

Passive VPs as phases in Jordanian Arabic

Marwan Jarrah (Newcastle University)

Chomsky (2000, 2001a,b) argues that passive VPs are not phases as they lack an external theta-role. Only vP with an external argument is qualified as a phase, whose content is subject to the effects of so-called the *Phase Impenetrability Condition* (PIC), i.e. only the edge of the phase is not immune to operations from outside the phase. This argument entails that passive VPs constructions do not give rise to any of the PIC's effects, the situation rejected in Jordanian Arabic (JA). In this paper, I defend the proposal that passive VPs are phases in JA, armed with a set of diagnostics that support this proposal, including long distance agreement, quantifier raising, and fronting in double complement constructions. The same first two diagnostics prove, on the other hand, that unaccusative predicates are not phases, repudiating hence several assumptions that equally deal with passive and accusative predicates as phases (or lack thereof) (cf., Fox 2000, Legate 2003, and Sauerland 2003).

First of all, in JA, the grammatical subject (i.e. the thematic object) must appear clause-initially or clause-medially when the verb occurs in passive voice (1a,b). When the grammatical subject remains in situ (i.e. a complement to the passive verb), the resulting sentence would be ungrammatical.

- (1) a. (ʔis-sijjaarah) ʔib-ti-n-sarig (*ʔis-sijjaarah)
 DEF-car PROG-3F-PASS.steal.S DEF-car
 ‘The car is being stolen.’
 b. (ʔis-sijjaarah) kaant (ʔis-sijjaarah) ʔib-ti-n-sarig (*ʔis-sijjaarah)
 DEF-car was.3SF DEF-car PROG-3F-PASS.steal.S DEF-car
 ‘The car was being stolen.’

The sentences in (1) are straightforwardly accounted for, assuming that passive VPs are phases. When the grammatical subject appears clause-finally, it is perforce situated in its base position. Due to the effects of the PIC, T°, which has unvalued $u\phi$ -content, cannot probe down the object as the latter is not part of the lower phase's edge, resulting in sentence ungrammaticality (as T°'s $u\phi$ -content remains unvalued till LF). The grammatical subject thus needs to raise to a structural position visible to T°, whence the demand on the grammatical subject's high position in sentences with passive VPs. Movement of the grammatical subject is motivated by its unvalued structural case which cannot be checked while it remains in situ. Sentences in (1) thus support phasehood of passive VPs whose complement is thus converted to phonological and semantic representations on the PF and LF branches, respectively, once C° enters the derivation (Chomsky 2000, 2007 and Nissenbaum 2010, among many others). On the other hand, when the verb is an accusative predicate, the grammatical subject may appear clause-finally, something that points to the absence of the PIC's effects:

- (2) ʕind ʔis^hʕubuḥ kaant ʔiðḏuub liθθalidʒ
 on morning was.3SF melt.IMP.3SF snow
 ‘Snow was melting in the morning.’

The use of the past tense copula *kaan* requires the lexical verb to remain in situ, given that T° is now lexically supported by the copula (Fassi Fehri 1993, 2012). The occurrence of the subject to the right of the verb and T° being inflected for agreement with the postverbal subject reveal that the latter is visible to the former (i.e. T°) in its base-position and hence the lack of the PIC's effects. Sentence (2) is evidence that unaccusatives in JA are not phases. This discussion casts doubt on the assumption that agreement relationships (between a probe and a goal), unlike movement, is insensitive to phase boundaries (cf. Chung 2013 and Legate 2014). According to JA data, a probe cannot agree with a goal that is trapped in the complement of a lower phase, otherwise the ban against the grammatical subject to appear sentence finally in passive VPs constructions in JA is hard to account for.

The second piece of evidence comes from quantifier raising (QR), which is, according to Legate (2003), is a diagnostic for movement to the phase edge. In JA, in the context of the past tense copula, a stranded quantifier may appear between the copula and the lexical (passivized verb), as in (3):

- (3) ʔiddaar kaant kull-ha ʔib-ti-n-hariq
 DEF-house was.3SF all-it PROG-3F-PASS.burn.S
 ‘All the house was being burned.’

Note that the stranded quantifier *kull* is co-indexed with the preverbal subject by virtue of the clitic *ha* which expresses the same ϕ -content of the grammatical subject. If the passive VPs are not phases, the

grammatical subject may not occupy any position between the copula and the passivized verb, predicting that the use of a stranded quantifier in this position would be ungrammatical, contrary to fact. Following Legate (2003), I assume that the stranded quantifier *kull* in (3) is motivated to occupy Spec, of the lower phase by convergence requirements which allow positing an EPP feature on the phase edge. This assumption follows from that fact that QR is not motivated by the morphological agreement needs of a particular head, but is triggered in order to be interpreted (see, Heim & Kratzer 1998 for discussion). On the other hand, when applying the QR diagnostic to constructions involving unaccusative predicates, it turns out that such predicates are not phases as no quantifier can be stranded in a position between the copula and the lexical verb:

- (4) ζ ind ζ is^hsubuḥ liθθalidz kaant (*kull-ha) ζ iððuub
on morning snow was.3SF all-3SF melt.IMP.3SF
‘All snow was melting in the morning.’

Given that the grammatical subject does not dwell in Spec of the lower phase en route to its surface position, QR is not licensed in a position which was not already occupied by its antecedent (cf. Sportiche 1988, among others), the situation supported by sentence ungrammaticality with *kullha* occurring between *kaant* and *ζ iððuub*.

The third empirical evidence in favour of phasehood of passive VP comes from the relative order between the direct object and the dative PP when both are fronted to a preverbal position. (5a) is a sentence with the verb in active voice. (5b) includes verb passivisation and Theme (*wardih*) promotion. Note that the grammatical subject appears between the copula *kaan* and the lexical verb, the expected position of the phase edge. When the dative construction *li-Hala* is preposed to a position between the tense copula and the lexical passivized verb, the dative construction must appear to the right of the grammatical subject (5c); otherwise the sentence crashes (5d).

- (5) a. Hashem kaan jiḥtari wardih la-Hala
Hashem was.3SM buy.IMP.3SM flower to-Hala
‘Hashem was buying a flower to Hala.’
b. kaant wardih ti-n- ζ ara? la-Hala
was.3SF flower 3F-PASS-buy.S to-Hala
‘A flower was being bought to Hala.’
c. kaant wardih la-Hala ti-n- ζ ara?
was.3SF flower to-Hala 3F-PASS-buy.S
‘A flower was being bought to Hala.’
d. *kaant la-Hala wardih ti-n- ζ ara?
was.3SF to-Hala flower 3F-PASS-buy.S
Intended: ‘A flower was being bought to Hala.’

If we suppose that passive vPs are phases, then any material within passive vP phase must land first in the edge of the phase (before heading off to a higher position, if needed). I follow here Harley (1995, 2002), Holmberg and Platzack (1995), and Pesetsky (1995) that in the dative constructions, the PP merges as a complement of V^o whose specifier contains the Theme. When the Theme is passivised (and hence must move to a closer ‘accessible’ position to T^o) and when PP moves outside the phase, as well, the dative PP moves first to the edge of the phase, followed by movement of the Theme to the uttermost specifier of the phase, forced by the Extension Condition (requiring that Merge and Move obey a cyclicity requirement; Chomsky 1993). The relative word order between the theme and the dative PP while both occur between the copula and the passivized verb is thus accounted for (THEME > PP; *PP > THEME).

In view of this, passive VPs in JA are phases, while unaccusative predicates are not. Following Fassi Fehri (1988), Ouhalla (1991), and Collins (2005), I argue that this difference is attributed to the assumption that passive VPs are headed by Voice^o which is projected above v^o and lower than T^o . This head is filled by the affix -n, prefixed to all passive verbs. Additionally, following proposals by Aldridge 2008 and Cole et al. 2008 for Indonesian object voice and Legate 2010 for Acehnese object voice, I argue that Voice^o is a phase head in JA, responsible for the effects of the PIC associated with passive VPs. Given that Voice^o is not projected in accusative constructions (cf. Legate 2014), it follows that the effects of the PIC are not found in these constructions.