. The fact that the generalization extends to morphologically basic forms such as *Sa9b* (*difficult*), etc. and non-passive complex forms like *xewteen* (*crazy*) indicates that the morphemic expression of intransitivity/non-agentivity--in this case ending in a heavy syllable--can be independent of passivization/valency reduction--in this case the prefixes *ma-* (in *maf9uul*) and *n-* (in *minfeel*).

But this distinction between morphology that expresses intransitivity/non-agentivity and valency-reducing morphology is common cross-linguistically. For example, the English 'passive' participle ending *-ed* (with allomorph *-en* and others) is not valency reducing, as incorrectly analysed in Jaeggli (1986) and other works. I.e., Jaeggli analyses *-ed* as being identical to the CA passive morpheme: it applies to a verb and forms its passive. But passivization in English is in fact more like passivization in LA, since *-ed* does not correlate necessarily with valency reduction. For example, it attaches to intransitive unaccusatives without absorbing the argument (*the arrived passengers*, *the escaped prisoners*, *the melted ice*), and also to transitives without absorbing the external argument in contexts such as the perfective aspect (*John has written a book*). The *-ed* ending occurs in intransitive non-agentive contexts (*written* is predicated of *a book* in *John has written a book*), like the LA heavy final syllable, and denotes the result of the verb it attaches to. The passive morpheme is expressed differently. It is null in English, as corroborated by the non-overtness of passive morphology in passive nominalizations (*the Romans' destruction of the city* --> *the destruction of the city by the Romans*). The null passive morpheme and *-ed* cooccur in true passive expressions like *The book was written*.

English is therefore like LA and not like CA in the manner in which passives are formed. English and LA differ in that English expresses through a verbal suffix what LA expresses through a principle relating a prosodic property to a semantic property, but, in fact, just such a difference is expected in light of the fact that derivational morphology is largely synthetic in English and templatic in Arabic.

References:

- Jaeggli, O. (1986) "Passive," *Linguistic Inquiry* 17, 587-622.
 McCarthy, J., and A. Prince (1986) "Prosodic Morphology," Ms., University of Massachusetts Amherst and Brandeis University .
 McCarthy, J., and A. Prince (1990) "Prosodic Morphology and Templatic Morphology," in M. Eid and J. McCarthy, eds., *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics II: Papers from the Second Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics*, 1-54, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam.