

## Passive Constructions in the Holy Qur'an

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### Abstract

This paper incorporates a fairly detailed analysis of the structures and types of passive constructions in the Holy Qur'an. That is, the study provides a linguistic analysis of forms and structures employed to express the meaning of passive in the Holy Qur'an, but not in other registers.

Most specifically, the study identifies the types of passive and relevant transformations revealing the meaning of passive. Moreover, the study shows that while Arab grammarians have stated some passive constructions that are not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, they have ignored some others. This, for sure, is due to the inimitability and miraculous and wondrous nature of the Holy Qur'an as it has been revealed in the straight Arab tongue.

Most importantly, although passive constructions are optionally and sometimes obligatorily used in Arabic, there are some passive constructions in the Holy Qur'an that are situationally and contextually used, i.e., they are used for certain purposes intended by the Almighty Allah.

Although this study is linguistically descriptive and not pedagogically oriented, it may have, nonetheless, pedagogical implication for foreign language teachers, translators, interpreters, textbook writers, test makers as well as syllabus designers.

The references used in this study, are traditional studies such as Sibawayh, Ibn Malik, Ibn Hisham, Ibn Yaish among others, in addition to the views of the Kufan and Basrian schools. Additionally, references is made to contemporary Arab grammarians such as Hasan, Al-Samarrai, Saad, Al-Rajihi, Maghalseh and Saleh.

**Keywords:** Holy Qur'an, agentive, agentless, janus agent, reflexive verbs, passive participle, active participle, verbal noun.

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### Phonetic symbols of Arabic consonants:

Transliteration		Phonetic Description	Arabic Examples
Arabic Letters	Symbol		
ء	ʔ	glottal stop	ʔamal (hope)
ب	b	voiced bilabial stop	balad (country)
ت	t	voiceless denti- alveolar stop	tammūz (july)
ث	θ	voiceless dental fricative	Θuluθ ( one third)
ج	J	voiced palato-alveolar fricative	jabal (mountain)
ح	ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative	Ḥubūr (joy)
خ	x	voiceless uvular fricative	xabīr (expert)
د	d	voiced denti-alveolar stop	daʕawa(invitation)
ذ	ð	voiced dental fricative	ðahab(gold)
ر	r	alveolar trill /tap	rāya(flag)
ز	z	voiced denti-alveolar fricative	zirāʕa (agriculture)
س	s	voiceless denti-alveolar fricative	sabab (reason)
ش	ʃ	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	ʃahīd ( martyr)
ص	ʂ	voiceless alveolar fricative (emphatic)	ʂawāb(correct)
ض	ḍ	voiced denti-alveolar stop(emphatic)	ḍaʕf (weakness)
ط	ṭ	voiceless denti-alveolar stop (emphatic)	ṭabīb( physician)
ظ	ḏ	voiced interdental fricative (emphatic)	ḏulm (injustice)
ع	ʕ	voiced pharyngeal fricative	ʕabīr (perfume)
غ	gh	voiced uvular fricative	ghibṭa (delight)
ف	f	voiceless labio-dental fricative	fasāha (fluency)
ق	q	voiceless uvular stop	qamūs ( dictionary)
ك	k	voiceless velar stop	kabīra (sin)
ل	l	lateral alveolar	luxa (language)

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م	m	bilabial nasal	murjān (pearls)
ن	n	alveolar nasal	najāh (success)
هـ	h	glottal fricative	hujūm (attack)

### Phonetic symbols of Arabic vowels:

Transliteration		Phonetic description	Arabic Examples
ـَ	a	Short front half-open unrounded	dam (blood)
ـِ	i	Short front open spread	ribāt (ribbon)
ـُ	u	Short front close rounded	mujīr (protector)
ا	ā	Long front open unrounded	ṣābir (patient)
ى	ī	Long front close unrounded	faqīr (poor)
و	ū	Long front close rounded	waqūr (dignified)
وَ	w	non-syllabic labio-dental semi-vowel	waṣf (description)
يَ	y	on-syllabic palatal semi vowel	yaqīn (certainty)

### 1. Introduction

A variety of constructions is used throughout the Holy Qur'an to serve different functions. The passive is one of these constructions that need to be tackled to pave the way for a better understanding of passive constructions particularity in the Holy Qur'an.

This paper will analyze the verses of the Holy Qur'an where the passive is used from semantic and syntactic perspectives since these aspects are significant in determining the meaning of the passive constructions. The term passive, i.e., the construction where the focus is on the event rather than the agent will be explained within the Qur'anic contexts.

The meaning of a cretin Qur'anic verse may vary according to the interference between the verb process and its arguments (participants), whether they are the grammatical subject and object or the semantic agent and theme. This is to say, we have to understand the relationship between the verb (process) and the other words (participants). If the focus is on the meaning of the verbs (processes) and the affecting entities (participants), we deal with these processes from a semantic perspective. If the focus is on the noun phrases that occupy the subject and the object positions (participants), we deal with these processes from a syntactic perspective.

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The lexical theory tends to explain both the semantic effects of passivization and the different meanings they convey and the syntactic principles that correspond to these differences. Passivization in Arabic undergoes word-formation processes, and any change in the construction of the Arabic sentence leads to semantic effects on the relations between the lexical items in the passive constructions. The lexical theory provides an analysis of the change in the order of the constituents, and their functions. The relationship between the verb and its arguments is the focus of the lexical theory.

The passive verb in the lexical theory indicates a shift in the roles that lexical items encode in this construction. Lexically speaking, the passive is defined as a situation in which the chief participant is affected, but not volitionally initiating entity, and in which the agentive participant exists within the awareness of the speaker.

The relationship between the arguments and the verbs (processes) are referred to as the thematic roles that assign functions to each argument of the verb in a sentence. Filmore (1968) and Jackendoff (1972) discuss these lexical entries. They argue that each argument bears a particular thematic role to its predicate verb. Jackendoff (1972) and Formkin et. al. (2010) list the following theta-roles:

Theme: the one or thing that undergoes an action, e.g:

1. قُتِلَ الْخَرَّاصُونَ (الذاريات: 10)  
Cursed be conjecturers. (Az-Zāriyāt:10)

Agent (actor): the one who performs an action, e.g:

2. مَا يُوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (البقرة:105).

It is never the wish of those without Faith among the People of the Book nor of the polytheists. That anything good should come down to you from your Lord  
(Al- Baqara: 105)

Experience: the one who perceives something or the entity experiencing some psychological state, e.g:

3. فَغَلَبُوا هَنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صَاغِرِينَ (الاعراف:119).

So they were vanquished there and then, and turned about humble. (Al -A<sup>r</sup> rāf:119)

Benefactive: the entity benefiting from some action, e.g:

4. وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ يُعْطُوا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ (التوبة:58).

And among them are men who slander thee in the matter of (the distribution of) the alms. If they are given part thereof, they are pleased, but if not, (i.e. , they are not given) behold! they are indignant! (At- Tawba: 58).

Instrument: the means by which an action is performed, e.g:

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5. فأما ثمود فأهلكوا بالطاغية وأما عاد فأهلكوا بريح صرر عاتية (الحاقة: 5-6).

But the Thamud: d, they were destroyed by a terrible storm of thunder and lightning!  
And the Ad, they were destroyed by a furious wind, exceedingly violent. (Al- Hāqqa: 5-6)

Goal: the place to which an action is directed, or the entity towards which something moves, e.g.:

6. ينقلب إلى أهله مسرورا (الانشقاق: 9).

And he will turn to his people, rejoicing! (Al- Inshiqāq:9)

See (2 .1. below).

Source: the entity from which something moves or originates e.g:

7. ويرى الذين أوتوا العلم الذي أنزل إليك من ربك هو الحق (سبا: 6).

And those to whom knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to thee from thy Lord. That is the truth. (Saba? :6)

This study will help researchers to gain a better understanding of passive constructions. It will also help linguists to compare the semantic and syntactic properties of the passive within the Quranic discourse. Studying the meaning and the structure of the passive constructions in the Holy Quran, students, as well as commentators, will understand the distinctiveness of the passive as a linguistic universal principle that permits a change in the constituent structure of a language without affecting the thematic roles of these constituents.

The importance of the passive construction has been recognized by a number of grammarians. The ancient Arab grammarians like Ibn Jinny and Al-Zamkhshari focus on syntactic aspects of the passive and how this construction is formed. On the other hand, Ibn Kathir and Al-Alusy among others concentrate on the semantic aspects of the language of the Holy Quran, but few of them deal with types of passive construction used particularly in the Holy Quran, and the relevant transformations revealing the meaning of passive. Section (i) incorporates the types of passive sentences: agentive, agentless, and passive sentences with janus agents. Section (ii) incorporates the constructions (relevant transformations) that reveal the meaning of passive, i.e, reflexive verbs, passive participles, active participles, verbal noun, and verbs of existence +verbal nouns.

### 2. Types (classes) of Arabic Passive Sentences

In their analysis of passive sentences, traditional Arab grammarians, beginning with Sibawayhi and ending with Ibn Malik, usually focus on the forms of passive verbs. They do not classify this construction into types. Unlike agents in English passive sentences, which can be overtly expressed, agents in Arabic passive sentences generally do not appear in surface structure. That is to say, the agent in Arabic passive sentences, in most cases, is obligatorily deleted\*. However, some Quranic passive sentences incorporate overtly expressed agents. Thus Quranic passive sentences can be divided into two types, namely, (i) agentless passive sentences and (ii) agentive passive sentences.

#### 2.1. Agentless Passive Sentences

As stated above, Arabic does not customarily allow the retention of the agent in the surface

structure of the passive constructions. Agentless passive is a passive sentence that does not have an overt agentive by-phrase, and where the suppressed agent is either (i) unspecified or (ii) can be uniquely recovered from the context. Our investigation of passive sentences that occur in the Holy Quran shows that agentless passive constructions do frequently occur in the Holy Quran. However, they occur more than agentive passive constructions. Khalil A. (1989) found that out of the total number of 18,181 verbs in the Holy Qur'an, only 957 have the passive form, that is 5.3%. He cited this evidence to prove that active verbs are more basic than passive ones, and that they are more frequently used than passive verbs. The following are illustrative examples:

8. ولقد أرسلنا برسل من قبلك فحاق بالذين سخروا منهم ما كانوا به يستهزئون (الانعام: 10).

Mocked were (many) messengers before thee; But their scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked. (AI-An'ām: 10).

9. يأياها الذين آمنوا كتب عليكم الصيام كما كتب على الذين من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون. (البقرة: 183).

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self - restraint. (AI-Baqara: 183)

### 2.2. Agentive Passive Sentences

As pointed out in 2.1 above, some passive sentences that occur in the Holy Quran upon which this study is based have overtly expressed agents. This, of course, contradicts the belief which is commonly held by Arab grammarians that Arabic passive sentences do not have expressed agent. This, of course, explains why passive sentences are called **al-mabni lil-majhul**, that is sentences whose agent is unknown. There is agreement among early and modern grammarians that the mabni lil-majhul results in the syntactic deletion of the subject / actor and its substitution by the object/ affected participant, which not only occupies its position but also assumes all diacritic features a subject usually takes (cf. Sibawayh , 1985 :42, Al- 'anṣārī , 1996 :74 , among others) . However, in the Holy Qur'an it is not infrequent to find agentive / long passive constructions.

In fact, some contemporary Arab grammarians such as Saad (1982) and Khalil (1988) believe that Arabic contains a set of passive sentences that have overtly expressed agents such as (i) **min**, (ii) **min qibali**, (iii) **min ja:nibi** and (iv) **'ala: yadai**. However, it may be stated that these overtly expressed agents are a contemporary innovation especially in newspapers and in translation from European languages (See Khalil, 1989). Our investigation in the Holy Qur'an shows that some passive sentences have expressed agents.

The following verses from the Holy Qur'an where the preposition **min** and **min ladun** play the role of agentive passive particle prove this point:

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\*Like transformational grammarians, we assume that passive sentences incorporate an agent in their deep structure.

10. قل إنما اتبع ما يوحى إلي من ربي (الاعراف: 203).

Say: "I but follow what is revealed to me from my Lord". (AI-A'rāf:203)

11. آمن الرسول بما أنزل إليه من ربه والمؤمنون (البقرة: 282).

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The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord as do the men of faith. (AI-Baqara: 282)

12. كتاب أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ (هود:1)

This is a Book with verses fundamental (of established meaning), further explained in detail from One who is wise and well- acquainted (with all things). (Hūd:1)

13. وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ (النمل:6)

As for thee, thou receivest the Quran from One All- wise, All knowing (AI-Naml:6)

Mentioning the agent in the prepositional phrase is pragmatically motivated; the origin of the Holy Qur'an having been disputed by the unbelievers, mentioning of the agent reinforces the idea that Allah is the originator of the Qur'an.

Passive verb phrases are less common and used for special discourse functions. They reduce the importance of the agent of an action and fulfill other discourse functions. The frequency of both forms of the passive varies greatly in Holy Qur'an. Passive may occur as either agentless or agentive. In agentless passives (also called short passive) the agent is not specified.

14. وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ (آل عمران:169)

Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay they live, finding their sustenance from their Lord. (AI-Imrān:169)

15. فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأَكْفِرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَدْخُلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ (آل عمران:195)

Those who have left their homes, and were driven out therefrom and suffered harm in My Cause, and fought and were slain, verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath. (AI-Imrān:195)

16. يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرُّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ (النساء:42)

On that day those who reject faith and disobey the Messenger will wish that the earth were made one with them. (AI-Nisa':42)

17. إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ خَلْفٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ (المائدة:33)

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land. (AI-Mā'idā: 33).

Agentive passive (also called long passive), on the other hand, contains a by-phrase which in typical cases specifies the agent of the action. Although the long passive (with a by- phrase) is much less common in the Holy Quran, it is used for specific discourse functions.

In principle, the long passive can be replaced by an active clause with the same meaning.

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For example, the following verses are long passive, and they could be used as active clauses instead.

18. a. **واتبع ما يُوحى اليك من ربك** ( الاحزاب:2 )

But follow that which comes to thee by inspiration from thy Lord. (Al-Ahzāb:2)

b. **وان اهتديت فيما يُوحى إلى ربي** (سبأ: 50)

But if I receive guidance, it is because of the inspiration of my Lord to me (Sabā:50)

19. a. **ويقول الذين كفروا لولا أنزل عليه آية من ربه** (الرعد: 7)

"And the unbelievers say does not his Lord send him a sign "AI-Rāʿd: 7)

b. **الحمد لله الذي أنزل على عبده الكتاب ولم يجعل له عوجا** (الكهف: 1)

Praise be to Allah who hath sent to His Servant The Book, and hath allowed therein no crookedness. (Al- Kahf: 1)

However, the active clause would have been less appropriate than the passive clause. Why? There are three interconnected motivations for choosing the long passive. ( cf . Biber , D.et.al.2002:169).

- Principle 1: The long passive is used to accord with the information-flow principle: The preference for presenting new information at the end of a clause. If we look at a clause in its discourse context, some elements refer back to information that is familiar due to the preceding discourse -i.e. given information- and other elements present new information. The typical word order is to start with given information and move to new. This, in the above verses, means the given information (**واتبع ما يُوحى اليك**) and (**لولا أنزل عليه آية**) is placed before new information (**من ربه**) and (**من ربه**). Given-new order of information contributes to the cohesion of a text. The given information is usually related to its previous mention, and the new information is often taken up in the following discourse. This order of information makes it easier for receivers to understand, because the clause starts with something that is familiar.
- Principle 2: The long passive is used to accord with the end weight principle: long and complex (i.e. heavier) elements are placed towards the end of the clause. This placement helps hearers and readers to follow the message more easily, because they do not have to keep in their minds complex information from the beginning of the clause as they reach the end of the clause. Many heavy elements also contain a large amount of new information. The information-flow principle and end-weight principle therefore often reinforce one another. This means that a " heavier" (or more lengthy) element of the clause, in this case the agent, is placed at the end, where it does not hold up the processing of the rest of the clause.
- Principle 3: The long passive is used to place initial emphasis on an element of the clause which is the topic, or theme, of the current discourse. In any clause, there is usually at least one point of focus. This point receives some prominence in the clause. Typically, the focus occurs naturally on the last lexical item in the clause. The general principle governing focus is therefore known as the principle of end-focus. When the information-flow principle is being followed, new information, which occurs at the end of the clause, will be the focus. Examples (12a) and (12b) above illustrate the three principles well:

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- 12a, unlike 12b begins with given information: "آيه" has already been mentioned. In contrast "من ربه" is new information.
- 12a, unlike 12b, begins with a reference to "آيه" which is the current topic of the discourse. In 12b the topic "من ربه" would have been placed at end of the clause.
- 12a, unlike 12b, begins with a short one word phrase as its subject (آيه). It ends with a longer phrase (من ربه) as its agent. This situation is reversed in 12b.

### 2.3. Passive Sentences with Janus Agents \*

Another point worth mentioning here is that within agentive passive, there are some passives that have two possible agents, depending on the interpretation of the agentive phrase itself, in particular the preposition introducing this phrase. The use of the prepositional phrase in some agentive passive sentences leads to ambiguity, depending on the interpretation of the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase may be interpreted as an agent or as an adjunct. This sub-type may be called Janus-Agents. In other words the nominal part may function as an active subject or the whole phrase may function as a sentential adjunct. The following verse is an illustrative example:

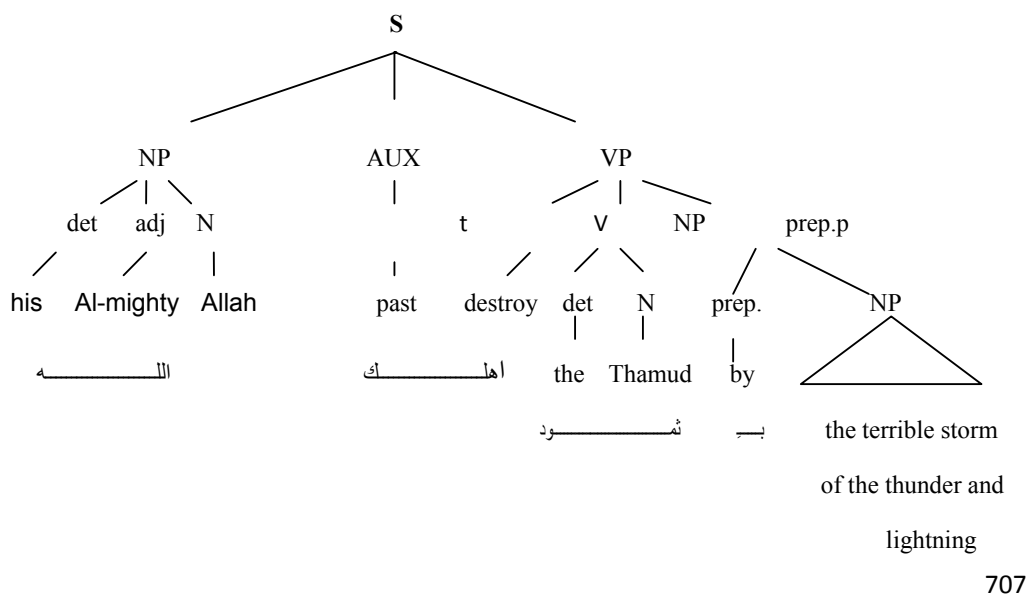
20. a فاما ثمود فاهلكوا بالطاغية وأما عاد فاهلكوا بريح صرصر عاتية (الحاقة:5-6)

But the Thamud, they were destroyed by a terrible storm of thunder and lightning! And the Ad, they were destroyed by a furious wind, exceedingly violent. (Al-Hāqqa:5-6)

Verse No 20 above illustrates this point. The verse can be interpreted as either:

b. أهلك الله ثمود بالطاغية وأهلك الله عاداً بريح صرصر عاتية.

The Mighty Allah destroyed the Thmud by a terrible storm of thunder and lightning, and He destroyed the Ad by a furious wind, exceedingly violent:



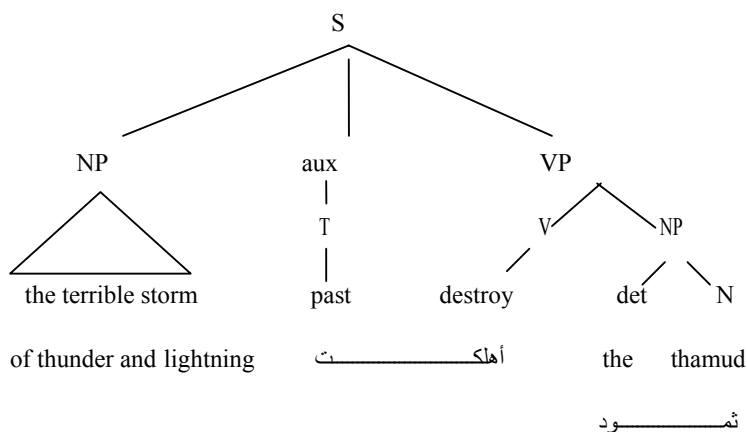
❖ This appellation is borrowed from English.

or as :

أهلكت الطاغية ثمود وأهلكت الريح الصرصر العاتية عاداً

A terrible storm of thunder and lightning destroyed the Thamud, and the furious wind, exceedingly violent, destroyed the Ad.

20. c



الطاغية

Similarly the following verses can be interpreted differently:

21. a وإن يستغيثوا يُغاثوا بماء كالمهل يشوي الوجوه (الكهف:29)

If they implore relief, they will be granted water like melted brass, that will scald their faces. (Al-Kahf:29).

b. وإن يستغيثوا يُغِيثهم الله بماء كالمهل يشوي الوجوه.

If they implore relief, the Al-mighty Allah will grant them with water like melted brass, that will scald their faces.

c. وإن يستغيثوا يُغِيثهم ماء كالمهل يشوي الوجوه.

If they implore relief, water like melted brass will scald their faces.

22. a (الرعد: 31) ولوان قرأنا سُيرت به الجبال أو قطعت به الأرض أو كُلم به الموتى بل الله الأمر جميعاً

If there were a Quran with which mountains were moved, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak (Ar-Rā'd:31)

b ولو أن الله سير الجبال بالقرآن أو قطع به الأرض أو كلم به الموتى .

If the Al-mighty Allah moved mountains, or cloved asunder the earth, or spoke to the dead with the Qur'an.

c ولو أن القرآن سير الجبال أو قطع الأرض أو كلم الموتى .

If the Quran moved the mountains, or cloved asunder the earth, or spoke to the dead.

The preposition "bi" in the above verses indicates the instrument used to carry out the action. This use of the preposition has been called by Arab grammarians **ba:ʔ ʔal-ʔistiʔa:na= the "bi" of instrument**. Palmer (1987) also calls this an instrument phrase. One more point that is worth mentioning in this context is that the agent in the above passive constructions (13-15) can be either the Almighty Allah as agent, and in this case it is implicit, or instrument in the active counterparts. Thus, it can be safely stated that the prepositional phrases in (a) sentences may be interpreted as adjuncts whereas they are agents in (b) sentences.

### 3. Relevant Transformations

Ibn Malik argues that the passive sentence is transformed from its active counterpart. The Kufans believe that the passive verb is not transformed from its active counterpart. See (Ibn Usfur, 1970, Vol 2: 478). Unlike the Kufans, the Basrians, represented by Sibawayh, believe that the passive verb is derived from its active counterpart.

It can be pointed out that contemporary Arab grammarians such as Hasan (1975), Al-Samarrāi (1980), Saad (1982), and Al-Rajhi (1985) do not differ much in their analysis of the passive from the traditionalists. This is due to the fact that contemporary grammarians are explicating the traditional concepts by means of their own examples representing current use without departing from the main grammatical framework postulated by traditional grammarians.

The Holy Quran shows that there are other constructions revealing the meaning of passive besides the agentive and agentless passive sentences mentioned in section I above. It is worth mentioning that such constructions are frequently used in the Holy Quran. The constructions may be divided as follows:

1. ʔafʔ a:l ʔal-muta:waʔa (Reflexive Verbs)
2. ʔismul-mafʔu:l (passive participle) (including compound passives)
3. Fʔil-ʔal-kawn +ʔal-musdar (Verb of Existence + Verbal Noun)
4. ʔism- ʔal -Fa:ʔ il( (Active Participle)
5. ʔal-masdar (Verbal Noun)

#### 3. 1. ʔafʔa:l ʔal-muta:waʔa (Reflexive Verbs)

The Arabic passive is heavily expressed by reflexive verbs in the Holy Quran. This finding

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affirms the assumption of Abdu (1973:89), Al-Samarrai (1980:97) and Khalil (1989:15) that reflexive forms are commonly used in Arabic. Moreover, reflexive verbs and the unmarked passive forms are related in the sense that reflexive verbs carry the passive meaning for the following reasons:

1. The agent is suppressed in both cases.
2. Both constructions occur in the Holy Qur'an.

The reflexive verbs that occur in Holy Qur'an and express the passive meaning are the following with illustrative examples:

### 3.1.1. ?infaʿala

23. فإذا إنشقت السماء فكانت وردة كالدهان ( الرحمن:37).

When the sky is rent asunder, and it becomes red like ointment (Al-Rahmān: 37)

24. فقلنا اضرب بعصاك الحجر فانفجرت منه اثنتا عشرة عينا (البقرة: 60)

We said:" Strike the rock with thy staff." Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs (Al Baqara: 60).

25. فانقلبوا بنعمة من الله وفضل آل عمران:(174).

And they returned with grace and bounty (Al-Imrān:174)

26. فغلبوا هناك وانقلبوا صاغرين (الأعراف:119).

So they were vanquished there and then, and turned about humble. (Al-Aʿrāf:119)

27. إذا السماء انفطرت وإذا الكواكب انتثرت وإذا البحار فجرت وإذا القبور بُعِثرت (الانفطار: 1-4).

When the sky is cleft asunder when the stars are scattered, when the oceans are suffered to burst, when the graves are turned upside down. (Al-infitār: 1-4)

### 3.1.2. Tafaʿʿala

28. a. ليغفر لك الله ما تقدم من ذنبك وما تأخر (الفتح: 4).

That Allah may forgive thee thy faults of the past and those to follow. (Al-Fath: 4)

- b. إن أجل الله إذا جاء لا يؤخر لو كنتم تعلمون ( نوح: 4).

For the Term given by Allah is accomplished, it cannot be put forward: If ye only know. (Nūh: 4)

29. a. يوماً تتقلب فيه القلوب والابصار (النور: 37).

For the Day when hearts and eyes will be turned about. (Al-Noor:37)

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b. يوماً تُقلب وجوههم في النار ( الاحزاب:66)

The Day that their faces will be turned over in the Fire.(Al-Ahzāb:66)

30. a. لا يزال بنيانهم الذي بنوا ريبة في قلوبهم إلا أن تُقطع قلوبهم والله عليم حكيم ( التوبة:110)

Until their hearts are cut into pieces. And Allah is All-knowing wise. (At-Tawba: 110)

b. إنما جزاء الذين يحاربون الله ويسعون في الأرض فساداً أن يُقتلوا أو يُصلبوا أو تُقطع أيديهم وأرجلهم من خلاف أو ينفوا من الأرض (المائدة:33)

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land. (Al-Mā'idā: 33).

3. 1.3. ʔiftāʔala

31.a. فإن أسلموا فقد اهتدوا (آل عمران:20)

If they do, they are in the right guidance (Al -Imrān:20)

b. ومن يعتصم بالله فقد هُدى إلى صراط مستقيم (آل عمران:101)

Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a Way that is straight. (Al- Imrān:101)

32. a. فلما أن جاء البشير ألقاه على وجهه فارتد بصيراً ( يوسف:96)

Then when the bearer of the good news came, he cast (the shirt) over his face, and he forthwith regained clear sight. (Yusuf: 96)

b. ثم رُدوا إلى الله مولاهم الحق ( الأنعام :62)

Then are they retuned unto Allah, their True Protector. (Al-Anʔām:62)

3.1. 4. Tafāʔala

33. a. أم جعلو لله شركاء خلقه فتشابه الخلق عليهم (الرعد:16)

Or do they assign to Allah partners who have created (any thing) as He has created, so that the creation seemed to them similar? (Al- Raʔd:16)

b. وما قتلوه وما صلبوه ولكن سُيِّه لهم (النساء:157)

But they killed him not, nor crucified him. Only a likeness of that was shown to them (Al- Nisāʔ : 157)

34. a. تبارك اسم ربك ذي الجلال والإكرام ( الرحمن:78)

Blessed be the name of Lord, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.( Al-Rahman:78)

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b. فلما جاءها نودي أن يورك من في النار ومن حولها وسبحان الله رب العالمين ( النمل:8).

But when he came to the Fire, a voice was heard: "Blessed are those in the Fire and those around: And Glory to Allah, the Lord of the World. (Al-Naml : 8)

### 3.2. ?ismul-maf'u: l (Passive Participle)

The passive may also be expressed by means of the passive participle in the Holy Quran which functions as pre-modifier(attributive adjective), post-modifier, subject complement, or object complement (predicative adjective) particularly if translated into English. Consider the following verses respectively.

35. ولهم فيها أزواج مُطهرة (البقرة:25)

And have therein spouses purified (Al-Baqara:25)

36. ذلك بأنهم قالوا لن تمسنا النار إلا إياماً معدودات (آل عمران:24)

This because they say:"The Fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days (Al-Imān: 24)

37. والشمس والقمر والنجوم مسخرات (الأعراف:54).

And the sun, the moon, and the stars (all) are subservient by His command. (Al-A'rāf : 54)

38. ونخرج له يوم القيامة كتاباً يلقاه منشوراً (الاسراء :13)

On the Day of Judgment we shall bring out for him a scroll which he will see spread open. (Al-Isrā : 13)

?ismul – maf'u:l (passive participle) in Arabic imports the meaning of passive . This construction always comes after the head noun since Arabic in most cases does not allow the adjective to precede the noun it modifies. Sometimes ?ismul- maf'u:l functions as an adjective as in the above examples. However, the passive participles in the above verses: مُطهرة (**purified**), معدودات (**numbered**), مسخرات (**subservient**), and منشوراً (**spread open**) convey the meaning of passive function as post-modifier in (34), pre-modifier in (35), subject complement in (36) and object complement in (37) , particularly if they are translated into English .

?ism-?al-maf'u:l constructions (passive participle) may correspond to semi-passive or quasi-passive in English. Sentences that belong to this class have verbal , adjectival, and nominal properties depending on linguistic and/or situational context. That is to say, these passive participles originally come from passive constructions. The following verses exemplify this point:

39. a. والذين آتيناهم الكتاب يعلمون أنه مُنزل من ربك بالحق (الانعام:114)

To whom we have given the book, that it hath been sent down from thy Lord (Al-An'ām: 114)

b. أفمن يعلم أنما أُنزل إليك من ربك الحق كمن هو أعمى ( الرعد:19)

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Is then one who doth know that that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the Truth like one is blind? (Al-Ra'd:19)

40. a. (الحجر:48) لا يمسه فيها نصب وما هم منها بمخرجين

There no sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave. (Al-Hijr: 48)

b. (الحج:40) الذين أُخرجوا من ديارهم بغير حق إلا أن يقولوا ربنا الله

They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah". (Al-Hajj: 40)

41. a. (هود:43) وحال بينهم الموج فكان من المغرقين

And the waves came between them, and the son was among those who were drowned (Hūd: 43)

b. (هود:25) مما خطيئاتهم أغرقوا فأدخلوا ناراً

Because of their sins they were drowned (in the flood) and were made to enter the Fire. (Hūd: 25)

42. a. (آل عمران:7) هو الذي أنزل عليك الكتاب منه آيات محكمات

He it is who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental clear in meaning (Al-Imrān: 7)

b. (هود:1) كتاب أحكمت آياته ثم فصلت من لدن حكيم خبير

This is a book, with verses fundamental (of established meaning), further explained in details, from one who is wise and Well-Acquainted (with all things). (Hūd: 1)

43. a. (ص:19) والطير محشورة كل له أواب

And the birds gathered (in assemblies): all with him did turn (to Allah). (Ṣād: 19)

b. (الأنفال:36) والذين كفروا إلى جهنم يُحشرون

And the unbelievers will be gathered together to Hell. (Al-Anfāl: 36)

The underlined passive participles in (a) sentences above have verbal properties as they have corresponding passive verses as illustrated in (b) sentences. Similarly, they have adjectival properties as they function as modifiers as illustrated in 41.a and 42.a. or they occur in the predicative positions, i.e they have nominal properties as illustrated in 32.a, 33.a. and 34.a. Moreover, similar to what comes after the passive verb is parsed as pro-agent, what comes after the passive participle is parsed as pro-agent ( *na:ʔib ʔal- fa:ʔil*) as well.

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44. إنما الصدقات للفقراء والمساكين والعاملين عليها والمؤلفة قلوبهم (التوبة: 60)

Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds): for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (At-Tawba:60)

45. ذلك يوم مجموع له الناس (هود: 103)

That is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together. (Hūd: 103)

46. جنات عدن مفتحة لهم الأبواب (ص: 50)

Gardens of Eternity, whose doors will (ever) be open to them (ṣād: 50)

In the above verse مجموع, الناس, and الأبواب function as pro-agents to the passive participle مفتحة and المؤلفة respectively. See Maghalseh (2007:532).

Finally, it should be pointed out that within passive participles, there are some negative passive participles. They may be called compound passive participles\*\* because they are morphologically isolated from the active form but not having an infinitive.

The negative passive participles in the following verses consist of two morphemes "ghayru" the negative particle) and 'ism ?al-maf'ūl (passive participle). The negative particle "ghayru" can join or apply to passive participle in the above verses and the like, but it can not join the infinitive. That is to say غير مخلقة, غير مردود, غير معروشات, غير مسكونة, مكذوب, غير المغضوب, غير يخلق, \* غير يرد, \* غير يعرش, \* غير يسكن, \* غير يكذب, \* غير يغضب, but not غير ملومين and \* غير يلوم and \* غير يخلق, \* غير يرد, \* غير يعرش, \* غير يسكن, \* غير يكذب, \* غير يغضب, but not غير ملومين

46. غير المغضوب عليهم (الفاتحة:7)

Those whose portion is not wrath. (Al-Fatiha:7)

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\*\* This appellation is borrowed from English.

47. ذلك وعد غير مكذوب (هود: 65)

(Behold) there a promise not to be belied!" (Hūd:65)

48. ليس عليكم جناح أن تدخلوا بيوتاً غير مسكونة (النور: 29)

It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used (Al -Nūr :29)

49. وهو الذي أنشأ جنات معروشات وغير معروشات (الأنعام: 141)

It is He who produced Gardens, with tellises and without. (Al-An'ām:141)

50. وإنهم آتاهم عذاب غير مردود (هود: 76)

There cometh a chastisement that cannot be turned out. (Hūd:37)

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51. ثم من مضغة مخلقة وغير مخلقة (الحج:5).

Then out of morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed. (AI-Hajj:5)

52. فإنهم غير ملومين (المعارج:30).

For (then) they are not to be blamed (AI-Ma'ārij :30)

### 3.3. Fi'l- ?al-kawn+?al-musdar (Verb of Existence + Verbal Noun)

The Holy Quran shows that passive can be expressed by the construction of a verb of existence and a verbal noun. The verbs that are used in this context and occurred in the Holy Qur'an are أخذ, جعل, يؤتى, أصاب, أعد, خر, جعل, أخذ. Consider the following verses.

53.a فأخذتهم الصاعقة بظلمهم (النساء:153)

But they were seized for their presumption, by thunder and lightning (AI-Nisā':153)

54. a حتى إذا أخذت الأرض زخرفها وازينت (يونس: 24)

Till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out in beauty. (Yunus:24)

55.a فلما تجلى ربه للجبل جعله دكاً وخر موسى صعقاً (آل عمران:143)

When his Lord manifested Himself to the Mound He made it as dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon (AI-Afrāf:143)

56. a سيصيب الذين كفروا عذاب أليم (التوبة:90)

Soon will a grievous chastisement seize the unbelievers among them (AI-Tawba:95)

57. a أعد الله لهم مغفرة وأجرًا عظيمًا (الاحزاب:35)

For them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward (AI-Ahzāb: 35)

58. a واعتدنا لها رزقاً كريماً (الاحزاب:31)

And we have prepared for her a generous sustenance. (AI-Ahzāb:31)

59. a سوف نؤتيه أجراً عظيماً (النساء:74)

Soon shall we give him a reward of great value (AI-Nisā':74)

60.a ولقد جاءهم من ربهم الهدى (النجم:23)

Even though there has already come to them guidance from their Lord (AI-Najm: 32)

The structures of verbs of existence plus verbal nouns in the above verses convey the meaning of passive. That is, they may be converted into passive verb forms without any change in meaning as follows respectively:

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**53. b** فَصُعِقُوا بِظُلْمِهِمْ

They got seized (struck) by thunder and lightning for their presumption.

**54. b** زُخِّرَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَازِينَتْ

The earth got ornamented.

**55. b** ذُكِّجَ الْجَبَلُ وَصُعِقَ مُوسَى

The Mound got dusted and Moses got seized (struck)

**56. b** سَيُعَذِّبُونَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

They will get zeized by a grievous chastisement

**57. b** سَيُغْفَرُ لَهُمْ وَيُؤْجَرُونَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

They will get prepared forgiveness and they will get rewarded

**58. b** سَتُرْزَقُ رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا

She will get sustained (get prepared for her sustenance)

**59. b** سَيُؤْجَرُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

He will get rewarded

**60. b** وَهَدُوا مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ

They were guided from this Lord

Verbs of existence plus verbal nouns constructions may correspond to "get passive" in English as "get" carries with it the meaning of "arrive at a resultant state. The existence verbs, "أخذ", "جعل", "خر", "جاء", "يؤتي", "اعتد", "أعد", "أصاب" and the verbal nouns accompanied may correspond to "get passive" as illustrated in the above sentences.

### 3.4. ? ismul-Fā'il (Active Participle)

Active participles are heavily used in the Holy Qur'an to express the meaning of the passive. The following verses are illustrative examples:

**61. a.** (البقرة: 167) كَذَلِكَ يَرِيهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ

Thus will Allah show them (the Fruits of ) their deeds as (nothing but) regrets. Nor will there be a way for them out of the Fire (Al-Baqara: 167)

**b.** (الحجر: 48) لَا يَمْسُهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرِجِينَ

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There no sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave.  
(Al-Hijr:48)

c. كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس (آل عمران: 11)

Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind.(Al- Imrān:110)

62. a. وما لهم من ناصرين (آل عمران: 22)

Nor will they have anyone to help (Al- Imrān: 22)

b. أنهم لهم المنصرون (الصافات: 172)

That they would certainly be assisted (AI-Şāfāt: 172)

c. ولا هم يُنصرون (الطور: 46)

And no help shall be given them. (At-Tūr: 46)

63. a. كل إلينا راجعون (الأنبياء: 93)

(Yet) will they all return to us. (AI-Anbiyā':93)

b. إلينا ترجعون (الأنبياء: 35)

To us must ye return (AI-Anbiyā':35)

64. a. ويدخله جنات تجري من تحتها الأنهار خالدين فيها أبداً (التغابن: 9)

And He will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever.(At- Tagābun:9)

b. ويظوف عليهم ولدان مخلدون (الانسان: 19)

And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (Freshness). (AI-Insān:19)

The underlined active participles in the (a) verses express the meaning of passive as they occur as passive participles, which convey the meaning of passive, as illustrated in (b) verses. Similarly they occur as passive verbs as illustrated in (c) verses. It is worth mentioning that the active participle "خالدين" in 63 (a) is related to the Garden or the Fire, but the passive participle "مخلدون" is related to the Garden only. Besides, the passive form "يُخلد" does not occur in the Holy Quran.

### 3.5. ?al-Masdar (Verbal Noun)

The last type of construction that expresses the meaning of passive is the verbal noun. This finding agrees with Shabaneh (1981) that passive may be expressed by means of ?al-masdar (verbal noun) in Arabic. Consider the following verses:

65. a. ثم إلينا مرجعكم فننبئكم بما كنتم تعملون (يونس: 23)

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To Us is your return and We shall show you the truth of all ye did (Yunus:23)

b. ثم إلى ربكم ترجعون (السجدة: 11)

Then shall ye be brought back to your Lord (AI-Sajda:11)

66. a. لهم اللعنة وسوء الدار ( غافر: 52)

But they will (only) have the curse and the home of misery (Ghāfir:52)

b. لعنوا في الدنيا والآخرة (النور: 23)

They are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter.( AI-Noor:23)

67. a. إلى ربك يومئذ المساق (القيامة: 30)

That Day the Drive will be (all) to thy Lord (AI-Qiyama:30)

b. كأنما يساقون إلى الموت وهم ينظرون (الانفال: 6)

As if they were being driven to death while they see it. (AI-Anfāl:6)

68. a. ولهم رزقهم فيها بكرة وعشيا (مريم: 62)

And they will have therein sustenance, morning and evening (Mariam:62)

b. كلما رُزقوا فيها من ثمرة رزقاً قالوا هذا الذي رزقنا من قبل (البقرة: 25)

Every time they are fed with fruit therefore, they say this is what we were fed with before.(AI-Baqara:25)

69. قالت ما جزاء من أراد بأهلك سوءاً إلا أن يُسجن أو عذاب أليم (يوسف: 25)

She said "What is the fitting punishment for one who formed as an evil design against thy wife, but prison or a grievous chastisement (Yusuf:25)

70. أولئك لهم مغفرة وأجر عظيم ( هود: 11)

For them is forgiveness and a great reward. (Hūd:11)

Verbal nouns in (a) verses above may import the meaning of passive since they can be converted into passive constructions without any change in meaning as illustrated in (b) verses. It is worth noting that the verbal nouns, مغفرة عذاب, and أجر in verses 61 and 62 above do not have passive forms in the Holy Quran. This may refer to the fact that Allah does not intend to torture people, as regards يُعذب. Regarding يُغفر and يُؤجر Allah is the only one who forgives and rewards.

### 4. Conclusion

The facts presented in this paper demonstrate beyond any doubt that voice is a  
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grammatical category that exists in Arabic in general and in the Holy Qur'an in particular. They also prove that it is one of the options available to native speakers of Arabic to express certain communicative functions.

Active sentences are more frequently used than passive sentences in the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an has agentive and agentless passive constructions. But agentless passive constructions remarkably outnumber agentive ones.

Semantically speaking, although Arabic has only agentless passive sentences, some Arabic passive sentences in the Holy Qur'an have explicitly stated agents for certain purposes meant by the Almighty Allah. The expressed agent in the Holy Qur'an is introduced by (i) *min* or (ii) *min ladun*. Moreover, agentive (long) passive sentences in the Holy Qur'an are used to accord with the information-flow principle, end weight principle, and end-focus principle.

We can conclude that there are some constructions revealing the meaning of passive in the Holy Qur'an, namely: *ʾismul-mafʿāl* (passive participle), *ʾafʿāl ʾal-mutāwʿaʿa* (reflexive verbs) with different forms (*ʾinfaʿala*, *tafaʿala*, *ʾiftaʿala*, *tafāʿala*), *fīʾl ʾal-kawn* + *ʾal-masdar* (verbs of existence + verbal noun), *ʾismul-fāʿ al* (active participle) and *ʾal-masdar* (verbal noun). These constructions have their passive counterparts and/or they can be transformed into passive constructions without any change in meaning.

### 5. Implications

Although this study is linguistically descriptive and is not pedagogically oriented, it may have, nonetheless, pedagogical implications for foreign language teachers, learners, translators, textbook writers, test makers as well as syllabus designers.

This study may in various ways help the language teachers and learners and translators in identifying the syntactic passive forms and structures that have different functions. In other words, this study may help students of EFL and translators understand the major similarities and differences between Arabic and English. Moreover, it may help the teacher to diagnose and remedy the difficulties the students may encounter.

In this sense, the findings of this study may be used by text book writers, test makers, syllabus designers and teachers of English and Arabic as foreign languages.

Moreover, this study may be helpful to ESP practitioners who are interested in preparing ESP teaching materials based on the analysis of authentic texts and concerned with the syntactic functions and meanings, in terms of categories and functions, which are conveyed by the syntactic passive constructions.

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### خلاصة

تُعنى هذه الورقة بدراسة وصفية تفصيلية لتراكيب المبني للمجهول في القرآن الكريم حيث ستقوم الدراسة بتحليل لغوي للتراكيب والمباني اللغوية المستخدمة في القرآن الكريم للتعبير عن الفعل المبني للمجهول والتي لم يذكرها النحاه . وهذا مرده بالتأكيد إلى طبيعة القرآن الفريدة والإعجازية حيث أنزل بلسان عربي بليغ .

تتضمن هذه الدراسة رغم أنها دراسة لغوية وصفية بعض المؤشرات التعليمية لمدرسي اللغات الأجنبية والمترجمين ومؤلفي الكتب المقررة وواضعي الاختبارات ومصممي المناهج.

أما المراجع المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة بالإضافة إلى القرآن الكريم فإنها تعود إلى بعض النحويين التقليديين كسيبويه , وابن مالك , وابن هشام , وابن يعيش , وابن عصفور و ابن كثير بالإضافة إلى مدرستي البصرة والكوفة , و النحويين المعاصرين مثل ابراهيم السامرائي , وعبد الله الراجحي , ومحمود المغالسة , وآخرون .