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# Ancient Greek

Morphosyntactic Structures – Part 2: Voice



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# Roadmap

- Active and Middle-Passive Meanings and Forms
- Argument Structure
- Passivization
- Different Kinds of Verbs and Middle Meanings

## Active and Middle-Passive Meanings

- Active

παρασκευάζει (τι) he prepares (something)

- Middle-Passive

παρασκευάζεται he makes (τι something) ready for himself  
he gets ready, he prepares himself  
he is made ready, he is being prepared (ὑπό τινος  
'by someone')

## Active and Middle, Passive Forms

Pr.	<b>λύω</b> I release	<b>λύομαι</b> I release (for myself), I am released	
Perf.	<b>λέλυκα</b> I have released	<b>λέλυμαι</b> I have released (for myself), I have been released	
Aor.	<b>έλυσα</b> I released	<b>έλυσάμην</b> I rel. (for myself)	<b>έλύθην</b> I was released
Fut.	<b>λύσω</b> I will release	<b>λύσομαι</b> I will rel. (for myself)	<b>(λυθήσομαι)</b> I have been released

## Argument Structure

ὁ ἀνὴρ γελά ‘The man laughs’

(One-participant event; intransitive verb)

ὁ Ὅμηρος ἔποιει τὰ ἔπη. ‘Homer composed the verses’

(Two-participant event; object in accusative)

ἀπειλεῖς μοι; ‘Are you threatening me?’

(Two-participant event; complement in dative)

ὁ Ξενοφῶν δίδωσι τὴν βίβλον τῷ Σωκράτει ‘Xenophon gives the book to Socrates.’

(Three-participant event; with a direct and an indirect object)

## Passivization

- Two-participant events

τὰ ἔπη ἐποιεῖτο (ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀμήρου) ‘The verses were made (by Homer)  
ἀπειλοῦμαι (ὑπὸ σοῦ) ‘I am being threatened (by you)

ὁ δὲ χρυσὸς οὗτος ... ὑπὸ Δελφῶν καλέεται Γυγάδας. (Hdt. 1.14.3)  
And this gold is called ‘Gygadas’ by the Delphians.

οἰκοῦσι δ’ ἐν μιᾷ τῶν νήσων οὐ μεγάλη, καλεῖται δὲ Λιπάρα. (Thuc. 3.88.2)  
They live on one of the islands, of modest size, and it is called Lipara.

## Active, Passive, Middle

- Two-participant events:

ποιῶ (aor. ἐποίησα)    ποιοῦμαι (aor. ἐποιήθην)    ποιοῦμαι (ἐποίησάμην)

- Causatives:

ἵστημι 'make stand, set up'

ἵσταμαι '(come to) stand'

φοβέω 'make afraid, terrify'

φοβοῦμαι 'be afraid'

πείθω 'make listen, persuade'

πείθομαι 'listen, obey'

Cf. English 'John breaks the glass' versus 'the glass breaks'

## Deponent Verbs

- θη-aorists:  
βούλομαι, aor. ἐβουλήθην ‘wish’
- Sigmatic aorist:  
κτῶμαι, aor. ἐκτησάμην ‘acquire’
- Voice switch between tenses:  
ἀκούω, fut. ἀκούσομαι ‘hear’



## Direct-Reflexive Meaning

- Expressed by middle forms (aor. -μην, fut. -μαι)
- Limited sets of verbs: λούω ‘wash’, κείρω ‘cut hair’, κοσμέω ‘adorn’; παρασκευάζω ‘prepare’, γυμνάζω ‘train’

οὐκ έλούσατ’ έξ ὄτουπερ έγένετο. (Ar. *Plut.* 85)

He hasn’t washed himself since he was born.

- Otherwise, the direct reflexive pronoun έαυτόν/ήν ‘him/herself’ is used

## Indirect-Reflexive Meaning

- Expressed by middle forms (aor. -μην, fut. -μαι)
- Some middle only verbs: κτῶμαι, aor. ἐκτησάμην 'acquire'  
δέχομαι, aor. ἐδεξάμην accept

ἀπὸ ὀλυρέων ποιεῦνται σιτία. (Hdt. 2.36.2)

They make food from a coarse grain. *Middle*.

οἱ ἄστοι ἄλευρά τε καὶ ἄλφιτα ἐποίηυν. (Hdt. 7.119.2)

The townspeople made wheat and barley meal. *Active*.

## (Change of) Mental State

Causative counterpart:

ὀργίζομαι 'be(come) angry' (ὀργίζω 'make angry')

φοβέομαι 'be(come) afraid' (φοβέω 'make afraid, terrify')

Deponents: αἰδέομαι 'respect, be ashamed', βούλομαι 'wish'

Aor.: ὠργίσθην 'was angry' ('was made angry'), ἐφοβήθην 'was afraid'  
(*'was terrified'*), ἠδέσθην 'was ashamed, ἐβουλήθην 'wished'

## Change of (Physical) State

Causative counterpart:

πορεύομαι 'go' (πορεύω 'make go')

ἵσταμαι 'stand' (ἵστημι 'make stand')

Deponents, e.g. ἔπομαι 'follow'

Aor.: ἐπορεύθην, ἐσπόμην, ἔστην

## Other middle-passive meanings

- Reciprocal:

μάχομαι, aor. ἐμαχεσάμην ‘fight (each other)’

- (Un)intentional mental activity:

θεάομαι, aor. ἐθεασάμην ‘gaze’

- Type of speech:

εὔχομαι, aor. ἤυξάμην ‘pray’

δέομαι, aor. ἐδεήθην ‘ask’