

ARABIC TRANSLATION ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PASSIVE IN ENGLISH

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1. *The problem*

The semantic category of the passive voice has its distinctive syntactic and morphological realizations in different languages. Since Arabic and English belong to two different language families, it is expected that their surface structures would be widely divergent and that each would employ different sets of linguistic means to indicate passivization.

Arabic is known to avoid passive verb forms and not to favour much use of them in its sentences whereas English is known to make abundant use of the passive verb, especially in scientific texts (Rosenhouse 1988:92). For the English-Arabic translator, this poses a major problem since he would be confronted with the task of having to convert a large number of passive verbs in his English source text into other linguistic forms if he were to produce a normal Arabic text, free of gross translation interference.

It is the purpose of this paper to investigate the various linguistic alternatives open to the English-Arabic translator in a situation like this by examining an English text and its Arabic translation. The paper also aims at studying the conditioning factors which determine opting for any one of these possible translation alternatives rather than for the others. This, it is expected, will help towards a better understanding of the translation process of passive verbs from English into Arabic.

2. *The passive*

Traditionally, the passive has been studied under the rubric of 'voice'. Voice has been defined as a "verb form or particular syntactic construction indicating certain relationships between the subject and object of verb" (Hartmann and Stork 1976:252). In passive voice sentences, the grammatical subject of the verb is not the agent or the initiator of the action indicated by that verb but it is rather the patient or the recipient of that action.

The choice of the passive, rather than the active, in any language relates to the textual function of the language (Halliday 1970). Focusing on the patient, viz. the affected NP, in any sentence and making it the grammatical subject of that sentence results from the speaker's viewing that NP as the theme of his sentence, thus giving it more prominence. Different languages achieve this thematization of the patient by different linguistic means, as will be discussed later. But, it should be borne in mind that a passive sentence contains the same participant NPs in its underlying structure as the active. The only difference is that passivization "disassociates the actor so that it can either be put in focal position at the end or, more frequently, omitted" (Halliday 1970:161). Thus both active and passive sentences seem to state the same proposition but in different ways. The essence of the passive, it seems, is that "it treats the patient as obligatory and the agent as optional" (Sullivan 1976:141). And the basic function of the passive transformation is to "reorder, relative to one another, the two semantic categories Agent and Goal [i.e. Patient]" (James 1983:111).

Lyons (1968:376) accounts for the relationship between active and passive sentences as follows:

"(i) The object of the active sentence becomes the subject of the corresponding passive sentence.

(ii) The verb is active in form in the more basic (active) version, and passive in form in the less basic (passive) version.

(iii) The subject of the active sentence is not necessarily expressed (overtly represented) in the passive version of the same sentence, but if expressed, it takes the form of an adjunct marked as agentive by means of case inflection or by the use of a particular preposition."

2.1. *The passive in English*

Different languages, as has been said above, realize passivization differently. Most of the early references to the passive voice in English, as can be found for example in Sapir and Jespersen "lack explicit semantic discussion and shed no additional light on the topic" (Sullivan 1976:118). But Chomsky and later treatments of the passive in English within Transformational Grammar "assume a glow of lucidity and accuracy... and describe [the] passive as an adverb of manner" (Sullivan 1976:119). Yet, all of these attempts seem to suffer from one serious drawback, viz. they do not show systematically how "active-passive sentence pairs communicate the same thing, though with a particular difference" (Sullivan 1976:119).

Lyons states that the active signifies an 'action' whereas the passive signifies a 'state'. Then he goes on to list three possibilities for the 'passive' in English: (a) passive with a 'specific' agent (Bill was killed by John); (b) passive with a 'non-specific' agent (Bill was killed by someone); and (c) passive without mention of the agent (Bill was killed) (Lyons 1968:376). Halliday used the Prague school concept of marked versus unmarked theme (the initial syntactic element) to distinguish between two types of clauses: operative versus receptive (Halliday 1967:41). The

action in operative clauses is directed from agent to goal with the agent assuming clause subject position. In receptive clauses, however, everything is similar except that it is the goal, rather than the agent, which assumes the clause subject position. Operative clauses are represented by active voice sentences while receptive clauses by passive voice sentences. Thus:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| (1) | Nour | has painted | this picture. |
| | Agent | V active | Goal |
| | Theme | Transition | Rheme |
| (2) | This picture | has been painted | by Nour. |
| | Goal | V passive | Agent |
| | Theme | Transition | Rheme |

The Agent (Rheme) of passive voice sentences can be deleted, thus making the Transition into the Rheme:

- (3) This picture has been painted (not photographed).

It is to be noted, however, that each of the above three alternatives is more probably selected in certain contexts: (1) would be selected if *Nour* were known from previous context or from the context, and the important 'new' information was that it was 'this picture' that she painted; (2) would be a mirror-image, in terms of contextual probability, of (1); and (3) would be expected if the origin or the production of the painting was at issue (James 1983:112).

Finally, there are some structures in English which are passive in meaning and not in form, e.g. :

- (4) This picture sells well.
 (5) The car stopped.
 (6) The shirt dried in the sun.
 (7) The room filled rapidly.

Such structures satisfy the first of Lyons' conditions for the passive voice already stated at the outset of section 2, but neither the second (since the verb is in active form) nor the third of these conditions (since it is not possible to express the agent). These and similar sentences are said to express 'notional' passive or pseudo-passive. Various grammarians have dealt with the notional passive in different ways. Jespersen (1961) explains the notional passive as related to the acto-passive usage of some verbs. He further explains that the double-sidedness in verbs like *dry* and *fill* in sentences (6) and (7) above results from the fact that "there is no distinction between transitive and intransitive derivatives from adjectives" (Jespersen 1961:350).

Zandvoort (1962:200) attributes notional passive to the phenomenon that some transitive verbs may be used intransitively with non-personal subjects, e.g.:

- (8) Browning's plays won't act.
 (9) The book sells well.

The difference between such pseudo-passive constructions (or 'notional passives') and formal passive constructions is a difference of orientation: the passive construction is agent-oriented, while the pseudo-intransitive is process-oriented (Halliday 1967:47). In notional-passive constructions, the 'agent' is not brought into the scene. This may explain the presence of inherent passivity in such constructions though their main verbs assume the active voice form.

2.2. The passive in Arabic

Arabic is a Semitic language whose verbal system is morphologically rich and diverse. The passive is performed in Arabic verbs by introducing apophonic vowel changes into the active basic verb forms or by the affixation of certain morphemes (notably a prefixed *in-*). Thus, for example, we have: *kataba/kutiba* 'he wrote/it was written' and *kasara/inkasara* 'it broke/it was broken', respectively¹.

The passive voice in Arabic has not yet been studied as extensively as in English. Traditional Arab grammarians and Arabists usually list passive verb forms in Arabic and briefly outline the situations in which the passive is used. Wright (1975), for example, states that "all the verbal forms, both primitive and derivative, have two voices, the *active* and the *passive*" Wright 1975:49). Then he lists some exceptions and adds that "the subject of the passive voice is either the object of the performer (personal passive), or the abstract idea of the act (impersonal passive)" (Wright 1975:49). As for the situations in which the passive is used in Arabic, Wright (1975:50) lists the following four:

- (a) When God, or some higher being, is indicated as the author of the act;
- (b) When the author is unknown, or at least not known for certain;
- (c) When the speaker or writer does not wish to name him;
- (d) When the attention of the hearer or reader is directed more to the person affected by the act (patients, patient) than to the doer of it (agens, the agent).

Traditional Arab grammarians add the "achievement of brevity" as another purpose for using the passive (Ghalaayini 1982:48). As for verbs prefixed by *in-* like *inkasara* 'it was broken', mentioned above, Wright says that such verbs "approach more nearly to a passive", they are actually reflexive and represent, what he calls, the Middle Voice (Wright 1975:49).

More recently, Resto (1984) has studied the passive, though in colloquial Arabic dialects. However the passive in Literary (written) Arabic has also been the subject of study in Saad (1982). In his *Syntax of Modern Arabic prose*, Cantarino (1975) gives an account on the use of the passive in Arabic similar to that given by Wright and originally by ancient Arab grammarians. He states that the purpose of using the passive in general is "to place a greater emphasis upon the action and its object" (Cantarino 1975:52). Though the passive in Arabic is usually agentless,

¹ The past tense verb in Arabic has many morphological patterns. However, most frequent of these are the basic form I CvCvC, and the derived forms: II CvCCvC, III CwCvC, IV ?aCCvC, V taCvCCvC, VI taCwCvC, VII ?inCvCvC, VIII ?iCtvCvC, IX ?iCCvCC, X ?istaCCvC.

Cantarino points out that "Arabic has found a way to express the agent in passive constructions; and that is by using a prepositional phrase with instrumental meaning" (Cantarino 1975:53).

In her more recent comparative survey on the passive in different types of text in English, Arabic and Hebrew, Rosenhouse (1988) has found that most of the passive verbs in Arabic were of the type of apophonic vowel change, and belonged to Patterns I, II, IV, and X. Two major means of avoiding the passive verb form, she has found, are patterns with 'active' verbs which govern nominalized complements, viz. */qaama + bi .../* lit. 'conducted' and */tamma .../* lit. 'completed, finished'. These verbs are used as "dummy verbs while their nominal complements serve as the nominalized passive verb" (Rosenhouse 1988:94). Rosenhouse has observed that passive participles are often used in Arabic to indicate passivity instead of using finite verb forms.

In another interesting paper on "Active and passive sentences in English and Polish," Sullivan (1976) points out that the relatively freer word order of Polish can be held to account for at least some of the statistical discrepancy" in the use of the morphological passive in English and Polish (Sullivan 1976:138). Similarly, the relatively free word order in Arabic, in addition to its rich verb morphological system, provides it with alternative means of expressing passivity other than by using the morphologically passive verb. Word order thus is more than just a stylistic variation; it rather has a grammatical function.

In the same way, Arabic draws on its rich morphological resources in the verb system to distinguish between formal passive and notional passive structures. For this purpose, Arabic derives from the basic primary verb forms a number of derived verb forms through apophonic changes and prefixation. Thus:

- (10) *kasara nabiil-un al-ka's-a* (active)
broke Nabil-nom def-glass-acc
Nabil broke the glass.
- (11) *kusira al-ka's-u* (formal passive, with the verb in the passive form)
broken def-glass-nom
The glass was broken.
- (12) *?inkasara al-ka's-u* (notional passive, with verb in the active)
broken def-glass-nom
The glass was broken.

Derived verb forms used in notional passive constructions are termed as *reflexive* by Wright. The derived verb forms V, VII, VIII are the most common of these. Interestingly enough, the notional passive is similarly expressed by reflexive verbs in Polish (Wołczyńska-Sudo 1976:159).

3. Translation of the English passive into Arabic

Studies dealing with the problems which Arabic-speaking translators encounter are very few indeed. One of such studies has been recently conducted by Khalil

on problems of translating English passive sentences into Arabic. In his study, Khalil exclusively studies the problems of translating English *agentive* sentences (Khalil 1993). He justifies focusing only on the problems of the translation of agentive passive sentences by stressing the fact that Arabic does not normally allow the appearance of the agent in the surface structure of passive sentences. Khalil has found out in his study that Arab translators either "shift or transpose the English passive sentence into a corresponding active sentence in Arabic or translate the sentence word for word into an Arabic passive sentence in which the agent is not suppressed" (Khalil 1993:69). Khalil's study, however, does not attempt to investigate the determining factors behind choosing either of the above two alternatives.

In an earlier study on the occurrence of the passive in English and Arabic, Rosenhouse concludes after examining percentages of occurrence of passive sentences in different English and Arabic texts that "for a formal definition of the translation of passive forms from English into either Hebrew or Arabic, much more work is required" (Rosenhouse 1988:101). She also adds that if the agent is known, Arabic prefers an active structure. But, whether this transformation is applied or not depends on other factors, too" (Rosenhouse 1988:102). Rosenhouse's paper, however, does not go any further in investigating the nature of these conditioning factors. It is exactly these factors, or some of them at least, that the present paper tries to shed light on. In the same line, Di Pietro (1971:38) says that Arabic "restricts passive sentences from expressing the agent while English does not".

4. Description of sample text

The sample text is an English scientific article entitled "A close look at Halley's Comet" published in the *Scientific American* (Sept. 1998:62-69) and its Arabic translation which appears in the Arabic version of the same journal *Majallat Al-Oloom* (Feb. 1989:56-64). A scientific text has been selected because such type of text makes more use of passive constructions than others (see Rosenhouse 1988). Though when a text is translated, it may be coloured by the linguistic characteristics of the source text and may thus not be typical of the target language texts, the choice of the above translated text is justified on the grounds that it is the very objective of the present paper to investigate English Arabic equivalent translation structures in the area of the passive voice.

The method of analysis followed was to mark every *finite* passive verb in the English text and see how it was rendered in the Arabic translation of that text. The translation of English non-finite passive forms has not been taken into account in the present study. However, Arabic non-finite passive forms which appear in the Arabic text as translation equivalents to English finite passive forms are taken into consideration and analysed. Likewise, only English sentences which indicate *real*, or formal, passive have been analysed, viz. 'notional' passive and other similar constructions have not been included. Such passive constructions have, however, been included and analysed when they appear in the Arabic text as translation equivalents to English formal passive constructions. This is so since these represent

in the Arabic translation some of the alternatives open to the Arab translator of the English passive; which is the topic under investigation in the present paper.

The total number of finite passive verbs in the English text was found to be 76 instances, translated into Arabic as follows:

TABLE ONE

English	Arabic			
	Finite Verbs		(Compound) Nominalized Constructions	
	Active	Passive	(+) Infinitive	(+) Passive Participle
76	21	20	21	14

4.1. Preliminary conclusions drawn from table one

1. More than 50% of the English finite passive verbs have been translated by verbs in Arabic (41 out of 76).

2. Out of the forty-one Arabic verbs mentioned above, twenty are passive and twenty one are active.

3. Twenty-one English finite passive verbs have been rendered into Arabic by nominalized constructions consisting of an infinitive, usually preceded by an introductory verb.

4. The remaining English finite passive verbs (14 out of 76) have been translated by nominalized constructions of passive participles, usually preceded by introductory verbs.

4.2. Research questions

The above preliminary conclusions give rise to some questions which are worthy of investigation:

1. When do English-Arabic translators translate passive finite verbs in English into *passive* finite verbs in Arabic?

2. When are passive finite verbs in English rendered into Arabic by *active* finite verbs?

3. When are passive finite verbs in English translated by *nominalized constructions* in Arabic, i.e. not by verbs?

4. Are there any factors governing the choice between the *infinitive* and a *passive participle* in these nominalized constructions?

The present paper in an attempt to investigate the above four research questions.

5. Translating English passive verbs by Arabic passive verbs

A close examination of the Arabic passive verbs shows that half of them (10 out of 20) belong to Pattern I in the traditional paradigm of Arabic verbs, viz. the basic trilateral verb *fa9ala*. The next largest number of Arabic passive verbs belong to Pattern II, viz. *fa99ala* (7 out of 20). The remaining three Arabic passive verbs belong to Pattern III *faa9ala* and Pattern VIII *ifta9ala*. Right away, the two Arabic verbs which belong to Pattern VIII attract our attention most since verbs of this pattern do not usually appear in the passive-verb form². So the use of these two Arabic verbs in the passive requires some explanation; which we will have to do soon.

The passive voice is typically used in Arabic when the agent is either unknown or when it is obvious and thus "the attention of the hearer or reader is directed more to the person affected by the act (the patient) than to the doer of it (the agent)" (Wright 1975:501). Seven out of the above-mentioned ten Arabic passive verbs which belong to Pattern I are used in sentences where the agent is *unknown* or *uncertain* while the other three are used in sentences where the agent is *obvious* and hence the patient is topicalized by using the passive transformation. Examples of these seven Arabic sentences are:³

- (13) *ajjuzay'aatu qad hufizat.*
The molecules were preserved.
- (14) ... *alhiqba llati wulidat fiiha lmudannabaatu*
... the epoch when comets were born
- (15) *fakayfa wulidat fiihaa lmudannabaatuwa mataa?*
How and when where they [the comets] formed?
- (16) *waqad fuqidat mitlu haadihi lmawaadd*
Such material has been lost.
- (17) *wahaadihi jjusaymaatu tudfa9u ba9iidan*
These particles are driven away.

whereas in the remaining three Arabic sentences where a verb of Pattern I *fa9ala* is used:

- (18) *sayudkaru šahru maars*
Mars will be remembered.
- (19) ... *akbar mimmaa kaana yuzannu*
... larger than what had been thought

² As will be seen from section 6 below in which we analyse Arabic active verbs used as translation equivalents to English passive verbs.

³ Only parts of sentences directly related to the passive in the English source text and its Arabic translation are given here.

- (20) *wayuzannu l'aana anna*
It is now thought that...

it is clear that the agent in the three of them is obvious since it can only refer to 'scientists' or to 'people' in general.

We now turn our attention to the seven Arabic passive verbs which belong to Pattern II, viz. *fa99ala*. These verbs appear in such sentences in the Arabic translation of the English source text as:

- (21) *tuhayyaju jjuzay'aatu fii lgaazi ššamsi*
Molecules are excited by solar radiation.
- (22) *yusammaa lgaazu...*
The gas is called...
- (23) *quddimat ttafsiiraatu min qibali 9aalimi lfiizyaa'i lfalakiyya l'almaani ...*
Interpretations were given by the German astrophysicist...
- (24) *yusammaa haadaa...*
This is called...
- (25) *yabduu anna tabii9ata jjuzay'aati lammaa tuhaddad ba9du*
The nature of molecules has not yet been determined.

A bird's eye view of sentences (22), (24) and (25) above shows that the agents in all of them are *obviously understood* to be 'scientists'. This, as has already been mentioned above, is one of the typical situations for the use of passive in Arabic. On the other hand, the other two Arabic verbs in sentences (21) and (23) above are not expected to appear in the passive voice since the agents are overtly expressed in both of these sentences. We would rather expect the agents to assume the subject position in both of these sentences and the verbs to appear in the active forms since Arab grammarians have always described the passive in Classical Arabic as an agentless construction" (Khalil 1993:169). How do we explain then the use of passive verb forms in such Arabic sentences?

The occurrence of agentive passive sentences as in the above two sentences could be a result of literal translation. Moreover, Modern Standard Arabic, as used in the mass media and some modern literary works, has noticeably come to tolerate such passive sentences. In English-Arabic translations, it has been found, however, that more experienced translators tend to render English agentive sentences into Arabic agentive sentences far less often than less experienced translators (Khalil 1993:172).

It was already mentioned at the beginning of this section that the two sentences in the Arabic data with passive verbs of Pattern VIII *ifta9ala* require special explanation since such verbs do not normally appear in the passive form in Arabic. To understand the special circumstances under which these are used, let us first examine the following sentences:

- (26) *ijtama9a lqawmu*
People met.
- (27) *intašara jjundu*
The soldiers spread out.
- (28) *ihtaraqa lbaytu*
The house burnt.
- (29) *imtala?a lmakaanu*
The place filled.

All verbs in the sentences above belong to Pattern VIII *ifta9ala*. Moreover, the four sentences have identical surface structures. A closer look, nevertheless, would reveal deep-structure differences. The NPs assuming subject positions fulfil different semantic roles. In sentences (26) and (27), the NPs are the agents, the performers of the actions indicated by the verbs; whereas in sentences (28) and (29), the NPs are *not* the agents but rather the patients affected by the actions. Hence, in sentences (28) and (29) above the verbs *ihtaraqa* and *imtala?a* are said to be used pseudo-intransitively (Lyons 1968). Sentences with pseudo-intransitive verbs, like (28) and (29) above, are similar to passive sentences in that the grammatical subject in both types of sentences is not the agent but the patient. This is why such sentences, with pseudo-intransitive verbs, have the meaning of the passive although their verbs have active forms. This may also explain why verbs used pseudo-intransitively do not assume passive forms. Thus passive forms like **ihturiqa* and **imtuli?a* are inadmissible in Arabic.

It may also be worthwhile to note that the grammatical subjects in sentences (26) and (27) refer to human agents whereas the subjects in (28) and (29) refer to non-human patients. It thus seems that verbs of Pattern VIII can only be used pseudo-intransitively in sentences where the subjects are non-human. Conversely, it seems that the formal passivization of this verb pattern is only possible when verbs belonging to it are *not* used pseudo-intransitively (Bakir 1994:17).

It is time we turned our attention now to examine the two sentences in our Arabic data with verbs of Pattern VIII in the passive form, viz.:

- (30) *waqad iktušifa ttawaafuqu nafsuhu*
The same agreement was found.
- (31) *kaana yu9taqadu ?anna l'inbitaqaati hiya...*
... jets were recognized as...

It has already been mentioned that the presence of verbs like *iktušifa* and *yu9taqadu* in such sentences calls for some explanation. This is so since such verbs belong to Pattern VIII *ifta9ala* whose verbs, as has just been mentioned, do not normally occur in the passive forms in Arabic. We notice first that the deleted agents in both sentences above are marked by [+Human]. This becomes clear when converting these two sentences to their active counterparts:

- (32) *waqad iktušafa l9ulamaa?u ttawaafuqa nafsahu*
Scientists found the same agreement.
- (33) *kaana l9ulamaa?u ya9taqiduuna ?anna l'inbitaqaati hiya ...*
Scientists recognized the jets as...

In both sentences above, therefore, the verbs are used *transitively*, and not *intransitively* as in sentences (28) and (29). When sentences (32) and (33) have been converted to the passive to become sentences (30) and (31) respectively, the agents were deleted since agentless passive sentences are the norm in Arabic. We thus can understand the occurrence of such verbs as *iktušifa* and *yu9taqadu* (which belong to Pattern VIII) in the passive form. This is only possible when such verbs are *not* used pseudo-intransitively.

6. English passive verbs translated by Arabic active verbs

It has been observed in the translated Sample Text that in quite many cases, English passive verbs have been rendered into Arabic by active verbs. It thus becomes clear that the English-Arabic translator has a second alternative when confronted with the task of translating English passive clauses, viz. to translate English passive verbs into Arabic active verbs.

This option is rather unexpected since it seems to run counter to the objective of any translation process; which is to render *the meaning* of one text into another text. Since passivity is an important component of the semantic structure of any passive sentence, changing the verb from passive to the active seems to distort the semantic inter-relationships within the sentence and thus defeats the ultimate objective of translation. It is therefore crucial to thoroughly investigate the consequences of this replacement of English passive verbs by Arabic active verbs in the translation process. And since the sample text under discussion has been translated by professional translator(s), it seems that this passive-active verb replacement must have been well motivated and duly justified. Nevertheless, this translation licence, viz. replacing English passive verbs by Arabic active verbs, cannot be without restrictions of some sort. It is the purpose of this section to find out the conditioning factors behind this English-Arabic translation option.

Arabic is known to be a language that "does not favour passive forms and avoids them" (Rosenhouse 1988:93). One major way of achieving this by English-Arabic translators is by replacing English passive verbs by translationally-equivalent Arabic active verbs. Out of a total number of forty-one Arabic verbs which appear in the English-Arabic translated text, twenty one are in the active form. An examination of these twenty-one Arabic active sentences shows that in the overwhelming majority of them (17 out of 21), the verb is used pseudo-intransitively⁴ in sentences where the grammatical subject is not the semantic agent but rather the goal or the patient, i.e. the recipient affected by the action of the verb. Hence the affinity of internal semantic relations between these active-verb sentences and their passive

⁴ See examples (28) and (29) above for the pseudo-intransitive use.

counterparts in the English source text, since in passive sentences the grammatical subject is not the agent either; it is the patient rather. This explains why it has been possible to translate these seventeen English passive sentences into Arabic sentences with verbs in the active forms without changing the intra-sentential semantic relations among their NPs. This rendering of English passive verbs into Arabic active verbs is in fact one major route for avoiding the use of too many passive constructions in Arabic since, as has been said earlier, Arabic is to a large extent not in favour of the use of passive verb forms.

The following are representative examples selected from the above-mentioned seventeen sentences. It is worthwhile noting perhaps that the grammatical subjects in all of them refer to non-human patients, as has been pointed out earlier⁵:

- (34) sawfa tastanidu munaqaṣaātunaa ilaa...
Our discussions will be based on...
- (35) waqad takawwanat ššamsu walkawaakibu
The sun and the planets were built.
- (36) waḥaalamaa tanqalibu dḍarraatu ilaa...
As soon as the atoms are converted into...
- (37) walammaa kaanat jjusaymaatu tanba9itu min...
Since the particles are emitted from...
- (38) ... yatakawwanu tayyaarun 9ariidun
... a wide stream is formed.

In the following four remaining sentences, Arabic active verbs have been used to translate English passive verbs:

- (39) saada dḍaabata qadrin mutazaayidun mina l'ayonaati
The coma is dominated increasingly by ions.
- (40) ʔinna ḥubaybaati lgubaar taḥtafiḥu jayyidan biʔuḥaadi oksiidi lkaarbon
The carbon monoxide is remarkably well retained by the dust grains.
- (41) ... tayaaran nayzakiyyan tuwaajihuhu l'arḍu
... a meteor stream that is encountered by the earth
- (42) ... lidaa faʔinnahu yaṭḡaa 9alaa lkiimyaaʔi tafaa9ulaatun
... the chemistry is therefore dominated by reactions

It is to be noted that the verbs in the above four Arabic sentences are not used pseudo-intransitively since the grammatical subject in each of them is itself the agent and not the patient. This, of course, is typical of active sentence structures and it seems that English-Arabic translators have opted to use the active sentence

structure in translating the source passive sentences in these cases because Arabic, unlike English, does not favour using *agentive* passive sentences. So, whenever an English agentive passive sentence occurs in a text, we assume that the English-Arabic translator would tend to transpose it to an active sentence in Arabic (Khalil 1993:169).

7. English passive verbs translated by nominalized constructions

As has been shown in the Table One above, the passive finite verb in the English sentences of the Sample Text has been translated by nominalized structures in Arabic in thirty five cases (out of 76). As the same Table shows, two major types of nominalized constructions are used in the Arabic translation of the English text. These are either a nominalized construction with an infinitive as the nominal complement (21 cases), or a nominalized construction with a passive participle as its complement (14 cases).

7.1. Arabic nominalized constructions with the infinitive

In this first major type of nominalized constructions, seventeen out of the twenty-one instances consist of an initial verbal element followed by an infinitive. The great majority of initial verbal elements belong to a list of verbs like *jaraa* 'took place, happened' and *tamma* 'completed, finished', which function as dummy verbs to carry the tense marker and to govern the nominalization in the structures. In the four remaining instances, bare infinitives have been used in Arabic for the translation of English passive verbs.

It has been noted, however, that in all the above twenty-one instances, the nominal complement, viz. the infinitive, functions as a nominalized passive verb. This could be clearly seen if we examined the semantic relation between these nominal complements and the NPs which follow them. This semantic relation is found to be that of a verb and its patient. Thus in the following representative sentences from the data:

- (43) waqad tamma taṭwiir haada nnumuudaj
That model was developed.
- (44) jaraa ba9da daalika taṣwiisu haadihi ssuḥub
The cloud was then disturbed.
- (45) ... 9inda tafakkuki juzayʔaati lmaaʔ
... when the water molecules are dissociated

all the NPs which follow the infinitives in the nominalized constructions are affected by the actions represented by the infinitives, viz. these NPs assume the role of patients in these sentences. Since this is exactly the role which these same NPs assume in the source English sentences, which appear below each Arabic sentence above, the translator then has succeeded in preserving the intra-sentential relations of the source text. This, therefore, explains why it has been possible to translate

⁵ See section 5 for further information.

passive verbs in English sentences by nominalized structures such as the above in Arabic. It remains to try to find out when this translation alternative is opted for by translators in preference to other translation alternatives already discussed above, viz. the use of an Arabic passive-verb form or an active-verb form.

Though the nominalized construction seems to be in free variation with the passivized verb in some Arabic sentences, there are other cases when its use is governed by certain restrictions. Thus in all the following sentences, for example:

- (46) waqad jaraa iktiṣaafu ba9di l'ayonaati
Some ions were detected.
- (47) wayumkinu taṣniifu jjuz'i l'aakar
The other part can be sampled.
- (48) waqad jaraa jam9u miṭli haadihi jjusaymaat
Such particles have been collected.

the passive forms of the verbs could have been alternatively used in Arabic. In sentence (46) above, for example, the Arabic translation could have been:

- (46a) waqad iktuṣifat ba9du l'ayonaati
Some ions were detected.

In other cases, however, the choice of a nominalized construction in Arabic instead of a passivized verb form is not so free. In the following two sentences, for example:

- (49) liḍaa yajibu 'an yajrii taqaasumu zzakmi...
The momentum of... must be shared
- (50) wahaada huwa 'usluubu takawwuni ttayyari nnayzakiy
That's how a meteor stream is created.

the passivized verb form in Arabic is unused since the verb forms derived from such infinitives as *taqaasum* and *takawwun* belong to verb patterns which do not appear in the passive form in Arabic.

The presence in the Arabic datum of sentences like

- (51) siinaaryo jaraa tatwiiruhu min qibali l'falakiy jaan uurt.
scenario... was developed by the astronomer Jan Oort
- (52) waqad tamma tatwiiru haada nnumuudaj min qibali 9aalimi lfiizyaa'i wibil
That model was developed by the astrophysicist Whipple.

could be interpreted as examples of translation interference from English since Arabic, as has been mentioned earlier, normally favours the use of the active verb form in sentences where the agent is overtly expressed. Thus neither the passivized verb form nor its semantic equivalent, viz. the nominalized construction, are ex-

pected to appear in sentences like the above two. The very limited number of such sentences in the Arabic data seems to lend credit to this conclusion.

7.2. Arabic nominalized constructions with the passive participle

As has already been mentioned, the passive verb in some English sentences in the English Sample Text has been translated by nominalized constructions with the passive participle in Arabic. There are fourteen instances of this in the Arabic translation of the English text. These fall into two sub-patterns as the passive participle is either preceded by a form of *kaana* 'to be' or it stands on its own. In the first sub-pattern, there are sentences like:

- (53) wakaana zzakmu maṣuunan...
Angular momentum was conserved...

whereas the second sub-pattern is represented in the data by sentences like:

- (54) inna nnawaata mukawwana fi9lan min...
The nucleus is actually made up of...

It is to be noted that in both sentences above and all other similar sentences in the Sample Text, the relation between the passive participle and the preceding NP is that of an action/state (expressed here by the passive participle) with a patient (represented by the NP directly preceding the passive participle). This relationship is of course the same semantic relationship which exists between the verbal element and the NP assuming the grammatical subject position in sentences with overtly marked passive verbs in both English and Arabic. Hence the similarity in Arabic between pairs of sentences like:

- (55a) innahaa muqayyada bidarraati lhaaydrojiin.
They are bound to hydrogen atoms.

- (55b) innahaa tuqayyad bidarraati lhaaydrojiin.
They are bound to hydrogen atoms.

- (56a) inna nnuwa mahjuuba biddu'aaba.
Nuclei are veiled by a coma.

- (56b) inna nnuwa tuhjabu biddu'aaba.
Nuclei are veiled by a coma.

This, as has been said earlier about nominalized constructions with infinitives, has made it possible to use constructions with passive participles as Arabic translation equivalents to passive sentences in English since the internal semantic relations in both types of sentences are the same. This semantic affinity between the passive participle and the passive verb in Arabic is based on the fact that the passive participle is both derived from the passive verb and has its function as well (Ghalaayini 1982:186).

It remains to be seen, however, whether this translation option is possible in all cases or whether there are some restrictions governing its choice and, if so, what these restrictions are. To find out, let us closely examine the following English passive sentences found in the data and their Arabic translations:

- (57) ... comets were concentrated in a cloud.
... ?almuḍḍannabaat kaanat murakkaza fii ssaḥaaba
- (58) The inner coma is composed.
waddu?aaba ddaakiliyya mu?allafa
- (59) The final barrier is formed by...
walḥaajiz nnihaa?i mu?allaf min...

It can be seen that the passive verbal constructions in all the above sentences refer to *states* rather than to *processes* or actions, i.e. in each sentence there is a quality attributed to the NP. Arabic translators of the English source text must have sensed this and consequently opted for the use of a passive participle in the Arabic translation of each of the above three sentences, as well as in other similar sentences in the source text.

The distinction between patient-state and patient-process could be further demonstrated if we examined the following Arabic sentences:

- (60) aššubaaku maksuur
(61) laqad kusira ššubaak
(62) tamma kasru ššubaak
(63) kaana ššubaak maksuur

The above four sentences can be translated into English as follows:

- (64) The window is broken.

for sentence (60) above, and

- (65) The window

{was} {has been} broken.

for sentences (61), (62) and (63) above. It thus seems that a passive English sentence like:

- (66) The window was broken

can be translated into Arabic in *three* different ways, as in sentences (61), (62) and (63) above. However, if we marked the English sentences for the *dynamism* or *process* category (by adding 'being', for example, to the verbal construction), our translation options in Arabic would then be limited. Thus:

- (67) The window was being broken

can only be translated as:

- (68) kaana ššubbaak yuksar (process)
(69) kaana ššubbaak yatimmu kasruhu (process)

but not as:

- (70) kaana ššubbaak maksuur (state)

since the passive participle in Arabic indicates a *state* and not a *process* category.

It therefore seems that the reason why an English sentence like

- (66) The window was broken

can have the three translation alternatives in Arabic is because the verbal element in such sentences is unmarked as far as process/state is concerned, viz. this distinction is neutralized. Hence, such sentences can have two semantic readings. If the above sentence was understood to refer to the *process* of 'breaking', then the English-Arabic translator could render it into (a) or (b) below:

- (61) laqad kusira ššubbaak
(62) tamma kasru ššubbaak

whereas if the *static* reading was understood, viz. if the sentence was understood to refer to the window in the *state* of looking broken, then the translator would opt for:

- (63) kaana ššubbaak maksuur

8. Summary and conclusions

This paper, as has been said before, is an attempt to find answers to the four research questions put forward in section 4.2. In brief, the analysis of the English-Arabic translated texts conducted in this paper has made it possible to arrive at the following conclusions:

1. The four translation alternatives in Arabic to the English passive verb are in most cases not in free variation, as they might first look. Rather, the selection of one or the other by English-Arabic translators is determined by factors closely related to the morphological patterns of verbs in Arabic as well as to semantic interrelationships of sentence components in English and Arabic.

2. The translation of an English passive verb by an Arabic passive verb is what is normally expected to be found in English-Arabic translated texts. This is due to the fact that both English and Arabic verbs can usually be passivized and also to the fact that the translation process itself encourages this transfer. Yet, the use of translationally equivalent Arabic passive verbs has in many cases been blocked by various linguistic restrictions.

3. Certain verb patterns in Arabic do not take a passivized form. In cases like these, the active verb form may be used while at the same time keeping the semantic

component of passivity in the sentence intact. This is achieved by using the active form of such Arabic verbs in sentences where the patient, rather than the agent, assumes the grammatical subject position; producing what is called *notional* passive or *pseudo-passive*. In other cases, a nominalized construction is used, with the infinitive of the translationally equivalent Arabic verb or its passive participle.

4. The active form of the Arabic verb is used as the translation equivalent of English passive verbs in two cases. The first, as has just been said above, is in sentences where such verbs are used pseudo-intransitively, viz. where the grammatical subject in the source English sentence as well as its Arabic translation equivalent sentence is not actually the agent but rather the affected patient.

The other case where an active-form verb is used in Arabic to translate an English passive verb is when the agent is overtly expressed in the source English sentences. In such cases English-Arabic translators usually transpose basic components of such English passive sentences producing Arabic active sentences with the overt agent assuming the grammatical subject position and the patient assuming the object position; an arrangement typical of active sentences in both English and Arabic.

5. It has been noted that the nominalized construction with the infinitive is used in Arabic in the translation of English passive verbs in two main situations:

(a) When the passivized verb form, which is the translation equivalent of the source English passive verb, belongs to a morphological pattern which does not take the passive form in Arabic.

(b) When the use of the nominalized construction with the infinitive is in free variation with that of the passivized Arabic verb form; thus providing Arabic with an avenue to avoid using passivized verb forms while still preserving the passivity of the source English sentences.

6. The nominalized construction with the passive participle is used in Arabic in the translation of some English passive verbs when the past participle of the source English sentence is understood to refer to a state rather than to a process. Moreover, the semantic relationship between the passive participles and the preceding NPs in all Arabic sentences in the data has been found to be the same as that of the source English passivized verbs with their preceding NPs, viz. that of a state with a patient. Arabic sentences using nominalized constructions with the passive participle succeed thus in maintaining the notion of passivity of their source translationally equivalent English sentences.

7. It has been found from analyzing the English-Arabic text that the four Arabic translation alternatives equivalent to the English passive verbs are distributed as follows:

Verbs:

(a) active: 27.5% (b) passive: 26.5%

Nominal Constructions:

(a) with the infinitive: 27.5% (b) with the passive participle: 18.5%

It thus becomes obvious that passivized verbs in the Arabic text are only about 25% of those found in the English source text. Similar statistics have been arrived at by other researchers (see Rosenhouse 1988). Yet, Arabic is *not* to be understood as a passive-avoiding language. Rather, the rich morphological system of the Arabic verb as well as the relatively free word order of its sentences provide it with various alternative avenues, other than that of using passivized verb forms, for the expression of passivity in Arabic sentences. Hence Arabic, as has been demonstrated in the present study, does not avoid passivity *but only expresses it differently*.

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