A Pragmatic Study of Using Passive Structures in Arabic with Reference to their Realizations in English

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Abstract

Passive structures are commonly used in Arabic and English. This study sheds lights on the pragmatic meaning of using passive structures in the Glorious Quran with reference to their translations. The use of passive structure has obvious pragmatic meaning in Arabic rather than in English. This pragmatic meaning differs from context to another. The addressee needs to have a great linguistic competence, and needs be careful to interpret the hidden meaning of such structures. Arabic differs from English, the pragmatic meaning of using these structures are not identical in the two languages.

Keywords: pragmatics, passive structures, meaning, context

1. Introduction:

Using passive structure in Arabic has many purposes. It is not easy to specify the intended meanings. There are specific reasons of using such a structure. This paper focuses on the pragmatic meaning of using these structures in the Glorious Quran in addition to reference to their translations into English. These translations are going to be investigated to show whether they give the same pragmatic meaning that exist in Arabic or not especially that the translators face several different problems in translating such texts. Concerning the analyzed samples, they are of the Glorious Quran i.e. Islamic texts, and "the Glorious Qur'ān" has certain characteristics: it is sacred texts, it cannot be translated literally and it is hard to choose the convenient translation because of the variation of interpretations.

2. Procedures:

The procedures of this study are:

1. Collecting data:

    Data are collected from different Ayas of the Glorious Qur'ān with reference to their translations by using adopted translations which are Al-Hilali and Khan translation (2011) and Arberry (2003).

2. Analyzing data according to pragmatic level in Arabic texts with reference to their translations in English.

    Finding the pragmatic meaning of using passive structures in Arabic with reference to their translations in English is the main concern of this study. The adopted method of analysis is analytical and descriptive one. The collected samples are of the Glorious Quran with reference their translations in English. The aim of this type of analysis is to show the similarities and differences in the pragmatic meaning of Arabic and English texts. These samples (Quranic Ayas) are chosen intentionally, they are standard type of the Arabic text.

3. Pragmatics:

The central topics of linguistics is pragmatics. Yule (1996:3) says that pragmatics is related to the study of meaning as communicated by an addresser and interpreted by an addressee. Whereas Fromkinet.al (2003:207) mention that pragmatics is mainly concerned with

interpretation of linguistics meaning in context. There are two kinds of contexts, the first one is linguistic context while the second kind is situational context.

pragmatics is based on the context of use, situation, etc., the interpretation exceeds the literal meaning towards an explanation of what an addresser tries to convey and finally the implicit meanings (propositions) this utterance contains.

4. Pragmatics and Context :

Linguists emphasize that language must perform its functions within an environment "context". So, what does the term context mean?

The term "context" is used to refer to the environment in which language is used. Its importance can be noticed in determining the appropriateness of the utterance based on linguistic and non- linguistic rules. It can be considered as textual elements which govern a particular utterance and as circumstances surrounding particular situational events (Stranzy , 2005 :274) .

Cook (2003:51) sheds light on the relationship between pragmatics and context. He says that pragmatics studies show how language is used and how language is integrated in specific context. In such a way , meaning can be changed from one context into another.

on the other hand, Brown and Yule (1983:35) indicate that context is considered as the core of pragmatics to arrive at the intended meaning of utterances. In such a way , the pragmatist depends upon background knowledge of the physical and social world as well as the knowledge of the time and place. Further , Brown and Yule state that addresser's meaning depends upon assumptions of information shared by addressee. i.e. the addresser constructs the linguistic message and implies a meaning while the addressee infers that meaning.

5. Passive in Arabic

5.1. Definitions of Passive in Arabic

The passive voice can be defined as a phenomenon of the sentence in which the subject of the verb is not mentioned. It is replaced by the deputy or representative of the doer

e.g. The lesson is written. (يُكتَبُ الدرسُ)

The transitive verb is called Al Mojawiz (المجاوز) that not only contained a subject but also an object such as kataba (كَتَبَ) and karaa(قرأ)

The intransitive verb is called Al Qassir (القاصر) that contains the subject only and does not contain an subject such as thahaba (ذَهَبَ) kama(قامَ) andjalasa (جَلَسَ) (Al Feddly; n.d., 95, 96) .

The way of forming passive structure is by changing the vowelling of the active verb. It is characterized by putting (dhamma) on the first syllable and (kasra) in the past and (fatha) in the present tense, moreover the subject of the active sentence is deleted and the object becomes the deputy or representative of the doer of the passive sentence, e.g.,

Past: He wrote a letter (كَتَبَ الرسالةَ)

Passive : A letter was written . (كُتِبِت الرسالةُ)

Present active : He writes a letter (يكتبُ الرسالةَ)

Present passive : A letter is written (تُكتبُ الرسالةُ)

If there is no object in the sentence, the adverbial, preposition or infinitive becomes the deputy or representative of the doer of the passive sentence. E.g.,

Adverbial : He was struck in front of the prince. (ضُربَ امام الامير)

Preposition: He was entered inside the house.   (أُدخلَ في الدار)

Infinitive: He was struck violently. (ضُربَ ضرباً مبرحاً)

(Haywood and Nahmad, 1962:142)

In the Arabic passive sentence, the agent is not mentioned, instead of it the deputy or representative of the doer is mentioned.

(Haywood and Nahmad, 1962 144)

It is worth mentioning that there are certain differences between the active sentence and the passive sentence in the Arabic language, these are as the following :

The active voice of the verb in Arabic is called MabnililMaa'loom (known) while the passive is calledMabnililmajhool (unknown). The form of the active verb is (فَعَلَ) e.g. he wrote(كَتَبَ), while the form of the passive verb is(فُعِلَ) e.g. it was written. (كُتبَ)

 The subject of the active sentence is mentioned in speech. e.g., <u>Mohammed</u> wrote a letter. (كَتَبَ محمدٌ رسالةً)

While in the passive sentence the real subject is not mentioned, instead of subject there is deputy or representative of the doer. E.g. A letter was written. (كُتِبت الرسالةُ)

The active sentence is used in all tenses while the passive sentence is used with two tenses only the past and the present (Haywood and Nahmad;1962:142 and Al Feddly; n.d. : 97-98).

5.2 . The Reasons and Implications of Using Passive in Arabic:

 The passive voice is used in Arabic by deleting the agent for many purposes these are:

1- The agent is either verbal as the rhyme, e.g., (من طابت سيرته حُمدت سريرته)

or spiritual i.e. to make the agent unknown to the speaker although the speaker knows it as in this example : The door was broken (كُسِرَ الباب)

2- The agent is not mentioned to make it known although the speaker knows it as in '' قال

تعالى : (" خُلِقَ الإنسانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ") الأنبياء: ٣٧ (Man is created of haste)

3- The agent is not mentioned if there is no purpose of mentioning it. e.g.,

قال تعالى (" فإنْ أُحْصِرتُم فَمَا استَيسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ) البقرة: ١٩٦

(''But if you are prevented (from completing them) , sacrifice a Hady'')

4- Sometimes the speaker knows the agent but it is deleted for alarm. e.g., The building was destroyed (هُدِمَ البناءُ)

5- The speaker may be afraid of the doer as in : Khald was killed (قُتِلَ خالدٌ)

6- The speaker has intention to obscure the doer as in : An arrogant was insulted. (أُهينَ مُتكبرٌ)

7- The doer is not mentioned for humility or glorification such as : The pig was created) (خُلِقَ الخنزيرthe doer is ''Almighty Allah'' Which is not mentioned with the mentioning of the pig for glorification (Alsamarrai, 1987:492-3).

6. Passive in English

6.1 . Definitions of Passive in English

There are many definitions of passive voice, Crystal (2003: 339) defines passive as a term used in the grammatical analysis of voice, referring to a sentence, clause, or verb form where the grammatical agent is typically the recipient or goal of the action denoted by the verb e.g., The letter was written by a doctor. Whereas Yule (2006: 56) defines the passive voice as "the form

by using the appropriate form of the verb (be) follows by the past participle of a transitive verb, e.g., my car was stolen. It used to say what happens to the subject", e.g., Two men were arrested.

In English, Verbs are of two types, the first one is the transitive verb which can be defined as the verb which is completed by a direct object e.g. Jane sang a beautiful folk. Whereas the second type is the intransitive verb which can be defined as the verb that does not take a direct object and also it cannot be used in the passive voice, e.g. She sang beautifully. (Stageberg;1981:207)

To transfer English active sentences into passive there are certain steps, these are:

1- The active subject becomes the passive agent.

2- The active object becomes the passive subject.

3- Write the verb (be) in the same tense of the active verb followed by the past participle of the active verb.

4- The passive subject is mentioned after the preposition (by) if it is importance.

5- The active - passive voice correspondence can be seen diagrammatically as in:

Active : John   admired   Mary

Passive: Mary   was admired   by John
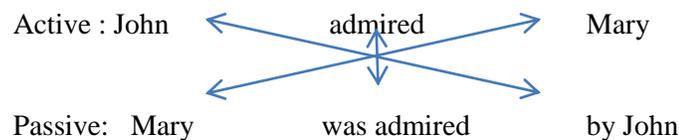
6- One cannot change active sentence into passive unless there is a transitive verb in active sentence.

   Active: The waiter poured the coffee. Passive: The coffee was poured by the waiter.

7- Sometimes the transitive verbs have two objects such as (give, buy, find, tell, play, write, send, ask, make, build, teach, assign, pass, offer, throw, feed, sell, pay).So, we can make passive sentence by two ways either by using the direct object or the

indirect object as a subject of the passive sentence.

Active: The aunt bought the girl a dress.

Passive: A dress was bought the girl by her aunt. Or, The girl was bought a dress by her aunt.

8- In English, there is a tiny group of transitive verbs called middle verbs (contain, lack, befell, elude, cost, have, and parted) that do not transfer into passive as in the following examples bellow.

The box contains a pair of shoes.

She lacks the necessary money.

My mother has a new car.

The pronouns can be used in the active and passive sentence as subject or object so when we transfer the active sentence into passive the pronouns change from subjective into objective case and vice versa.

Subjective	objective
I	me
You	you
He	him
She	her
It	it
We	us
They	them

Active : He helped me. / passive affirmative : I was helped by him / passive question : Where you was helped by him? / passive negative: I wasn't helped by him. (Stageberg: 1981:208; Quirk et al. 1985:159-60)

Concerning the agent, it is the person or the thing that performs the action and it can be mentioned in the passive sentence by using (by) before it. e.g.,

The house was designed by the architect.

The agent is mentioned in the sentence if it is important for the meaning. e.g.,

The cheque must be signed by the manger.

Sometimes the agent is not mentioned in the sentence for the following reasons:

If it does not add new information. e.g.,

The money was stolen. (There is no need to say that the money was stolen by a thief) because it is clear .

If it is not important. e.g.,

Oil has been discovered at the north pole. (who discovered the oil is less important than the fact is there).

It is sometimes difficult to say who the agent is. e.g.,

This kind of jacket is considered very fashionable these days.

(Eastwood,2002:134)

Concerning the differences between active and passive structures, there are certain differences between the active sentence and the passive structures in the English, these are as the following:

The passive sentence generally requires the auxiliary (be).

The main verb in passive sentence is in the past participle form .

The passive sentence may contain a by-phrase in which the complement of (by) plays the same thematic role as the subject in the corresponding active sentence, consider "hundreds of passers-by" in the active structure, it will be:

Hundreds of passers-by saw the attack.

Whereas in the passive structure it will be :

The attack was seen by hundreds of passers-by.

It serves as the complement of the preposition (by) (though in both cases it has the thematic role of experience argument of see).

The complement of an active verb serves as the subject in the corresponding passive structure, e.g. the attack is the complement of the verb "saw" in the active structure, but it is the subject of the verb "was" in the passive structure (Radford, 2004:260).

6.2.   The Reasons and Implications of Using Passive in English:

There are many reasons of using passive in English, these are can be summarized by many points, the passive is used when the focus is on the action not on doer. Passive without agent is common in the academic and scientific writing for this reason. e.g.,

Too many stories have been written about the first world war.

Using passive shifts the responsibility from the addresser to some other entity (Martin-Martin, 2008:138).

The passive is used to put the news at the end because it prefers to begin a sentence with something already known or something we are already talking about. e.g.,

Nice pictures. Yes, it was painted by my grandmother. (passive verb, so that the "news" (painter) can go at the end).

The passive is used to continue talking about the same subject whether something or person. e.g.,

She was waiting for an hour; than she was seen by a dentist; then she was sent back to the waiting room. She sat there for another hour; then the dentist saw her.

One of the reasons of using passive is putting the longer and the heavier expressions at the at the end of a clause. e.g.,

I was annoyed by Marry wanting to tell everybody that to do. (more natural than Marry wanting to tell everybody what to do annoyed me- the phrase Marry … do would make a very long subject)

(Swan,2005: 388).

It is worth mentioning that some writers refer to that using passive structure has aim to focus on the topic and mention the information about the doerat the end of the sentence, this makes it perceptually prominent, and the stress of the sentence is received naturally e.g.,

That bank was robbed by five men with facial scars.

(Horn & Ward, 2007:409-10)

Using passive, on the other hand, permits agent expression to be entirely suppressed, and enabling a addresser to accommodate the fact that it is unknown. E.g.,

My car was taken between 5:00 and 7:00 on Sunday. (ibid)

Passive structure is used to avoid identifying the agent, as in the following example : "Do you know where the February Scientific American is? " It was thrown out.

In addition to that, using passive implies a belief that the described event has a particular effect on individual, often the affected individual is the subject, e.g.,

He was interrogated for three hours. (Horn & Ward, 2007:410)

7.   Data Analysis :

Sample No. 1

قال تعالى : (كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آياتُهُ قُرآناً عَرَبِياً لِقَومٍ يَعْلَمُون)فصلت : 3

Translations:

1- ("A Book whose signs have been distinguished as an Arabic Koran for a people having knowledge")(Arberry, 2003:627).

2- ("A Book Whereof the Verses are explained in detail – a Quran in Arabic for a people who know") (Al-Hilali& Khan,2011:644).

Interpretation:

In this Ayah, Almighty Allah has specially addresses and advisesQuraysh that Quran is revealed in Arabic. So, they do not have any difficulty in understanding Its contents. فُصِّلَت (fusilat) means stating things clearly by explaining in detail.

Discussion:

In this Ayah, passive structure is used in فُصِّلَت . passive in this situation is used to give a certain meaning. It is known that this structure creates the sentence structure more intensification in meaning by using brevity i.e. every part where it is small or not is stated clearly and perfectly. The language of the Glorious Quran in this Ayah is built to achieve brevity, this is achieved, thus, if this context is out of the Glorious Quran it will be " A book, that Allah Almighty has explained its Ayas". This intensive meaning and brevity are achieved by using the passive structure in this Ayah. In the translation of this Ayah, the first translator and the second translator use passive structure i.e. (signs have been distinguished) and (Verses are explained in detail)

respectively. This use reflects the brevity of the structure, but it is not used to give intensive meaning, accordingly there is no full concord between Arabic and English intended meaning of using passive structure.

Sample No. 2

قال تعالى (قُتِلَ الخَرَّاصُونَ الَّذِينَ هُم في غَمْرةٍ سَاهُونَ) الذاريات: : ١٠ ـ ١١

Translations:

1- (" perish the conjectures ۞ who are dazed in perplexity") (Arberry, 2003: 688).

2- ("Cursed be the liars۞ Who are under a cover of heedlessness") (Al-Hilali and Khan, 2011:710).

Interpretation:

In this Aya, the word " kharrasun" is the plural form of "kharras" which has means of the one who estimates or says things by conjecture. In this context, the word refers to those stubborn and obstinate infidels who, without any reason or evidence, say discordant things about the Messenger Mohammedﷺ . Thus it would not be out the turn to interpret "kharrasun" as " kathabuun" which means the great liars, as they are condemned, denounced, cursed, and imprecated in this statement.

Discussion:

In this Aya, the passive structure is used in قُتِلَ whereas the subject is, intentionally, not mentioned although the subject is well-known i.e. " Allah Almighty" . In this context " Allah" is not mentioned in order not to be connected and mentioned with "kharrasun" (the great liars) in one sentence. Thus, the sentence is built as a passive one, i.e. without the subject, for the magnification and glorification of Almighty Allah. Thus, the intended meaning of using passive structure is for magnification and glorification of Almighty Allah. One can see that the first translator uses the implicit meaning of passive by using the verb (perish) which has meaning (be destroyed) whereas the second translator uses the past participle form in translating this Ayah, i.e. (Cursed be the liars). This form although it is passive, but it does not reflect the pragmatic meaning that exists in the Arabic text, i.e. glorification.

Sample No. 3

قال تعالى: (وَلا تَقُولُواْ لِمَن يُقْتَلُ في سَبِيلِ اللّهِ أَمْواتٌ بَلْ أَحْياءٌ ولكن لا تَشْعُرُونَ) البقرة: ١٥٤

Translations:

(" And say not of those slain in God's Way, They are dead rather they are living, but you are not aware") (Arberry, 2003:37)

("And say not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah, "They are dead." Nay,they are living, but you perceive (it) not") (Al-Hilali and Khan, 2011:31).

Interpretation:

In this Ayah, Almighty Allah talks about the Martyrs, those who dye in the cause of Allah (Shuhadaa') We are forbidden to regard their death like ordinary deaths, because they have special life in Barzakh that transcends all sensory perceptions.

Discussion:

In this Ayah, the passive structure is used in يُقتَلُ (is killed) , here the verb is present, it is passivized. Such passivization in this situation gives the meaning of the generalization and stability of the judgment. i.e. on the one hand, any one is killed in the Way of Almighty Allah goes under this judgment, and this judgment is not for specific person but it is for all. On the other hand, this use gives the stability of event, which means that this judgment is not limited for a certain time, but it lasts forever to those who will be killed in the Way of Allah. Thus, passivation is used for stability and continuity. Concerning the English text, the first translator uses the verb slain which is not passive, and thus the first translator does not transfer the intended meaning, while the second translator uses a passive structure to translate this Ayah i.e. (those who are killed in the Way of Allah). According to the theoretical background, There is no such equivalent and similar pragmatic meaning can be gotten from using passive structure in English. The pragmatic meaning of using passive structures in Arabic and English is clearly different.

Sample No. 4

قال تعالى : (وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيّواْ بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْها أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلّ شَيءٍ حَسِيباً)

النساء: ٨٦

Translations:

1- ("And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a fairer than it, or return it; surely God keeps a watchful count over everything") (Arberry, 2003: 123).

2- ("When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally. Certainly, Allah is Ever a Careful Account Taker of all things") (Al-Hilali and Khan, 2011:122).

Interpretation:

In this Ayah, Almighty Allah tells us how to greet others, Allah teaches Muslims the etiquette of offering and returning greetings known as Salam among Muslims.

Discussion:

Here, passive is used (وإذا حُييتُم When you are greeted) for specific reasons, the first one, the agent is not mentioned to inform the addressee that this order is not restricted to a specific one (agent), i.e. this order is directed to everyone. The second reason of using passive in this Ayah is that the Glorious Quran teaches us the polite way and the etiquette of returning greetings to anyone greets us. The politeness aspect is clear, it is used to control over Muslims' behavior. In the English text, the two translators usepassive structure, i.e. (when you are greeted with a greeting). The agent is deleted to say that this direction is not for specific agent.

Sample No. 5

قال تعالى : (لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا) البقرة: 233

Translations:

1- ("No soul is charged save to its capacity") (Arberry, 2003: 55).

2- ("No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear") (Al-Hilali and Khan, 2011:55).

Interpretation:

This Ayah talks about the father's expenses responsibility. The responsibility of child's expenses should not be heavy on the father.

Discussion:

In this Ayah, the verb (تُكَلَف) is present passive. The real subject is not mention here whereas the subject is known (Almighty Allah). If this Ayah is out of this context, it will be لا يكلف الله نفسا الا وسعها(Allah will not burden a person than he can bear). The passive structure is used her to shift the focus from the subject to the object i.e. person (soul). The focus is on the person (soul) and the action rather than the subject has certain meaning. One of these meanings is to show the importance of a person in Islam and the person should not bear what he cannot. This use has a reference to the mercy of Almighty Allah on persons. Concerning the English text, the first translator uses passive structure, in which the focus is on the object. The passive structure is used to focus on the object for its importance. The second translator uses the paraphrasing strategy in translating this Ayah. The translator does not use passive structure to transfer the intended meaning of Arabic text.

Conclusions:

In this study, some important points are concluded. Throughout the theoretical background and data analysis, it is found that passive structures have pragmatic meanings, and this is clear in Arabic more than in English. The pragmatic meaning in Arabic has rhetorical aspects that cannot be interpreted easily. The context is very important factor to specify the intended meaning of using these structures. Additionally, the Glorious Quran has specific characteristics, and every structure, especially passive structure, has its own hidden meaning. According to the current study, this pragmatic meaning in Arabic is not similar or it is not found in the translation throughout rendering these passive structures into English. Thus, the meaning behind using passive structures is not identical in Arabic and English. The translators should justify and clarify the use of passive structures in different positions in the Glorious Quran because these structures are used to convey a certain meaning. This meaning is not found in English text i.e. there is no a meaning equivalent can be got by using similar structures in English.

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