



ISSN: 1999-5601 (Print) 2663-5836 (online)

Lark Journal

Available online at: <https://lark.uowasit.edu.iq>



\*Corresponding author:

Assist. Instr. Noora Abd-Alnabi

English Department/ College of Education/  
Mustansiriyah University

Email:

[nora.a.khalif@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq](mailto:nora.a.khalif@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq)

**Keywords:** Passivization, Given-New, Political discourse, Newspapers, Gaza Crisis

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16May 2025

Accepted 25Jun 2025

Available online 1 Jul 2025



## The Use of Passivization in Selected American Editorials about Gaza Crisis

### Abstract

This study investigates the syntactic and semantic functions of passivization in American newspaper editorials covering the Gaza Crisis. Specifically, it examines how passive constructions are employed within political discourse to manipulate sentence structure and influence reader perception. The research is guided by two central questions: What motivates the use of passivization in political discourse? and What are the syntactic and semantic implications of employing passive voice in this context?

To address these questions, the study adopts the grammatical framework proposed by Quirk et al. (1985) as the analytical model. A qualitative analysis is conducted on a corpus of six editorials, randomly selected from two prominent American newspapers. The selection aims to ensure representativeness and neutrality in the sampling process.

Findings reveal that passivization serves multiple discourse functions in political texts. Syntactically, it allows for the restructuring of sentences in alignment with the Given-New principle, foregrounding known information and deferring new or sensitive content. Semantically, passive constructions are used to emphasize particular elements of the sentence, enhance the objectivity of the text, and eliminate agent responsibility in certain contexts. Additionally, passivization is found to support textual cohesion by avoiding redundancy and creating a more formal, impersonal tone.

The study concludes that passivization in political editorials is a deliberate rhetorical strategy, employed not only to manage syntactic structure but also to subtly shape meaning and influence audience interpretation.

© 2025 LARK, College of Art, Wasit University

DOI

استخدام المبني للمجهول في مقالات أمريكية حول أزمة غزة

م.م نورا عبدالنبي خليف / الجامعة المستنصرية/كلية التربية/ قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

## المُلخَص

يتناول البحث الحالي استخدام المبني للمجهول نحويًا و دلاليًا في النصوص السياسية. يمكن تعريف المبني للمجهول على أنه آلية تغيير الترتيب الكلاسيكي للجمل البسيطة إلى جمل معقدة غير كلاسيكية. وبالتالي، يتم استخدامه لتحويل بنية الجملة. في نهاية الدراسة، من المتوقع أن يجيب الباحث على الأسئلة التالية: ما هي الأسباب وراء استخدام المبني للمجهول في الخطاب السياسي؟ وما هو الدلالة النحوية والدلالية له؟

يركز هذا البحث على مسح المبني للمجهول في النصوص السياسية، ودراسة استعمالات هيكله في هذه النصوص. يهدف إلى فحص المبني للمجهول في بناء أنواع معينة من البنى في نصوص الخطاب السياسي وإظهار كيف يمكن أن تنتج هذا الظاهرة بنى جمل غير كلاسيكية. لتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم اعتماد Quirk 1985 كنموذج للتحليل. يقوم الباحث بتحليل ستة مقالات تم اختيارها عشوائياً من جريدتين أمريكيتين

مشهورتين The New York Times و Washington Post.

تفترض هذه الدراسة أن المبني للمجهول يُعقد البنية النحوية للعبارات الأساسية؛ ومع ذلك، يتم استخدامه في المقالات السياسية لتأكيد عناصر معينة من الجمل، مما يجذب انتباه القارئ ويقنعه باتجاه معين. توفر هياكل المبني للمجهول وضوحًا وتلغي الغموض في المعنى المقصود. تشير تحليل البيانات إلى أن المبني للمجهول يسمح للمحرر بتمييز المعلومات المثبتة مسبقًا، وتجنب التكرار، وتأجيل إدخال المعلومات الجديدة، وخلق هياكل مباشرة سهلة الفهم للقراء، وتعزيز النبرة الموضوعية في النصوص السياسية.

ختامًا، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن المبني للمجهول كآلية نحوية، يمكن أن يؤدي وظائف متعددة. على سبيل المثال، عند إدخال معلومات جديدة، يمكن استخدام المبني للمجهول لإعادة ترتيب الجملة وفقًا لمبدأ المعطى-الجديد عن طريق تأجيلها حتى نهاية العبارة. يؤكد المبني للمجهول دلاليًا على الموضوع، مما يشير إلى أن أهم المعلومات، من وجهة نظر المحرر، يتم تقديمها أولاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المبني للمجهول، المعطى-الجديد، الخطاب السياسي، صحف، أزمة غزة

## 1.Passivization

Research paper in modern “linguistics has long been confined to the boundaries of the sentence, which researchers have regarded as the largest independent unit of meaning that stands on its own .Consequently, the sentence was adopted as the primary unit of linguistic analysis ”(Obaid,2025,701).

Passivization is explained as" a construction in which the undergoer occurs instead in the normally topical subject position, as a reflection of its topical status in the discourse context, while the actor, the topical subject in the default case, appears in the normally focal portion of the utterance, if it appears at all” (Brown and Miller,1999,p.155). Passivisation involves the leftward movement of a noun phrase element. It has long been established in the literature that passive sentences can be represented as structures derived from their corresponding active forms using movement principles. From a pragmatic standpoint ,passivisation is considered another method of achieving topic position ,specifically the attention focus, the noun phrase, which fulfils the grammatical role of the object in the underlying level of representation .Huddleston posits that passivisation may additionally facilitate end-focus or the omission of the actor, while simultaneously employing object fronting for opposite purposes. End-focus, while a phonological attribute, evidently has substantial implications in syntax, where the organisation of sentence parts is largely dictated. It may influence the choice between passive and active structures (1984, p.17) . By examining the subsequent instances:

1.a .Huda tidied the house .                      1b. The house was tidied by Huda .

It is evident that, with the end focus, the two lines suggest different contexts; for instance, the first statement responds to the inquiry" ‘What did Huda tidy ”?The second one addresses the inquiry"‘Who tidied the house?’” At the level of clauses, altering from the active to the passive includes rearrangement of two clause constituents, and one more thing:

- (a) The active subject is transformed into a passive agent
- (b) the active object is transformed into a passive subject; and
- (c) before the agent, the preposition by is added (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973).

The active-passive identification can be expressed using the following formula:

NP + active VP + NP2

NP2 + passive VP +(by NP1)

2.a. Ahmed broke the window Active []

b. The window was broken by Ahmed [Passive]

Normally, be is the auxiliary of passive, its only serious competitor is get, which is not an auxiliary according to most syntactic standards. Furthermore, get is usually restricted to constructions that lack an expressed animate agent:

3. The dog got run over (by a car)

4. Ahmed got fired yesterday (Quirk et al., 1985).

Eastwood (2002, p.132) recognises various uses of passive form;

**a. Topic :**for example

5.a. Huda wrote the message

b. The message was written by Huda

The two sentences share the same meaning but cover distinct topic.

**b. New information :** Sentences typically include a topic and comment, or new information, at the end of the sentence, such as Huda wrote the message. Other information, such as location, instrument, time, or manner, may be the focus of attention in the passive form.

6. The electron was discovered in 1897.

7. The electron was discovered at Cambridge.

8. The gas should be lit carefully.

9. The gas should be lit with a match (ibid).

**c. Passive sentences without an agent :**In passive sentences, we only state the doer if it's important and not already known. Sometimes, you don't need to remember it. For example:

10.A typical day in the world

11.Nine million cigarettes are smoked

Or, when the agent doesn't relate to the message, for instance;

12. Before the discovery of the electron in 1897, people thought that atoms were solid. Sometimes, the person doing the action is not named because the speaker chooses not to say it, for example" :A crime has been committed ".Using the passive voice is a way to avoid saying who is guilty (Eastwood, 2002, p. 133).

**d. Empty subjects :**for example:

13a. One can't fix the issue.

b .The issue can't be fixed (Eastwood, 2002, p. 133).

**f. Some verbs cannot be used in passive voice :**Intransitive verbs cannot be made passive .The following sentences do not have passive versions:

15.Something happened.

16.He slept peacefully.

17.The cat ran away (Eastwood, 2002, p. 134).

Most prepositional and phrasal verbs with an object can be used in the passive voice.

18a. We ran over a cat..

b .The cat was run over (Eastwood, 2002, p. 134)

Many scholars are using the passive voice less in their work these days. Some inactive methods still need to be used. Writers can choose a neutral or objective style, which is useful when it doesn't matter who did the action (Crystal, 1990, p. 47). It's better to start a line with familiar information and finish with something

new. This is a reason for choosing an inactive structure that includes an agent. For example:

19.a. Great photo

b. Yes, my grandma painted it (My grandma is a new painter)

20. The electron was found out by Thomson .

In the above instance "the electron "is the main subject, and" Thomson was the discoverer "provides new information about it (Eastwood, 2002, p. 132) . Longer and larger phrases usually come at the end of a sentence. This is another reason to use a passive structure. For example:

21. I was annoyed by Mary trying to tell everybody what to do (Swan, 2005, p. 388).

Palmer (1981) states that there are two reasons for choosing the inactive form. The first one is usually a matter of cohesion of the speech in order to keep the same subject, for example:

22. The child ran into the road and was hit by a car (Palmer, 1981, p. 159).

This sentence is a bit more connected than the next one:

23. The child ran into the road and a car hit him (ibid).

The second reason is that the passive is utilized wherever the doer is unknown such as:

24. The child was knocked down (Palmer, 1981, p.159).

Or, when it is deliberately disregarded. This is regarded as a characteristic of scientific reports because the reporter employs passivisation to prevent self-reference, for instance:

25. The water was heated to 80°C (Palmer, 1981, p.144).

Nevertheless, the initial argument is more than merely a stylistic device, whereas the second is a direct consequence of English grammar, which consistently requires a sentence to have a subject .Subsequently, the alternative of structure that

incorporates the subject as a topicalization's matter is quite obscure (ibid). Keenan (1985, p.243) defines the functions of passivisation in English from a semantic perspective and concludes that the primary function is to "mark the object of the verb as the topic of the sentence". In the same vein, Saeed asserts that the subject in passive form is the patient, while the agent is positioned in a prepositional phrase. By characterising the condition from the patient's perspective rather than the agent's perspective 'this strategy offers significant flexibility in terms of thematic roles (Saeed, 2009). For instance:

26. They constructed the residence.

27. The residence was constructed..

Additionally, passivisation may be implemented to conceal an agent's identity in certain circumstances, such as:

28. The laws have been violated

In the aforementioned example, the agent has been sufficiently backgrounded to the extent that they are now considered exclusively an implied participant. A number of authors portray "this foregrounding of the patient and backgrounding of the agent in terms of promoting the patient and demoting the agent or as reflecting the speaker's greater empathy with the patient rather than the agent (Saeed, 2009, p.169).

## **2. Political Discourse**

Political discourse is how politicians share ideas, persuade others, discuss social problems or events, and express their opinions. Van Dijk (2002, p.19) notes that "political discourse is not a genre, but a class of genres defined by social domain, namely that of politics." Political editorials, debates, and speeches by leaders are just a few examples of the different types of writing and discussion related to politics .. Neumark (1986, p.45) says that political discussions focus on how people use important ideas in strong ways. The topics, clarity, word choice, and

points in a political speech can reveal a lot about the speaker's personality (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 30). Political discourse is a formal conversation about important topics that affect society .. Beard (2000, p.35) clarifies that political discourse is the hardest work a politician can do because it includes how to announce a policy and how to persuade people of agreeing on that policy. The main idea of political discussions covers these meanings: Talking, convincing, and influencing. Politicians use their words to fight, explain, and support their ideas. Language can be used by strong people to hurt others, promote their beliefs, protect individuals, or support civil rights and peace. Political discussions should be thoughtful and persuasive. By" intellectual "it refers to how well the speech is expressed and how it helps build political discussions. On the other hand, rhetoric means the power of the discourse, its ability to enthuse and persuade (Fairclough,2000,p.85). Political discussions create and reinforce views, opinions, and ideas.

### **3. Newspapers as a Discourse Genre**

Newspapers provide their readers with a variety of articles to read. They offer a wide range of pieces, making them an important resource for finding the information you need to understand the world. Newspapers provide a wide range of information through news stories ,sports reports, features, and ads, all aimed at meeting the different interests of their readers (Grossberg et al, 1998). A further equally important function which newspapers serve is correlation, which includes the explanation and ultimate interpretation of news events and society's problems. This function is supposed to be performed by editorials (Burton,2002). The editorial page has many printed articles, usually written by the publisher or editor. This page shows the ideas from the newspaper. Editorials, correspondingly, might be viewed as stories in newspapers expressing the standpoint of the newspaper on news items or topics of public interest (Sinclair, 1995) .Language is essential for human contact. Powerful groups use discussions to influence, manipulate, and hide

their true intentions (Oktar, 2001). People used to overlook the importance of language 'thinking of it as just a way to see the world. Now, linguists are examining language more carefully. They understand that how language is structured can change our perspective, much like how the design of a window affects what we see. Now, people are looking at and questioning the social roles of different beliefs and ideas more than ever.

### 3.1 Editorials

Buitkien (2008, p.13) says that an editorial is a type of writing that is both personal and meant to persuade readers. The main editor or a group of well-known writers shares their opinions on important current topics and takes part in political or ethical discussions. Events can be judged in different ways: they can be criticised, praised, or condemned. An editorial mainly aims to change how readers think, act, or believe. A newspaper uses its commentary to convince readers that its opinion on a topic is the correct one to follow. Editorials act as boosters for a newspaper. Editorials aim to suggest whether to support or oppose a specific action. Sebranek and Kemper (1990) explain that editorials present a case and try to persuade readers to accept it. In essence, the objective of an editorial is to:

- a. Influence the public's opinion
- b. Promote critical thinking
- c. Motivate individuals to adopt a specific course of action regarding an issue

It is, in fact, communication that is intended to influence others. Newspapers currently interpret the news and construct reality from a specific perspective, which is necessary in light of the information deluge that the reader is currently experiencing, as per Jaworski and Galasinski (2002). The editorial of the newspaper is examined by readers in order to obtain prospective guidance in interpreting the content they encounter on a daily basis. Consequently, the objective of editorials is to motivate readers to take action. The editorial interprets

or elucidates an event, action, or idea by either criticising or extolling it in order to achieve its objective. Consequently, the editorial writer must take into account the persuasion process.

#### **4. Method of Analysis**

In the present study, passivization, which is employed in six American editorials, is analyzed by adopting qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher utilizes these two methods to describe the findings of the analysis in detail and relies on the statistical results. Thus, the mixing of these two methods guides to accurate results to obtain the objectives of this study. To get accurate results and to keep up the descriptive explanation, the researcher employed a quantitative method. Quantitative method displays statistics of the data by introducing the rates of passive structures after counting their number (Creswell, 2012, p.13). After that, it will be simple to measure the differences between the results and suppose which structure is the dominant one in each editorial and among the six editorials. The statistics of all editorials analysis will be tabulated for the measuring of the rates in percentage, and calculate processes' number. The predominant passive structure, which has the highest rate among the editorials under study, is compared with other structures in a table. Then, the elaboration of these rates are debated in addition to the findings of data analysis. It is significant to point out that the qualitative method presents the analysis of the data to provide more information. The description of the data simplifies the comprehension of the results, and supplies a complete description about the analysis (ibid:16).

#### **5. Data Analysis and Result**

##### **Text 1.**

“Even for many residents of Gaza, however, the swift re-emergence of the fighters, some in official uniforms ‘was a surprise‘. They came out of hiding in a snap of a finger,” said Mohammed, 24, who requested his last name be withheld to avoid

possible retribution from Hamas

”.

) NYT, Jan. 23, 2025 (

The editorialist uses passivisation in the sentence “his last name be withheld.” The active form of the sentence is someone withholds his last name. The structure of the sentence is changed in order to front the new piece of information, which is “his last name withheld.” This structure enables the editorialist to put the focus on this piece of information. The editorialist wants to grab the reader's attention to this piece of information through using a passivisation structure.

### **Text 2.**

“Later on the first day of the cease-fire, dozens of Hamas militants turned up at Saraya Square in Gaza City to hand over three hostages to the Red Cross for release to Israel ‘the first of 33 to be freed’ as part of the deal. The appearance of the militants didn’t suggest they were on their last legs: They appeared to be wearing clean uniforms, in good shape and driving decent cars”

) NYT, Jan. 23, 2025(

The noun phrase" the first of 33 ،"in the above text, is served as the subject. The infinitive Phrase" to be freed ،"functions as a complement to" the first "،indicating an action related to it" ،to be "is an infinitive form of the verb" be "،which indicates a future or potential action. While, the verb"freed ،"which is in past participle form of the verb, indicates the action that will occur. The editorialist shifts the focus from who is performing the action to who is receiving or undergoing the action (hostages) by omitting the notion subject or the doer of the action (Hamas)

### **Text 3.**

“The cease-fires in Gaza and Lebanon will most likely hold for now, despite being tested to their limits over the weekend ،because all sides want to avoid full-scale fighting at least for a few weeks ،analysts said”

(NYT,Jan. 27, 2025)

The sentence "The cease-fires in Gaza and Lebanon will most likely hold for now, despite being tested" employs a passive structure with the phrase "despite being tested". The phrase "being tested" indicates that the cease-fires are the subjects experiencing the action of testing, rather than performing it. This follows the passive voice pattern where the focus is on the action received by the subject the cease-fires rather than who is conducting the testing. The passive here is constructed using the verb "to be" in its present participle form "being" combined with the past participle "tested". This structure emphasizes the action of testing without specifying who is performing it. The editorialist likely chose this structure to emphasize the state of the cease-fires rather than who is testing them. By using passive structure, the sentence highlights that these cease-fires are currently under scrutiny, which may be more relevant to the context of stability in conflict zones. Passivization here creates a sense of neutrality, as it avoids attributing blame or responsibility to any specific actor. This can be particularly important in sensitive political contexts where naming parties involved in testing might introduce bias or conflict. Overall, this use of passive voice serves to draw attention to the cease-fires themselves and their precarious situation without delving into specifics about who is testing them or how.

#### **Text 4.**

“In southern Lebanon, Israeli troops remained in position past the deadline on Sunday for their withdrawal, amid Israeli claims that Hezbollah had broken its own pledge to leave the area. In Gaza, Hamas failed to release a female hostage who Israel had hoped would be freed on Saturday, prompting Israel to delay the agreed return of displaced Palestinians to their homes in northern Gaza”

(NYT, Jan. 27, 2025)

The editorialist uses passivization in the sentence "In Gaza, Hamas failed to release a female hostage who Israel had hoped would be freed on Saturday "for several reasons. The passive structure emphasizes the action of not releasing the hostage rather than focusing on Hamas as the agent responsible for that action. This aligns with the purpose of many news reports, where the event itself is often more significant than who performed it. By using Passivization, the editorialist highlights the implications of the failed release without attributing blame directly to Hamas, which can be crucial in politically sensitive contexts .Furthermore, using Passivization allows the editorialist to minimize direct responsibility. In political reporting, this can create a sense of neutrality ‘avoiding potential bias against any party involved. It shifts attention away from Hamas's actions and instead focuses on the broader context of the hostage situation and its impact on Israeli hopes. Also, The passive construction contributes to a more formal and objective tone, which is typical in news reporting. This tone can help maintain credibility and professionalism ‘especially when discussing contentious issues such as hostage situations and conflicts. In this instance, passivization serves to keep the focus on the outcome the hostage not being released rather than on Hamas's decision-making process .This can be a strategic choice to maintain clarity regarding the situation's gravity without delving into potentially inflammatory details about the actors involved.

In summary, the use of passivization in this context serves to emphasize the action over the actor, avoid direct blame ‘maintain an impartial tone, and focus on the implications of the event rather than the specifics of who is responsible.

#### **Text 5.**

“The Lebanese Health Ministry said that 22 people had been killed by Israeli fire in southern Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority’s news agency said that one person had been killed in Gaza as large crowds in both places gathered near Israeli

troops ‘demanding to go home.’”

)NYT,Jan(2025 ،26 .

In the provided text, the passive structure is used in the phrases " had been killed " to convey specific information about events without emphasizing the subject the individuals who were killed .Passivization shifts the focus from who performed the action the Israeli fire to the action itself and its consequences the deaths. This is particularly useful in news reporting where the outcome the fatalities is more significant than the agent the Israeli forces. By using passive constructions, the text maintains an impersonal tone, which is often preferred in editorials writing. It allows for a more objective presentation of facts, distancing the editorialist from the events described. In situations where the agent is either unknown or less relevant, passive voice can provide clarity. Stating "22" people had been killed " succinctly communicates the gravity of the situation without needing to elaborate on who specifically caused it. Moreover, passivization here highlights the victims rather than the perpetrators, which can evoke a stronger emotional response from readers and draw attention to humanitarian aspects of conflicts. In summary, passive structures like " had been killed "are used in this context to emphasize outcomes and maintain an objective tone in reporting sensitive events.

#### **Text 6.**

“Mr .Trump’s comments appeared to echo the wishes of the Israeli far right that Palestinians be encouraged to leave Gaza— an idea that goes to the heart of Palestinian fears that they will be driven from their remaining homelands, but one that was dismissed by Egypt and Jordan”

) NYT,Jan(2025 ،26 .

In the provided sentence, there are three instances of passivization used. The passive structures present in the sentences "Palestinians be encouraged to leave Gaza", "they will be driven" and "one that was dismissed by Egypt and Jordan." These sentences illustrate different aspects of passivization usage, the first structure is in the subjunctive mood, suggesting a desire or wish rather than stating a fact. The focus here is on the action of encouragement directed towards Palestinians rather than who is doing the encouraging. Whereas, the second structure is in the future tense, indicating a potential action that may occur. It focuses on the action of being driven away from their homelands, highlighting the fear experienced by Palestinians regarding their future. The third structure is in the past simple tense indicating that an action (dismissal) occurred in the past. Here, the emphasis is on the action of being dismissed rather than on who performed the dismissal (Egypt and Jordan). The editorialist employs passivization here to shift focus from the doer (Israel) to its recipient (Palestinian). This mechanism creates a sense of objectivity. It allows editorialists to present information without personal bias or emotional involvement, as well as, maintain anonymity or create suspense. That is, clarifying who is affected by an action without cluttering sentences with details about the doer.

#### **Text 7.**

"After 76 years in which most of the population of Gaza was held by force under harsh conditions to maintain the ambition to destroy the State of Israel, the idea of helping them find other places to start a new, good life is a great idea," he said ". (NYT, Jan. 26, 2025)

The editorialist employs passivization in the statement about Gaza to emphasize the conditions experienced by the population rather than focusing on the actors responsible for those conditions. Passivization creates a more impersonal tone, which can be perceived as objective and formal. By stating that "most of the

population of Gaza was held by force "the emphasis shifts from who is doing the holding to the plight of the people affected. This technique highlights their suffering and circumstances without attributing blame directly to specific actors, which can be important in maintaining a balanced narrative. In this contexts where the actions of specific groups may be contentious or politically charged, using Passivization constructions allows the editorialist to avoid naming these actors explicitly, thus reducing potential bias or conflict in interpretation .Overall, this use of passivization serves to underscore the humanitarian aspect of the situation in Gaza while maintaining a level of detachment that can facilitate broader discussion.

### **Texts 8.**

"we got starved and humiliated, we experienced killing, death and destruction, but we didn't move south" (NYT ,Jan ,26 .,2025)

The sentence " we got starved and humiliated, we experienced killing, death and destruction, but we didn't move south "employs passive structures in the phrases "got starved "and" were humiliated ".The first structure is a colloquial form of passivization where " got "acts as a helper verb indicating that the subject (we) underwent the action of being starved. Whereas, the second structure" Were humiliated "is a more standard passive construction using" were" (a form of" to be") followed by the past participle" humiliated "emphasizing the experience of humiliation rather than who caused it. The first structure ("got starved") is informal and often used in spoken English, while the second ("were humiliated") is formal and more commonly found in written contexts. The use of" got "tends to focus on the state of being affected by an action, while" were "emphasizes the action itself and its consequences on the subject .The phrase" got starved "can sometimes create ambiguity about the agent causing starvation, while" were humiliated "clearly indicates that the subject was subjected to humiliation without

specifying who caused it. In both cases, the editorialist emphasizes their experiences (starvation and humiliation) rather than the agents causing these actions. This aligns with narrative styles that prioritize emotional impact over details about perpetrators. Passive constructions can lend an air of objectivity, making it less about who did something and more about what happened to the subjects.

### **Text 9.**

“Under President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and other recent presidents other than Mr. Trump, the United States officially supported establishing a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli one, criticized Israeli extremist attempts at seizing more Palestinian land by building settlements on it and assured Egypt and Jordan that they would not be forced to take in more Palestinians)”NYT,Jan. 26, 2025(

The editorialist uses passivization in the phrase "they would not be forced to take in more Palestinians" to shift focus from the agent (the entity enforcing this action) to the affected parties, Egypt and Jordan. This allows the editorialist to emphasize the impact on these countries rather than assigning responsibility for the action. Such use of the passive is common in political discourse to avoid explicitly naming the doer, especially when discussing sensitive topics, as it can help diffuse blame or controversy".They would not be forced "is a passive structure where "they "(Egypt and Jordan) is the grammatical subject but not the agent performing the action. The agent (who might force them) is deliberately left unstated, which aligns with political discourse strategies to avoid assigning responsibility or creating ambiguity. This construction shifts attention to Egypt and Jordan's position, framing them as recipients of potential pressure while leaving the source of that pressure ambiguous, a common technique for maintaining neutrality or avoiding direct criticism.

**Text 10.**

“For one year and three months, we were attacked from all sides, we got starved and humiliated, we experienced killing, death and destruction, but we didn’t move south,” she said. “No way” would she leave, she said” (WP,Jan. 26, 2025)

The sentence " we got starved and humiliated "employs passive voice structures in the phrases" got starved "and" humiliated.” This is a colloquial form of passive voice, this type of passive structure is called bare passive. The use of " got "tends to focus on the state of being affected by an action. The phrase" got starved and humiliated "can sometimes create ambiguity about the agent causing starvation and humiliation without specifying who caused it. The editorialist emphasizes their experiences (starvation and humiliation) rather than the agents causing these actions. This aligns with narrative styles that prioritize emotional impact over details about perpetrators.

**Text 11.**

“Thirty-three living hostages are set to be released over the course of that ceasefire, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli jails ، according to U.S. officials .Two Americans — Keith Siegel and Sagui Dekel-Chen —are slated for release in the first phase ،according to a senior administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under rules set by the White House”.

(WP, Jan.17,2025)

“hostages are set to be released over the course of that ceasefire ”...This is a passive construction using " to be ،"and past participle" released ."It emphasizes the hostages as the recipients of the action. “hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli jails "Here" ،held "acts as a past participle in a passive construction ،describing the state of the Palestinians. “Two Americans are slated for release "Again, this uses "to be + "past participle" releas” focusing on the Americans and the action

happening to them the condition of anonymity under rules set by the White House " The phrase " rules set by the White House " uses " set " as a past participle in a passive construction, indicating the rules were established by the White House.

In each case, the passive voice shifts the focus away from the actor and emphasizes the recipient of the action. That's 'instead of saying who will release the hostages, the sentence focuses on the fact that the hostages will be released. This is typical in formal writing where the action itself is more important than who is performing it

**Text 12.**

“The first phase will also include a “withdrawal and redeployment of Israeli forces outside densely populated areas,” the Qatari ministry said. Internally displaced people in Gaza will be allowed to return to their homesInternally displaced people in Gaza will be allowed to return to their homes ”.

) WP, Jan.17,2025(

The structure of the passive sentence here is future passive (will be allowed) ‘ auxiliary verb " :will be” (future tense) Past participle" :allowed" . "Internally displaced people in Gaza "affected entity occupied the subject position .The agent is omitted) implied: Israeli authorities or mediators .(The sentence focuses on the displaced people rather than on who is granting permission. The agent is omitted, which keeps the statement neutral and avoids direct attribution of responsibility.

The phrase " will be allowed "implies external control over the displaced people's actions, reinforcing their lack of agency in the situation.

The future tense indicates a conditional or planned action, not something happening immediately focus on the affected people: The main emphasis is on the displaced people rather than on the decision-makers.

To maintain neutrality, the editorialist avoids specifying who is allowing the return, which can be politically sensitive. The phrase " will be allowed "suggests that the displaced people do not have full autonomy over their movements, subtly indicating control by an external authority.

### Text.13

“ Hamas and Israel have been engaged for more than a year in negotiations , mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States .The existing plan is for three hostages to be the first released ,a process that will take at least 48 to 72 hours and maybe longer to arrange, said a senior U.S. official Wednesday, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations”.

(WP, Jan.17,2025)

The given passage contains multiple instances of passivization. Below is an analysis of their syntactic and semantic structures and why the editorialist may have chosen them:

"Hamas and Israel have been engaged for more than a year in negotiations "...

The sentence is in present perfect passive (have been engaged) “Hamas and Israel” occupied the subject position. The agent is not explicitly stated (but implicitly, they are engaged in negotiations by mediators or themselves) The focus is on the ongoing nature of the negotiations rather than who initiated them.

..."mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States"

The sentence is in the past participle phrase functioning as a reduced passive clause (mediated by.....) Subject position is occupied by the object“ negotiations .” "Qatar, Egypt, and the United States "is the agent. The emphasis is placed on the mediating process rather than on who is actively mediating.

“The existing plan is for three hostages to be the first released...”

The syntactic structure here is passive infinitive (to be released) , “Three hostages” occupied subject position. The agent is not explicitly stated (likely Israel, Hamas, or negotiators) .The focus is on the hostages and the release process rather than on who is releasing them.

“a process that will take at least 48 to 72 hours and maybe longer to arrange, said a senior U.S. official....”

The structure of this sentence is passive infinitive (to arrange), subject position is occupied by “A process,” the agent is not explicitly stated (likely officials organizing the release). The emphasis is placed on the complexity of the arrangement rather than on who is arranging it.

The above text emphasizes the negotiation process and outcomes, rather than specific actors. Simultaneously, some agents are omitted (e.g., who is releasing the hostages or who is arranging the process) possibly due to diplomatic discretion or confidentiality.

#### **Text. 14**

“The only other previously negotiated hostage release of some of the more than 250 people taken when Hamas sparked the war with its brutal raid into Israel in October 2023 had been negotiated in late November of that year”.  
(WP, Jan. 18, 2025)

The sentence " the more than 250 people taken when Hamas sparked the war "...is considered a reduced passive clause. The main verb is " taken" (past participle) ، subject position is occupied by the phrase " the more than 250 people ، "the agent is implicitly mentioned“ Hamas”, which is mentioned later in an active clause.

The second sentence..." had been negotiated in late November of that year ".is another instance of past perfect passive. The phrase " hostage release "occupied subject position and it's actually an affected entity. The agent is omitted) likely mediators or negotiating parties).

First Passive Clause" the more than 250 people taken "focuses on the hostages as victims, rather than explicitly stating" Hamas took them "in the main clause. The agent (Hamas) is only indirectly referenced, keeping the structure more formal and neutral. Second Passive Clause" had been negotiated "emphasizes the

completion of negotiations rather than who carried them out. Omitting the agent makes the statement more objective 'avoiding attribution of responsibility for the agreement.

The editorialist uses passivization to emphasize the victims (hostages) instead of the perpetrators, avoid politically charged attributions, especially in a complex geopolitical context, and highlight process and outcomes over actors, keeping the focus on negotiations rather than specific decision-makers.

### **Text. 15**

"Syria's pro-Iran government fell weeks later with the dramatic ouster of Bashar al-Assad; allied Iraqi militias had been effectively neutralized. Iran itself had suffered severe losses to its military strength after Israeli responses to two missile and drone strength after Isra strength after Isra

(WP, Jan.18.2025)

The passive structure "allied Iraqi militias had been effectively neutralized".is in past perfect passive 'the phrase "allied Iraqi militias " (affected entity) occupied subject position, while the real subject (the agent) is omitted implied, likely Israel or opposing forces.

The phrase "had been effectively neutralized" emphasizes the outcome rather than the actor responsible for the neutralization. The agent is omitted, which keeps the sentence neutral and depersonalized, avoiding explicit attribution of responsibility.

The adverb "effectively" suggests that while they may still exist, their operational capability has been diminished.

The editorialist employs passivization to highlight the result (neutralization) rather than the actor responsible, maintain neutrality, which is common in political reporting where responsibility might be disputed, as well as, suggest an irreversible or significant change while keeping the wording formal and indirect. The first

sentence (about Iraqi militias) uses passive to emphasize the neutralization of forces while avoiding explicit responsibility.

### **Text 16.**

“Trump had made clear that he did not want the Israel-Gaza war on his plate and, through the end of December and beginning of January, repeatedly threatened a steep but unspecified price for failure to end it before he took office. At a Jan. 7 news conference, he said he didn’t want to “hurt” the ongoing negotiations, but that if the deal wasn’t done before his inauguration“ ‘all hell will break out in the Middle East. And it will not be good for Hamas”.

(WP, Jan. 18,2025)

The sentence " If the deal wasn’t done before his inauguration "...in the above text is in past passive structure" wasn't done . "This construction shifts focus away from the agent (who is responsible for doing the deal) . The editorialist likely uses the passive to emphasize the state of the deal rather than the specific actors responsible for completing it. It makes the process seem more neutral and inevitable rather than attributing blame to any particular party.

The last sentence " It will not be good for Hamas "is in passive-like structure" will not be good , "that's not a strict passive but functions similarly in removing agency. While this isn't a traditional passive construction, it avoids specifying exactly who will take action against Hamas. The phrase suggests consequences for Hamas without directly stating who will impose them, maintaining an air of uncertainty and potential threat.

The editorialist uses passive structures here to maintain neutrality, maintain neutrality, avoiding active agents (e.g" ‘if they do not complete the deal") allows the text to remain neutral and less accusatory .Also, to emphasize the outcome rather than the doer, the editorialist shifts attention to the consequences of the deal being incomplete rather than who is responsible for making it happen.

Furthermore, reflect uncertainty or diplomacy, the vagueness of "all hell will break out" aligns with the passive structure, avoiding direct attribution of who would escalate the situation. These choices contribute to a more formal, objective, and analytical tone in the editorial.

### **Text 17.**

“Ron Dermer, Netanyahu’s confidant and top strategy adviser who served as Israeli ambassador to Washington throughout the first Trump administration, flew to Florida to touch base with the president-elect six days after his victory. Their meeting was “scheduled for 25 minutes but lasted two hours,” said Dan Diker, president of the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs”.

(WP, Jan. 18,2025)

In the sentence "Their meeting was scheduled for 25 minutes but lasted two hours.", the editorialist uses past passive structure "was scheduled." This construction removes the agent responsible for scheduling the meeting. Instead of saying "Someone scheduled the meeting for 25 minutes" the passive shifts focus to the duration of the meeting rather than who set the time limit. This allows the editorialist to emphasize the contrast between the planned short duration and the actual extended discussion.

The editorialist uses the passive structure here, to highlight the meeting's unexpected length, the contrast between the scheduled time and actual duration is the key point, so the sentence structure downplays who set the schedule and instead emphasizes how the meeting unfolded. Moreover, passive structure keeps the focus on the meeting itself rather than speculating on whether the duration was intentional or a result of shifting priorities.

This passive construction aligns with the broader tone of the passage, which presents the meeting as both diplomatically important and unexpectedly lengthy, suggesting deeper strategic discussions between Dermer and Trump's team.

**Text 18.**

“Israel had delayed the crossing's opening, which was supposed to happen over the weekend, saying it would not allow Palestinians north until a civilian hostage, Arbel Yehoud ‘was released .Israel said she should have been released before four female soldiers who were freed on Saturday.”

( WP ,Feb. 10,2025)

Several passive structures are employed in the provided text:

1. “The return was also seen....”

“The return ‘"in the above sentence, occupied subject position, but it's the recipient of the action of being seen. It's not actively seeing anything. This passive construction indicates that the return was perceived or interpreted in a particular way by an unspecified group of people .The real or notion subject (the agent) ‘ who saw the return in this way ‘is not explicitly mentioned, which is a common characteristic of passivization. The focus is on how the return was viewed, not who viewed it. The sentence conveys the idea that this perception was widespread or generally held. The passive structure allows the editorialist to express this without needing to identify the specific observers.

2. “which was launched in response...”

The relative pronoun" which ‘"in the above sentence, referr to" Israel's military campaign ."It occupied subject position, but it's the recipient of the action of being launched. The campaign didn't launch itself. This passive construction tells us that the military campaign was initiated or started by someone (implied to be Israel, though not explicitly stated in this passive phrase) . The passive voice here allows the text to focus on the campaign itself and its purpose (being launched in

response) rather than explicitly naming the agent who launched it. This phrasing is, common in news reporting where the focus is on the event itself rather than necessarily assigning direct agency in every instance. It allows for a more concise and potentially less accusatory tone.

### 3. “that many Palestinians be resettled.....”

The phrase "be resettled" in the above sentence, is a passive subjunctive construction. "Be" is the base form of the verb "to be" and "resettled" is the past participle. The subjunctive mood is used here because it expresses a hypothetical or desired situation (Trump's suggestion). The subject position is occupied by the phrase "many Palestinians" who are the recipients of the action of being resettled. This passive subjunctive expresses Trump's idea or proposal that the Palestinians should be resettled. It doesn't mean they were resettled, but that he suggested this as a possibility. The passive emphasizes the Palestinians as the objects of this proposed action. It highlights their lack of agency in the suggested plan. They are the ones to be resettled, not the ones doing the resettling. The use of the passivization in these instances is strategic and contributes to the overall tone and focus of the text. It shifts the emphasis away from the actors and towards the events and their impact.

### Discussion of the Results

In news editorials, a variety of syntactical patterns are used to make genuine and interesting patterns in meaning and form. Using different passive structures is one way to achieve this goal. This study distributes passive structures into agentless and agentive passive. The following table will display their occurrence frequencies, their use percentages, as well as compare their frequencies to display which type is the dominant one. Then, the results of the analysis will be discussed to find out the reasons behind the occurrence of these passive structures in political texts, and why some structures are highly used than the others. In table (1) the

numbers and percentages of each passivization type in the selected texts of American newspapers' editorials are presented:

Passivization	Total Number	Percentage
Agentless Passive	74	%87
Agentive Passive	11	%13
Average	85	%100

**Table (1) Number and Percentage of Pass. Types**

In the selected data, agentless passive constructions are used more frequently than agentive ones. This occurs for several reasons. To maintain neutrality and objectivity, on one hand ‘editorialists’ strive for neutrality ‘avoiding language that directly assigns blame or credit to a specific actor .Example:

Agentive Passive: The hostages had been released by Hamas.

Agentless Passive: The hostages had been released

The second version focuses on the event itself, rather than explicitly naming Hamas as the agent, which could carry political weight.

To Omit Controversial or Unverified Information, on the other hand. In politically sensitive topics, the exact agent may not be confirmed or the writer may wish to avoid making a potentially false claim. Example:

Agentive Passive: “The attack had been planned by Iran” (Specifies Iran as responsible)

Agentless Passive: “The attack had been planned” (Avoids direct attribution if responsibility is unclear)

Furthermore, emphasizing the outcome over the actor. Agentless passives place greater focus on the event itself rather than on the doer. This is useful when the event is more significant than the agent. Example:

Agentive Passive: “Israeli airstrikes had destroyed the weapons facility”

Agentless Passive: “The weapons facility had been destroyed”

The second version emphasizes the destruction ‘not who caused it.

Moreover, agentless passive constructions de-emphasize responsibility or blame.

Editorialists prefer language that obscures direct responsibility for controversial actions. Example:

Agentive Passive: “The protesters were arrested by government forces”

Agentless Passive: “The protesters were arrested”

The second version removes the government from direct responsibility, making it sound less accusatory.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the analyses, it was concluded that there are certain justifications for using Passivisation in political editorials. Passivisation assists editorialists in reorganising sentence elements, ensuring a clear distinction between the phrase's topic and comment. Thus, their messages are successfully communicated. Passivisation strengthens the feeling of objectivity in discourse by removing the subject or performer of the activity from the topic position. This trait is especially significant in political conversation due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. Passivisation lends semantic prominence to the issue, indicating that the most important thing, in the editor's opinion, is mentioned first . Furthermore, the fronting of phrase elements might cause, in some situations ‘the postponing of other elements, with the delayed portions receiving the greatest degree of communicative dynamism. Thus, the generated statements are both syntactically and semantically significant.

### **References**

- Beard, A. (2000) Language of Politics. London: Routledge.
- Brown, K & Miller, J. ed. (1999). Concise encyclopedia of Grammatical Categories. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Buitkiene, J. (2008). Hedging in Newspaper Discourse. Man and the Word. 10.3: 11 – 15.

- Burton, G. (2002). *More than Meets the Eye: An Introduction to Media Studies*. 3rd ed. London: Arnold.
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research, planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. 4th Ed USA: Pearson Education.
- Crystal, D. (1990). *Rediscover Grammar with David Crystal*. London: Longman
- Eastwood, J. (2002). *Oxford Guide to English Grammar*. Oxford: OUP.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). *New Labour, New Language*. London: Routledge.
- Grossberg, L., Wartella, E. and Whitney, D. (1998). *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. New York: Sages.
- Huddleston, R. (1984). *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. Cambridge: CUP
- Jaworski, A. and Galasinski, D. (2002). *The Verbal Construction of Non-Verbal Behaviour: British Press Reports of President Clinton's Grand Jury Testimony Video*. *Discourse and Society*. 13. 5: 629– 649.
- Keenan, E., L. (1985). *Passive in the World's Languages*, pp.239-257. In T.Shopen, ed. *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Newmark, P. (1986). *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press
- Obaid, H. Haider. (2025). *Linguistic Cohesion and Its Impact on Text Structure: A Comparative Semantic Study in the Discourse of Mara Bar Serapion*. *Lark Journal*(1)17, Pt1-724 ( .701<https://doi.org/10.31185/lark.3940>
- Oktar, L (2001). *The ideological organization of representational processes in the presentation of us and them*. *Discourse & Society*, 12 (3)346-313
- Palmer, F. R (1981). *Semantics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A university grammar of English*. Longman.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., and Svartvik, J. (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Saeed, J. I. (2009). *Semantics*. Singapore: Utopia Press Pte Ltd
- Sebranek, P & Dave K. 1990. *The Write Source 2000*. Burlington: Write Source House.
- Sinclair, J. ed. 1995. *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*. London: Harper Collins.
- Swan, M. C. 2005. *Practical English Usage*. Oxford: OUP.
- Van Dijk, T. A. 2001. *Text and Context of Parliamentary Debate*. In Baley, P. ed. *Papers of Politics and Language*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/23/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-israel-cease-fire.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/27/world/middleeast/gaza-lebanon-israel-ceasefire.html>  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/26/world/middleeast/trump-egypt.html-jordan-gaza-d/>  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/01/18/biden-trump-witkoff-ceasefire-israel-gaza/>  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/01/14/israel-hostages-amas/>  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/02/10/israel-war-gaza-ceasefire-hostages-news-amas/>

مجلة لارك للفلسفة واللسانيات والعلوم الاجتماعية