A Minimalist Approach to Agentive Passive in Standard Arabic

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Abstract: **In this paper, we claim that Standard Arabic (SA henceforth) has agentive passive. We also claim that we can extend the Chomskian approach of Minimalism that we introduce in Ayyat et.al (2013) to derive short passive to agentive passive in standard Arabic. We assume that a Voice° with a valued (-active) feature should be introduced with the passive infex as its specifier to the derivation. Moreover, we assume that verbs enter the derivation with unvalued voice feature and be involved in a probe-goal syntactic relationship with Voice°. This relationship motivates the verb to move up for two reasons: The first is to check its unvalued voice feature. The second is to pick up the passive infex from the Voice° and moves up to TP to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP henceforth) and derive a VSO sentence. Three approaches to passive are discussed: Collins` Smuggling Approach (2005), Gehrke and Grillo`s Approach (2009) and Muller`s Cut and Merge Approach (2014). We claim that DPs in agentive passive originate in different positions from the active sentence. This goes in line with Chomsky`s Principles and Parameters and argues against Collins` Smuggling Approach in which DPs are generated in the same positions of the active sentence.**

Keywords: **Agentive passive, Minimalist Syntax, Standard Arabic, Voice.**

1. INTRODUCTION

SA has been the core of many linguistic studies as being considered as the formal language of many countries in the Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, and the north of Africa. Its rich phonological , morphological and syntactic system triggers many linguists to study it and dig deeply in its linguistic system (Ryding,2005). SA has its importance from its decentness from the language of the Holy Quran. It is worth mentioning that both SA and the language of the Holly Quran have many differences which we are not going to discuss in this paper. One of the linguistic characteristics which distinguish SA is the Voice which can be expressed morphologically in the prosodic tier of a perfective verb in which the melody tier changes to (u,i) in the passive form. Whereas, in an imperfective verb, the melody tier changes to (u,a). The following two examples manifest the morphological changes occurring on the passive verb:

(1)   Perfective: kasara :   kusira

                         break   was-broken

(2)   Imperfective: yaksir :   yuksar

                         To break   to be broken

Maleej (1999) names this process infixation in which the passive morphemes (u.i) and (u,a) are inserted in the root of the verb /k s r/ to change it to passive. This is to conclude that passive voice process is a morphological process on the word level.

On the syntactic level, the early Arab grammarians maintain that passivization in SA in addition to its morphological characteristics on the verbs, it also has an influence on the sentence level and especially on the distribution of the DPs

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within the passivized sentence. They describe the process as the nomination of the object to be the subject of the passive sentence and gains a default nominative case. They also claim that the verb loses its ability to assign accusative case. This definition goes in line with Chomsky`s analysis to the passive in SA (1986) that passivization in SA is a morphosyntactic process. The following two sentences will explain the process of passivization in SA:

(1) Active: kasra   ?al-walad-u   ?al-zudʒadʒa-t-a

broke-sg m   the-boy-Nom m   the-bottle-f- Acc

The boy broke the bottle.

(2) Passive   kusira-t   ?al-zudʒadʒat-u

broke-passive sg fem   the-bottle-Nom fem

The bottle was broken.

Moreover, Early Arab grammarians claim that the real subject of the active sentence is NOT lexicalized in the passive sentence. Thus SA has no Agentive Passive. Moreover, Saad (1982) claims that SA has no agentive passive nor agentive particle that can be used to lexicalize the agent in the passive clause. Also, Maleej (1999) claims that agentive passive sentences are the echo of their English language counterparts. They claim that a sentence like (3) is not grammatical in SA:

(3)   qutila   ?al-walad-u   biwasiTat-i   ?al-dʒayŝ-i

killed-passive   the-boy-Nom m   by-mediation-Dat   the-soldiers-Gen

The boy was killed by the soldiers .

On the other hand , Badawi et.al (2004) claims that SA has agentive passive . He claims that the agent is lexicalized in the passive sentence using one of the following particles:

(4) min qibali `on the part of`

kutiba   ?ad-dars-u   min qibali   ?al-mudarris-i

wrote-passive 3sg m   the-lesson-Nom m   on part of   the-teacher-Gen

The lesson was written by the teacher.

(5) biwaSiTati `by means of`

durriba   ?al-fareeq-u   biwasiTati   ?al-mudarrib-i

trained-passive 3sg m   the-team-Nom m   by means of   the-coach-Gen

The team was trained by the coach.

(6) min ʒdanibi `from the side of`

rufiDat   ?al-waraqat-u   min ʒdanibi   ?al-muwaÐÐaf-i

rejected-passive 3sg f   the-paper-Nom f   from the side of   the-officer-Gen

The paper was rejected by the officer.

(7)ʕala yadi ` by the hand of`

qutila   ?al-walad-u   ʕala yadi   ?aŝŝurTat-i

killed-passive 3sg m   the-boy-Nom m   by the hand of   the-police-Gen

The boy was killed by the police

(8) min Tarafi `on the part of`

sudʒdʒila   ?al-hadaf-u   min Tarafi   ?al-laʕib-i

scored-passive 3sg m   the-goal-Nom m   on the part of   the- player-Gen

The goal was scored by the player.

(9) bi `by`

kutibat	ʔar-resalat-u	bi-l-qalam-i
wrote-passive 3sg f	the-letter-Nom f	by-the-pen-Gen

The letter was written by the pen.

It is worth mentioning that sentences(4-9) clearly appear in the language of journalism nowadays and they are acceptable as well as fully understandable by the native speakers of SA.

Another evidence which we would like to draw for the existence of agentive passive in SA is that it highly appears in the language of the Holy Quraan. Nofal (2011) maintains that some Quran passive clauses include an overt agent. As we mentioned earlier that SA is the decentness of the language of Quran. Therefore, it is not peculiar to find agentive passive in SA. The following verse shows the agentive passive in the Holy Quran:

(10)	ittabiᶜ	ma	yuHa	ilay-ka	min- rabbika	(Younis,221)
	follow	what	taught	to- you	by –your Lord	

"follow what thou art taught by inspiration from thy Lord"

Nofal (2011) gives three principles to the appearance of the agentive passive in the Holy Quran:

1- To present new information at the end of the clause. This principle is called the information-flow principle which means that if we look at an agentive passive sentence and its discourse context, we can see the new information given at the end of it.

2- Long and complex elements are placed at the end of an agentive passive clause. This principle is called the weight principle. This technique helps the hearer to get the message easily.

3- The agentive passive is used to shed the light on the topic or theme of the current discourse. Nofal calls this the end-focus principle. New information is given at the end of the clause.

Therefore, in this paper we claim that agentive passive appears in SA.

2. APPROACHES TO AGENTIVE PASSIVE

Collins`s Smuggling Approach (2005):

Collins (2005) introduces the notion of smuggling to derive an agentive sentence as the following example:

(11) The house was robbed by the thief

Collins claims that the arguments in this sentence, *the house and the theif*, originate in the same positions as they appear in the active sentence. In this analysis, Collins follows Chmosky`s (1957) *Syntactic Structures* in which Chomsky claims that there is no difference between the situ of arguments in the active sentence as well as the passive sentence. Also, Collins argues that this way of origination goes in line with Baker`s (1989) UTAH in which Baker claims that arguments originate in the positions that allow them to gain their thematic rules whether the sentence is in active or passive. Collins define Smuggling in syntax as:

A constituent like YP that contains XP which is NOT accessible to Z because of the presence of W which intervenes any syntactic operation to occur between Z and XP. If YP moves to a position c-commanding W, it is said that YP smuggles XP past W. In other words, Collins claims that the DP the house originates internally and makes a PartP with *was robbed*, whereas, the PP *by the thief* originates externally to PartP *was robbed the house*. The PartP was *robbed the house* smuggles the DP *the house* past the PP *by the thief* to make it closer to TP and hence triggers the movement of *the house* to Spec TP .Therefore, *the house* will satisfy the EPP feature in T° and correctly the sentence *The house was robbed by the thief* is derived.

Liter (2013) offers a critical analysis to Collins` Smuggling Approach in which he discusses the pros and cons of this approach. Liter maintains that the Smuggling Approach successfully derives sentences that contain *Dative*

Shift(constructions with double complements) without any syntactic problem. For Liter, a sentence like (12) is simply derived by the Smuggling Approach:

(12) Mary was given the gift by John.

Liter (2013) claims that Collins` Approach successfully accounts for the derivation of (12) . He claims that the head movement of *gave* pied-pipes *Mary*, smuggling it past *John* where *Mary* then moves to {spec, TP} to satisfy the EPP feature.

On the other hand, Liter (2013) proposes a point of weakness that the Smuggling Approach is deeply suffering from. He claims that the *by-phrase* seems to form a constituent and Collins clearly refuses this. Liter (2013) discusses three syntactic cases in which he maintains that the *by-phrase* forms a constituent. The first case is the NP shift as in (13-14) :

(13) They were attacked by the plane on Thursday.

(14) *They were attacked by on Thursday the plane.

The second case is coordinating structures as (15-16) show:

(15) The book was written by John and Bill.

(16) The book was written by John and by Bill.

  Sentences (13-15-16) prove that the *by-phrase* is a constituent. The third case is movement. Liter maintains that Collins (2005) argues that pied-piping occurs in cases where *by-phrases* are fronted as in (17):

(17) By whom was the car fixed?

Collins claims that this movement occurs based on a stylistic rule which states:

If DP undergoes movement to [Spec,CP], it can optionally pied-pipe a preceding preposition.

Liter maintains that the constituency of *by-phrase* poses a problem for Collins` Smuggling Approach since how a constituent like PP would not move to [Spec,TP] and satisfy the EPP feature in agentive passive sentence. We agree with Liter`s points that what would prohibit a PP from moving to [Spec, TP] and wrongfully deriving (18):

(18) * By Ahmed was written the book.

Moerover, we believe that Collins` Smuggling Approach is NOT clear, he does not clearly show the nature of smuggling in Syntax. Also, Collins` approach is NOT purely minimalist in the sense he gives more rules for a theory that calls for economy. In addition, the smuggling approach is not suitable for SA as we have explained that SA passivization is a morphosyntactic process. Thus, Collins` Approach will not successfully account for a language like Arabic in which the V moves to T° to satisfy the EPP feature and successfully derive a VSO sentence.

Gehrke and Grillo`s Approach (2009):

Gehrke and Grillo (2009) introduce a new approach to deal with passivization phenomenon in English in which they pay their attention on the predicate structure rather than the arguments. To them, a predicate is a complex event which composes the core of passive constructions. They maintain that such an assumption can simply help determine which kind of a predicate is allowed to passivize. Consequently, passivization is an operation on an event-predicate structure- rather than argument structure.

 Gehrke and Grillo (2009) criticize three important previous analyses which dealt with the same phenomenon. These analyses, according to them, consider passivization as a transition on the structure of DPs. For instance, Baker et al. (1989) propose that the –en morpheme is attached to IP/TP and gets lowered to V to "absorb" case assignment. Thus, the internal argument raises to get its theta role according to UTAH. Gehrke and Grillo claim that Baker et al.`s analysis is inadequate since it does not distinguish between active participle morphemes and passive ones. Moreover, they argue against Jaeggli (1986) who posits a "fairly complex" process of theta assignment in passive constructions. This assumption has two different ways in active and passive sentences making it unsuitable to adopt with regard to this phenomenon, according to Gehrke and Grillo. In addition to the previous analyses, Gehrke and Grillo find that Collins` (2005) smuggling approach which fronts a vp with an internal argument inside to get it closer to [Spec, T] and thus can

satisfy the EPP feature rather problematic. Following Baker`s UTAH, Collins claims that the *by phrase* of the passive sentence originates in [Spec, v] and the surface subject originates in [Spec, V]. Gehrke and Grillo raise doubts about the ability of this approach to derive existential passive constructions such as "*There was a Saubian killed.*" Also, they maintain that Collins does not give a straightforward definition to the nature of smuggling in syntax.

Their proposed analysis is based on the fact that predicates which are able to successfully passivize have a complex structure of two sub events. The first one they call the CAUSE sub event and carries the external DP. The second one they call the BECOME sub event and carries the internal DP. Additionally they assume a VoiceP carrying two features; the first feature is discourse-related which chooses the suitable sub event to be fronted and the second feature is "quantificational" making the next phase more readable. These two features trigger the movement of the BECOME VP to its specifier and thus internal DP has its freedom to remain in situ in existential passive constructions or raise to [Spec, T] to check the EPP feature. Moreover, Gehrke and Grillo (2009) describe VoiceP as "responsible for grounding the event time in a particular way". They also maintain that the presence of this VoiceP is obligatory in active sentences. Yet, they do not show whether should it have the same features or it should have new ones to make it more suitable to active sentences.

Empirical evidence to their approach is brought up to validate its adequacy. For example, they maintain that only transitive predicates that contain BECOME sub event can passivize such as in (19) and (20)

(19) The antelope was killed by the lion.

(20) * Two kilos were weighed by this lap top.

Also, their evidence is drawn from the ungrammaticality of preposition stranding in constructions such as (21) and (22):

(21) * The argument was summed by the coach up.

(22) The argument was summed up by the coach

This shows that the whole VP is fronted to [Spec, Voic]. Additionally, their approach gives an empirical evidence to Stative verbs which can passivize such as *know* and *surprise* because they do contain BECOME sub event, whereas Stative verbs such as *appeal* cannot passivize because no BECOME sub event is involved.

To conclude, although what Gehrke and Grillo (2009) have done is valid, their approach gives a rather complicated analysis to passivization phenomenon. It also increases the number of VPs in a theory which calls for economy. We might find verbs with more than two sub events in a language and thus intricate analysis is needed. For instance, the semantics of Arabic verbs are really complicated so making it very difficult to adopt this approach. What we are looking for is a more adequate, economical and simpler analysis that can account for deriving agentive passives in SA.

Muller`s Cut and Merge Approach (2014):

Muller (2014) proposes a new approach to derive stacked passive in German as in (23):

(23) Die daten wurden nackt analysiert.

The data were naked analyzed

He claims that an operation which is opposite to Merge should appear in the syntax and he calls this operation Cut or Slice, He maintains the Merge adds elements to the syntactic tree in the derivation of the sentence. Also, he asserts that an operation like Cut removes elements from the derivation of the sentence. Thus he claims that the subject of the active sentence has a short life cycle in the derivation of the passive sentence in which it appears in the derivation for a short time and disappears. Thus, it will not prevent the movement of the internal argument, *the object* to [Spec, TP] and therefore there is no violation to Extension Condition (Chomsky 1995). To simplify the Cut process, Muller claims that *Cut* is also a driven building feature that can be added to the following features:

- Merge: [•D•]

- Probe: [*F]

According to Muller, the Cut operation can be added to the above operations as:

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- Cut : [-D-]

So, Muller claims that a Voice° enters the derivation with two features, the first one is [•D•] and the second one is [- D-]. The internal argument satisfies the Merge feature and the external argument satisfies the Cut feature and thus disappears from the derivation of the passive sentence and consequently the internal argument which is *the object* in the active sentence gets closer to [Spec, TP] and moves to it to satisfy the EPP feature.

Although what Muller introduces to the operation of passivation is valuable to German which has an optional movement of the subject in the active constructions, it is still adding another operation to a theory that calls for economy. Moreover, Muller`s approach is suitable for German and other languages that have Stacked passives like Turkish (see Murphy ,2014 for an analysis of Stacked passives in Turkish within the Cut and merge approach) we do not think that it suits the process of passivization in SA which is completely different from the passive in German and Turkish. What we are for is an economic approach that is Minimalist in its nature and suits the morph syntactic process of passivation in SA. And this is what we are going to discuss in the following section.
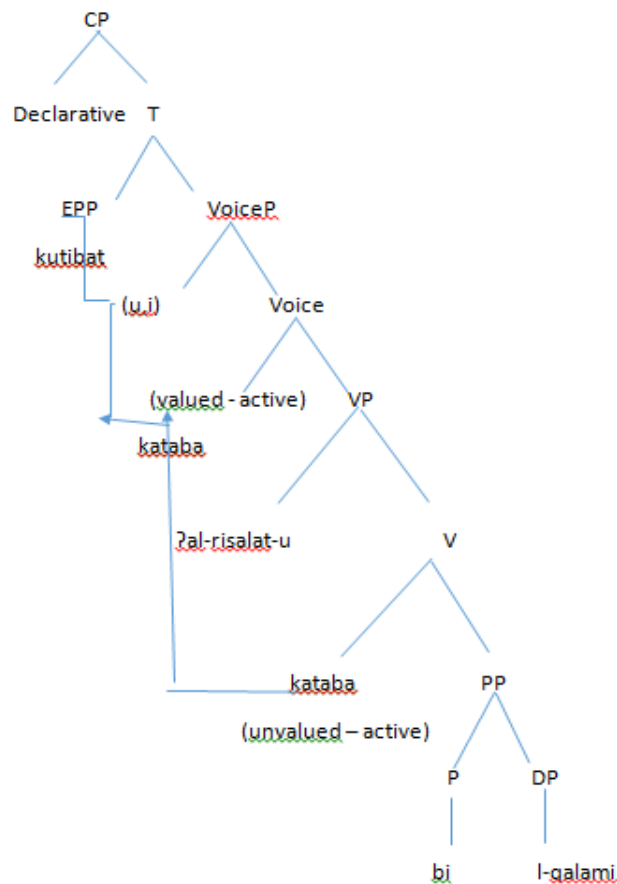
3. ANALYSIS

In this section, we extend the approach we introduce in Ayyat et.al (2013) to derive short passive to derive agentive passive in SA. We assume that an affixal Voice °with a valued voice feature (+/- active) enters the derivation. In other words, if the sentence is passive, a Voice ° which carries a (- active) valued feature should be introduced. To make this approach suitable to SA, we assume that the Voice °has the infex (u-i) for perfective verbs or (u-a) for imperfective verbs as its specifier. Moreover, we assume that verbs enter the derivation with their basic form and with unvalued (+/- active) feature. For instance, if the sentence is active, the verb enters the derivation with a (+active) unvalued feature. On the other hand, if the sentence is passive, the verb enters the derivation with a (- active) unvalued feature. Consequently, the verb enters in a probe-goal syntactic relationship with the Voice°in order to value its (-active) feature in passive sentences. This syntactic relationship triggers the verb to move up to Voice° for two reasons. First, to value its (-active) feature. Second, to pick up the passive infex which is in the specifier, Voice°. Then, the verb in a VSO sentence moves up to TP to satisfy the EPP feature. It is worth mentioning here that the DPs enter the derivation in a passive sentence similar to what Chomsky has in Principles and Parameters in which he claims that DPs originate in different positions from the active sentence. Thus, we argue against Collins (2005) , Gehrek and Grillo (2009) and Muller (2014) that DPs originate in passive sentences in the same positions to their active sentences counterparts .Thus , there is no need to an extra vague process like smuggling to occur in a theory that calls for economy.

Now , let's apply our approach on (24) ,an agentive passive sentence, and see how the derivation will merge according to our approach:

(24)   kutibat   ʔal-risalat-u   bi-l-qalam-i

         wrote-passive 3sg f   the-letter Nom f   by-the-pen-Gen

         The letter was written by the pen.

The Dp *l-qalam* enters the derivation in the internal position to the verb *kataba*. Whereas the Dp *ʔal-resalat* enters the derivation externally as its surface subject. Then, the verb enters the derivation on its base form with unvalued (-active) feature. The DP *l-qalam* joins the *bi* (by) particle to form a PP *bi-l-qalami*. Then the PP merges with V *kataba* to form a V. After that, the DP *ʔal-resalat* merges with the V to form a VP. As the sentence is passive, a Voice° with a (-active) valued feature is introduced to the derivation and merges with the VP. This Voice° enters in a probe-goal syntactic relationship with the verb *kataba*. Thus, it triggers the verb to move up to Voice° for two reasons, First to satisfy the unvalued (-active) feature carried by the verb. Second, to pick up the passive infex (u-i) in[Spec, Voice]. Then, a T° merges with VoiceP to form a TP. This T carries unvalued EPP feature. Since (24) is a VSO sentence, the V *kutibat* moves up to T° to satisfy the EPP feature in T° . Finally, a CP enters the derivation with a declarative force feature marking the sentence as declarative. The following tree structure will show the mechanism of deriving the sentence above:

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It is worth mentioning that in an SVO sentence like (25) :

(25) ʔal-risalat-u   kutibat   bi-l-qalam-i

   The-letter Nom f   wrote-passive 2sg f   by-the-pen Gen mas

   The letter was written by the pen.

The DP ʔal-risalat-u moves up to [Spec, TP] to satisfy the EPP feature and thus an SVO sentence is derived.

4.   CONCLUSION

As it has been seen, the approach that we are following is successfully deriving an agentive passive in SA. Moreover, the approach is purely minimalist by its nature and expresses the nature of passivization in SA by introducing a Voice°with a valued (-active) feature and the infex (u,i) or (u,a) as its specifier to be picked up by the verb. Thus, we believe that this approach can be also extended to other contexts to passives in SA such as prepositional passives.

APPENDIX- A

Symbols of Standard Arabic Sounds:

1-   Consonants:

ʔ   voiceless glottal stop   dʒ   voiced alveolar affricate

b   voiced bilabial stop   H   voiceless pharyngeal fricative

t voiceless dental stop   x   voiceless velar fricative

θ voiceless dental fricative   d   voiced dental stop

ð	voiced dental fricative	ġ	voiced uvular fricative
r	voiced alveolar trill	f	voiceless labiodental fricative
z	voiced alveolar fricative	q	voiceless uvular stop
s	voiceless alveolar fricative	k	voiceless velar stop
š	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	l	voiced alveolar lateral
S	voiceless emphatic alveolar fricative	m	voiced bilabial nasal
D	voiced emphatic alveolar fricative	n	voiced alveolar nasal
T	voiceless emphatic dental stop	h	voiceless glottal fricative
Ð	voiced emphatic inerdental fricative	w	voiced labio-velar glide
ᶜ	voiced pharyngeal fricative	y	voiced palatal glide

2- Vowels:

Short vowels: *long vowels*

i high front unrounded   ii   high front unrounded

a low unrounded   aa low unrounded

u high back unrounded   uu high back unrounded

(a and aa are pronounced front or central according to their adjacent consonants)

3-Other Necessary Abbreviations:

1-Nominative: Nom   2-Accusative: Acc

3-Genitive: Gen   4-Dative: Dat

5-Singular: sg   6- Plural: pl

7- Masculine: mas   8- Feminine: fem

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