

Middle Voice in English and Arabic**Instructor: Widad Sabir Shakir (MA)****University-Erbil - College of Languages****Salahaddin - Department of English****sewda98@rocketmail.com****Abstract:**

This paper is about middle voice in English and Arabic. Middle voice does not exist in all languages of the world, but there are languages that express middle voice; a voice that can be described as active and as passive at the same time as it has the characteristics of both of them. The paper compares middle voice in English and Arabic focusing on the verbs that are used in this voice in both languages to show areas of similarity and difference in the kind of the verb used to express this voice in the two languages under study.

Keywords: Ergative verbs, Middle voice, Non- agents, Transitivity

Voice in Language:

In grammar, voice is used to refer to sentences in which the verb (V) has a different relation to the subject (S) and the object (O) though the meaning is the same in both sentences (Crystal 375). Similarly, Quirk et al. state that "Voice is a grammatical category which makes it possible to view the action of a sentence in either of two ways without change in the facts reported" (159). Generally, sentences that have objects, usually (though not always) have their matching passives (57), e.g.

- a. The doctor(S) saved (V) the patient (O). (Active)
- b. The patient (S) was saved (V) by the doctor (by-phrase).
(Passive)

But in Arabic, sentences containing intransitive verbs can also be passivized (Ghayati 195, 196), but this is not the concern of the paper under study.

Active/ passive voice can be observed in many languages of the world (Saeed 175). The difference between the two is that the subject of the active sentence is also the agent (A) while the subject of the passive is the noun (N) or the noun phrase (NP) that undergoes the action (Crystal, 375). Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman state that languages use various means in order to place certain NPs in subject position. For example, in Banto languages, the passive is preferred when the agent is "in-animate" (343). Thus in Banto, the sentence which is similar in meaning to

- a. The students were bothered by the test,
is preferred to
- b. The test bothered the students.

The meaning that the passive manifests is thought to be explained grammatically rather than lexically. Generally, in passive construction the NP that receives the action is fronted to the position of the subject (347) and used as the grammatical subject (gr.S) (Halliday 64) and the agent or the

doer of the action as Shibitani states is defocused (qtd. in Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 347).

Crystal states that in addition to the foregoing construction i.e. the passive, in other languages such as Greek, Eskimo and Basque there exists another voice which is expressed via ergative verbs (EVs) which are also called “unaccusative” verbs, or via “passive agents” (124,125) in which the NP of an active sentence is non-agentive (376). Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman call this construction which manifests no change of voice “middle-voice” or “the middle” (350).. Saeed states that this other voice, i.e. the middle, which is displayed in some languages of the world is expressed in classical Greek and Somali by inflecting the verb (175). The voice is called *middle* because morphologically the verb is active while semantically it is passive or in other words there is equivalence between the object of transitive (tr.) verb and the subject of intransitive (intr.) use of the same verb (Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 350). So the middle as Chan states is the voice that intermediates between the active and the passive. In this voice, the object of the active transitive verb acts as the subject of the same verb used intransitively or as Crystal puts it there a “formal parallel” between them (124); they have the same function and belong to the same case. Chan mentions that agents in middle sentences are not stated and if they are stated, they do not do the action “deliberately or intentionally” and “the doers of the action act upon themselves”. What has been mentioned can be illustrated through the following examples (Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 350; Chan):

- a. John(S) closed (V tr.) the window (O). (Active)
- b. The window (S) was closed (V). (Passive)
- c. The window (gr. S) closed. (Middle, *closed* is EV)

“Water evaporates” (Middle; the S is acting upon itself)

The three voices in language are distinguished either by inflecting the verb as in Latin or by change in the syntactic order of the elements of the sentence as in English (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

The middle in many languages of the world does not exist alone but together with transitive verb sentence and the middle itself has some restrictions for example specific verbs, specific aspect of a verb and specific NPs are used to express the middle (Halliday 64). Halliday presents Mathew’s view who states that in almost all cases of middle voice the existence of three parts is necessary: “1) a transitive verb, 2) an expressed object figuring as the grammatical subject, and 3) the logical subject denoted differently from the way it is when paired with an intransitive verb” (64) i.e. when the verb is used ergatively. Payne states that the subject in middle voice and the object of the transitive verb have the same “grammatical properties” that is different from those of the agent.

Garner states that in the fifties of the twentieth century ergativity attracted grammarians. Under ergativity a number of verbs are grouped (qtd. in Nordquist). Garner (qtd. in Nordquist) and Lock (qtd. in Chan) state that ergative verbs such as *close, evaporate, bend, increase, sink, shrink, drown, break, change, drop, burn*, etc. can be used in three voices; the active with its subject and object, the passive with the object fronted to the subject position and a by-phrase at the end of the sentence and a third voice or “the third way” which is the middle voice; a voice which has a passive meaning but active structure, e.g.

- a. My sister burnt the food. (Active)
- b. The food was burnt (by my sister). (Passive)
- c. The food burnt. (Middle)

Trask states that nowadays linguists have some information on ergative languages such as Basque and Pashto and that these languages can no longer be regarded as unusual (*Historical Linguistics* 151, 152). Ergativity exists nearly in 25% of languages. Linguists have arrived at some interesting conclusions. They have found a split in the grammar of those ergative languages. One aspect of this split is that ergativity seems to be apparent in the past tense or perfect aspect (Trask, *Historical Linguistics* 151, 152; Payne).

Trask (*Language and Linguistics*) mentions that in Basque or Georgian which are ergative languages the subject of the transitive verb is identified by a "grammatical case" (36, 37). He also states that in ergative languages the agent is focused, while in nominative languages including English the subject of the sentence is focused (36, 37).

To Halliday, ergativity is explained in terms of “causation” (128). In dealing with ergatives, the *roles* are distributed to *affected* and *causer* or the agent (64). In the middle there is only one participant which is the *affected*; but the cause is not explicit (61), e.g.

The window broke. (*The window is the affected*),
or when the verb affects the subject, that verb is said to be ergative (Using English.com).

Trask considers the passive as one of the means to express ergativity (*Historical Linguistics* 153), but the researcher does not agree to be similarity, at least for English and Arabic, between passives that start with fronted non-agents and between non-agents of intransitive use of the verb in the active through the use of ergative verbs.

Concerning Arabic, Al-Khawalda (163-185) states that despite tackling ergative verbs in many languages, this attention is not given to ergative verbs in Arabic believing in the lack of such verbs in this language. He, Al-Khawalda, proves that ergative verbs do exist in Arabic and he then analyses them in the light of nominal sentences of the pattern Noun-Verb-(Object) NV(O) in some cases and Verb-Subject-(Object)VS(O) in others

besides using sentences that contain present participles as alternative to replace the verb (163-185).

In tackling the middle in English, the focus is on active sentences containing transitive verbs that are used intransitively with non-agent NPs conveying passive like meaning. Any other kinds of sentence may be referred to when necessary. The focus extends to sentences containing verbs that are inherently intransitive but behave likewise i.e. they have non-agent NPs. Concerning the middle in Arabic, the same procedure is followed for data but concentrating, unlike Al-Khawalda (163-185), only on verbal sentences of the structure VS (O) for active sentences from which the passive derives, obviously when the verb is transitive, and referred to i.e. the passive when needed. The verbal pattern is focused for data because Aljiwari (81) states that fronting the subject causes confusion as the sentence becomes nominal (c.f. Khawalda 163-185). (Arabic letters that cannot be represented by English ones such as ﺉ, ﺀ, ﺗ, etc. are taken from *Journal of Arabic Linguistics Tradition*).

Middle Voice in English

Middle voice does exist in English. It is formed via the use of ergative verbs. When ergative verbs are used, the relation of the object to the verb in the sentence pattern SVO is similar to the relation of the subject to the same verb when used intransitively in the sentence i.e. SV pattern. Examples of ergative verbs that constitute the middle are *break, change, increase, move, open* and there are also two pairs of phonologically and graphically related verbs which are *raise, rise* and *lay, lie*; the first verb in each pair being transitive and the second in each being intransitive (Biber et al. 147; Difference Between.com), e.g.

- a. I laid the book on the shelf. (*laid* is tr.)
- b. The book is lying on the shelf. (*lying* is intr.)

Lock states, as it was mentioned earlier, that ergative verbs in English such as *close, evaporate, bend, increase, sink, shrink, drown, break, change, drop*, etc. appear in three voices: the active, the passive and the middle (qtd. in Chan), e.g.

- a. The girl broke the glass. (Active)
- b. The glass was broken (by the girl). (Passive)
- c. The glass broke. (Middle; *the glass* is gr. S)

Most of the verbs in English can be used transitively and intransitively but the use of the verb ergatively is different from using it intransitively because the case in using the verb intransitively is object deletion while with ergatives the case is retaining the object in subject position and what was mentioned is illustrated in the following pairs of sentences (Biber, et al. 147):

- a. I am writing a letter. (*write* is tr.)

b. I am writing. (*write* is intr., O is deleted)

a. I opened the door. (*open* is tr.)

b. The door opened. (*open* is int. but E)

It can be said that in middle voice moving the object of an ergative verb into subject position of the intransitive verb indicates that the action takes place without agent (Yule 267) or the agent exists but it is not explicit. Sometimes the middle replaces passive construction as the middle is usually preferred when speakers talk about “natural processes and changes.... or to describe actions, but not mention a cause” (64), e.g.

The ice melted. (Natural process and change)

The glass broke. (Description)

Natural processes usually demand the middle and ergative verbs are intentionally used in order not to mention the agent. Some other examples of the middle are the following (Yule 64):

Prices (gr. S) increased.

The ice (gr. S) cracked.

The trees (gr. S) grew.

Lock states that in English, sentences indicating "happenings", i.e. middle voice such as 13, 14 and 15 are allowed besides sentences indicating “actions” which include the active and the passive such as sentences in 8 a and b (qtd. in Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 350). Shibatani states that happenings are expressed by using reflexives in Spanish, French and Russian (qtd. in Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 350), such as the sentence that reads like

The door opened itself,

but Kemmer disagrees stating that there is difference between reflexives and the middle.

Middle voice in English is expressed through different types of verbs which act ergatively without change of voice and these verbs are classified into four types: 1) verbs indicating “change-of-state” such as *begin, bend, break, burst, finish, develop, cool, close, increase, crack, shake, start, grow, transform, change*; 2.) verbs of cooking such as *bake, fry, cook, thicken, defrost*, 3) verbs that refer to “physical movement” such as *move, rock, shake, turn, shift* and finally 4) verbs related to vehicles such as *fly, drive, park, run, sail, reverse* (Celce-Murica and Larsen- Freeman 350, 351; Xamuel.com; Yule 64), e.g.

The city developed. (Type 1)

The soup thickened. (Type 2)

The ball moved. (Type 3)

The boat sailed. (Type 4)

There are other types of ergative verbs that form middle voice though some verbs that belong to these categories may not be ergative such as *cut* as a verb of harm. These types include verbs related to file arrangement in

computer such as *download, upload, run, load*; verbs expressing harm such as *starve, drown, strangle, wilt* and finally verbs of healing such as *heal, resuscitate, strengthen* besides a group of verbs used in this sense that are formed from adjectives with the suffix-*en* such as *quicken, whiten, blacken, brighten* and others (Xamuel.com) e.g.

The game loaded.

The ship drowned.

The wound healed.

His face blackened.

One can notice that the examples 17-24 above are all in the middle in which the subjects are not doing the action and those sentences are different from the passive in that the middle voice, unlike the passive, does not allow *-by phrase* that is used in the passive (Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman The ball was moved (by the player).

*The ball moved (by the player).

Even more than that the middle is more preferable in certain situations besides the ones mentioned earlier about 11 and 12 (351), e.g.

The fair opens at 3:00 p.m. (A is not relevant)

As we were watching television, the windows shook. (Suspense)

If one is not sure whether a verb is ergative, they can apply the following test (Xamuel.com):

The (actor) (verb) ed the (object), therefore; the (object) (verbed)

If the previous test is applied and the resultant sentence is logical, then the verb is ergative or else it is not (Xamuel.com), c.f. 29.b and 30 b:

a. The earthquake shattered the windows.

b. The windows shattered. (*shattered* is EV)

a. I swallowed the pill.

b. **The pill swallowed.* (*swallowed* is not EV)

Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman state that besides constructing the middle through the use of transitive verbs intransitively, some intransitive verbs can also use non-agent NP in subject position with some other types of verbs such as verbs that indicate happening e.g. *happen, occur, take place*; verbs used to show direction such as *arrive, fall, rise, emerge, go* and verbs that describe something such as, *appear, disappear, vanish* (352), e.g.

. The accident took place on the main road. (Happening)

A new problem emerged. (Direction)

My hope vanished. (Description)

Middle Voice in Arabic

Khawalda emphasizes the existence of ergative verbs in Arabic. He, Al-Khawalda, discusses ergative verbs in Arabic, as mentioned earlier, in the light of verbal sentences of the pattern VS (O) in some cases and nominal sentences of the pattern NV (O) in others besides using sentences that

contain present participles (163-185), but the researcher's focus is only on verbal sentences i.e. VS(O) pattern.

In Arabic, as in English, the subject is either the N or the NP that really carries out the action i.e. it is the agent as shown below (*double consonant is used for germination; al-(at the beginning of N or NP)= the; -t(at the end of past tense verb) is a feminine marker; -u, -a(n) and -i at the end of the NPs are case markers for the subject, the object and the governed noun or object of preposition respectively*):

akala (V tr.) al-walad-u (A) al-xubz-a (O)

The boy ate the bread.

sa:fara (V intr.) al-walad-u (A).

The boy travelled.

or in other cases the action is attributed to the subject without its being the agent, e.g.

ihtazza-t (V intr.) al-shajara-t-u (gr. S).

The tree shook.

in which the subject is not doing the action, but undergoing it (Ghayati 186, 187).

Concerning voice, Alsamarrai Ibrahim states that one meaning can be expressed through different constructions (104). He has previously proved what he claims by saying that the passive sentence

kusira (V) al-qadaḥ-u (Acting or gr. S),

The glass was broken,

is similar to the active constructions

inkasara al-qadaḥ-u,

The glass broke,

and saqaṭa al-jida:r-u.

The wall fell.

in that both constructions (the passive and the active) convey the same passive meaning through different voices and in both constructions the subjects undergo the action not perform it i.e. the NPs are non-agents but grammatical subjects that are described by the verb in each of the sentences above (94). He also points out that Mustafa Jawad regarded verbs of the pattern *infaʿala* as in *inkasara* as spontaneous verbs (101, 103). Other verbs similar to *saqaṭa* in belonging to the same pattern *faʿala* such as *nama:* (grew), *jaffa* (dried) and *dha:ba* (melted) can behave similarly in being intransitive verbs having grammatical subjects and forming the middle (Alshamsan 719), e.g.

nama-t al-shajara-t-u.

The tree grew.

It could be said that the sentences in 38, 39 and 40 are in middle voice. The verb *inkasara* in 38 is inflected from the verb *kasara* (broke) which is a transitive verb and its passive is *kusira(t)* (was broken) as shown below:

a. kasara (V) al-walad-u (A) al-qalam-a (O). (Active)

The boy broke the pen.

kusira (V) al-qalam-u (gr. S) (Passive)

The pen was broken.

inkasara (V) al-alqalam-u (gr. S) (Middle)

The pen broke.

while the sentence for the middle **kasara al-qalam-u* is not possible. The verb should be inflected as it is the case in classical Greek and Somali in order to be intransitive (Al-ghalaeeni 45) and have a passive meaning 41. c (Alsamarrai Ibrahim 104; Alsamarrai Fadhil 73; Saeed 175).

Alsamarrai Fadhil mentions that some of the semitic languages used the inflected verb pattern *infaʕala* to express the passive but in Arabic the form *fufila* is used for the passive and Arabic does not use two forms for the same meaning (73).

The researcher assumes that using the pattern *infaʕa la* in the middle is different from using this pattern to express the passive for different reasons: first, the middle, unlike the passive, is in active structure (Crystal 376); second, if the pattern *infaʕa la* were used to form the passive, then only a limited number of verbs could have been used in the passive as not all verb have the inflected form *infaʕa la* (Alsayyid 45) and third, this pattern is used to invert transitive verbs into intransitive ones (Alshamsan 719) and verbs belonging to this pattern can form middle voice in Arabic as it was mentioned earlier by Alsamarrai Ibrahim (101, 103).

Ghayati presents some verbs in the past tense which act like passive verbs in having the same pronunciation such as having the vowel /u/ which is one of passive markers. Among this kind of verbs are *junna* (to go mad), *sulla* (to be infected with TB) and *imtuqiʕa* (paled) which have NPs as their grammatical subjects (196, 197), e.g.

junna (V past) al-rajul-u (gr. S) .

The man went mad.

imtuqiʕa (V past) lawn-u (S) almari:ḍ-i. (Governed noun).

The patient paled.

The sentences 42 and 43 are similar to the passive in different aspects; in meaning, in passive like pronunciation and in having NPs as their grammatical subjects (Ghayati 196, 197, 186, 187).

It could be said that the sentences in 42 and 43 are in middle voice despite having verbs which are inherently intransitive.

Alsamarrai Ibrahim (104) and Alsayyid (78) state that besides the inflected verb pattern *infaʕala*, some other intransitive verbs that are inflected from their transitive ones behave like the passive in having grammatical subjects and thus they are used in middle voice. These verb patterns include *iftaʕala*, *tafaʕʕala*, *tafa:ʕala*, *ifʕalalla*, and *istafʕala*. They all have the pattern V- gr. S and are exemplified below respectively, e.g.

irtafaʿa-t (VE) al-asʿa:r-u (gr. S) .

Prices increased.

tayayyara (VE) lawn-u (gr. S) al-thawb-i (governed noun) .

The colour of the dress changed.

taḍa:ʿafa (VE) al-ḥadad-u (gr. S) .

The number doubled.

iṭmaʿanna (VE) al-rajul-u (gr. S) .

The man felt safe.

istaḥṣa: (VE) al- ḥila:j-u (gr. S) .

The treatment was difficult.

The verb *saqaṭa* (fell), that was mentioned earlier, still has another intransitive inflected form. The inflected verb is *tasa:qaṭa* of the pattern *tafa:ʿala* (Ibrahim Alsamarrai 104; Alshamsan 719). This form can be used ergatively to form another middle, e.g.

tasa:qaṭa-t (EV) al-awra:q-u (gr. S).

The leaves fell.

There are also two other pairs that have two middles; one of each pair is the basic form and the other is the inflected form. The verbs are *badaʿa*, *ibtadaʿa* and *za:da* , *izda:da* of the patterns *faʿala* and *iftaʿala*. The first verb in each pair can be used transitively (in the active and passive) and also intransitively in the middle (Alshamsan 719), as in,

a. za:da (V) al-maṭar-u (A) al-ma:ʿa (O). (Active)

The rain increased the water.

b. zi:da (V) al- ma:ʿ- u (gr. S). (Passive)

The water was increased.

c. za:da (VE) al-ma:ʿ- u (gr. S).

The water increased.

d. izda:da (VE) al-ma:ʿ- u (gr. S). (*izda:da* is inflected)

The water increased.

Two other transitive verbs *ḡala* (boiled) and *sha:ʿa* (spread) are used in the three voices without inflection (Al-Khawalda 163- 185), e.g.

a. sha:ʿa (V) al-rajul-u (A) al-xabar-a (O). (Active)

The man spread the news.

b. shi:ʿa (V) al-xabar-u (gr. S). (Passive)

The news was spread.

c. sha:ʿa (EV) al-xabar-u (gr. S). (Middle)

The news spread.

What was mentioned by Ghayati (186, 187) about the subject of the intransitive verb *ihṭazza-t* in 36 as being grammatical subject, can be applied to what Alsayyid (45) mentioned about the verbs that denote color of the pattern *ifʿalla* such as *iswadda* (blackened), *iḥmarra* (reddened), *iṣfarra* (yellowed),... etc. and analogously these verbs can be used to construct the

middle since the sentences have non-agent NPs that undergo the action of the verb, e.g.

iḥmarra (EV) al-jild-u (gr. S).

The skin reddened.

Alsayyid (78) and Nahir (273) add another inflected intransitive verb pattern which is *tafaḥlala* which is taken from its transitive form *faḥlala* (78). It is noticed that verbs of this pattern can be used ergatively in middle voice, for example the verb *tadaḥraja* (rolled) which is taken from *daḥraja* as in:

a. daḥraja (V) al-walad-u (A) al-kura-t-a (O).

The boy rolled the ball.

b. tadaḥraja-t (VE) al-kura-t-u (gr. S).

The ball rolled.

There exists a transitive verb which changes into a semantically similar verb in the intransitive which constructs middle voice and that is changing the verb *ṭabaxa* into *istawa:*, e.g.,

a. ṭabaxat (V) al-umm-u (A) al-akl-a (O).

The mother cooked the food.

b. istawa: (VE) al-akl-u (gr. S).

The food cooked.

Middle Voice in English and Arabic Compared

Recalling what was mentioned, it is noticed that middle voice is manifested in both English and Arabic. Certain groups of verbs are used to form this voice in the two languages exhibiting similarities and differences (Halliday 64; Saeed 175). Examining the following examples in English and a similar group of sentences in Arabic

a. The girl (S) broke (V) the window (O). (Active)

b. The window (gr. S) was broken (V) (by the girl). (Passive)

c. The window (gr. S) broke (V). (Middle; *broke* is EV)

a. kasara (V tr.) al-walad-u (A) al-zuja:j-a (O) (Active)

The boy broke the glass.

b. kusira (V) al-zuja:j-u (Acting S or gr. S) (Passive)

The window was broken.

c. * kasara al-zuja:j-u. (The supposed middle)

we find that in English the verb *broke* as Lock mentions is used in three voices and it can be used ergatively without any change. In middle voice, the NP of the sentence is grammatical subject and it is the same NP that was the object of the transitive verb (qtd. in Chan). In Arabic, we see that *kasara* (broke) cannot be used in the three voices as it is the case in English. For middle voice, the verb has to be changed morphologically i.e. to be inflected to convey the idea of passive in active structure (Saeed 175; The

Encyclopaedia Britannica). The inflected verb of the pattern *infaʕala* is to be used in the middle and the sentence should read as follows:

d. *inkasara*(VE) *al-zuja:j-u*(gr. S) . (Middle)

The window broke.

The NP in middle voice in Arabic is treated in the same way as of English middle in being grammatical subject (Halliday 64; Alsamarrai Ibrahim 94; Payne).

There are some transitive verbs such as *badaʕa* (began), *za:da* (increased), *ʕala* (boiled) and *sha:ʕa* (spread) which are similar to English ergative verbs in being used in three voices without inflection (Al-Khawalda 163-185), e.g.

a. *za:da* (V tr.) *al-mudi:r-u* (A) *al-ʕadad-a*. (O). (Active)

The headmaster increased the number.

b. *zi:da* (V) *al-ʕadad-u* (gr. S). (Passive)

The number was increased.

c. *za:da* *al-ʕadad-u*. (Middle)

The number increased.

But the first two i.e. *badaʕa* and *za:da* among the four can also be made intransitive by inflecting them into *ibtadaʕa* and *izda:da* in accordance with the verb pattern *iftaʕala* (Alsayyid 45). What is interesting is that each of these inflected forms can form another middle besides the existing one, e.g.

ibtadaʕa (EV) *al-dars-u* (gr. S).

The lesson started.

izda:da (VE) *al-ma:ʔ-u* (gr. S).

The water increased.

If we consider the verbs that form middle voice in the two languages, we find that in English they are classified into several syntactically and semantically based groups such as verbs indicating change-of-state, e.g. *begin, bend, break, start*; verbs used in cooking such as *bake, fry, cook, thicken*; verbs that refer to physical movement such as *move, rock, shake*, and verbs of other types (Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 350, 351; Xamuel.com; Yule 64). Syntactic basis entails the use of the verbs in three voices: transitively in the active and passive and intransitively in the middle while semantic basis limits the types of the verbs that can be used ergatively.

Arabic verbs that are used in the middle are morphosyntactically grouped i.e. the verbs have to undergo inflection in order to be used in this syntactic construction which is *middle voice*. The verbs are inflected according to the verb patterns *tafaʕlala*, *ifʕalla*, *iftaʕala*, *tafaʕʕala*, *tafa:ʕala* and *infaʕala* (Alsamarrai Ibrahim 104; Alsayyid 178), e.g.

a. *kasara* (V) *al-walad-u* (A) *al-qalam-a* (O). (Active)

The boy broke the pen.

b. *inkasara* (VE) *al-alqalam-u* (gr. S) (Middle)

The pen broke.

Besides transitive verbs that are used intransitively to construct the middle in English, a number of inherently intransitive verbs occur in middle voice and they are classified semantically such as verbs that indicate happening e.g. *happen, occur, take place*; verbs that show direction: *arrive, fall, rise*, and verbs that describe such as, *appear, disappear* (Celce-Murica and Larsen-Freeman 352), e.g.

The ball fell into the pond. (*fell is E*)

The ergative verb appears in three voices. (*appear is E*)

Concerning Arabic, there are also a number of inherently intransitive verbs that are selected morphosyntactically can occur in middle voice. These verbs belong to the pattern *faʕala* such as *saqaʕa* (fell) *nama: (grew)*, *dha:ba* (melted) *jaffa* (dried) and others (Alshamsan 719), e.g.:

nama-t (EV) *al-aʕsha:b-u* (gr. S).

The herbs grew.

jaffa-t (V) *al-thiya:b-u* (gr. S).

The clothes dried.

Conclusion:

The research that was conducted on middle voice in English and Arabic proved that middle voice exists in both languages under study. Middle voice in the two languages share areas of similarity and they also exhibit differences.

What do English and Arabic have in common is that middle voice in both languages is similar to the passive voice in meaning and in having the object of their active sentences as their grammatical subjects. Simultaneously, the middle is similar to the active voice in structure.

Concerning the verbs, in both languages ergative verbs are used in the two languages to form the middle and they can be used in three voices i.e. the active, the passive and the middle, but the way they behave to form the middle is different in each of the languages. In English, the verb is alike whether used transitively in the active or intransitively in the middle, whereas in Arabic, ergative transitive verbs undergo inflection when used intransitively in the middle except few verbs which do not undergo inflection in the middle; yet two of them are exceptionally used in a second middle in their inflected forms; whereas in English there is only one middle for each ergative verb.

English ergative verbs that are used in the middle are grouped on syntactic and semantic grounds, whereas Arabic ergative verbs are grouped on morphosyntactic basis.

Finally, in both languages, a number of spontaneous verbs which are inherently intransitive are used in the middle and are selected for semantic considerations in English but selected on morphosyntactic grounds in Arabic.

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ما بين المعلوم والمجهول في اللغتين الإنكليزية والعربية

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الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث البناء الوسط في اللغتين الإنكليزية و العربية. فانه لا تستطيع جميع اللغات التعبير عن البناء الوسط و لكن هناك لغات باستطاعتها التعبير عن هذا البناء الذي يتوسط المعلوم و المجهول حيث انه يمتلك صفات كلا البنائين- اعني المعلوم و المجهول و يقوم البحث على دراسة مقارنة للبناء الوسط في الإنكليزية و العربية مركزاً على الأفعال التي تستعمل في هذا البناء في كلتا اللغتين لإظهار اوجه التشابه و التباين في نوع الفعل الذي يستعمل لهذا الغرض.

مفاتيح الكلمات: افعال ارجتف، البناء الوسط، فاعل غير قائم بالفعل، التعدي