

## Reciprocals

Reciprocals are expressions that indicate that the subject of the verb is at the same time the object. Unlike reflexives, however, which have a similar function, reciprocals introduce a distributing element into the meaning. While a reflexive can be applied to a singular subject (*x hits x*), a reciprocal requires a plural subject, because it expresses that the various members of the subject each perform the action described by the verb not on themselves but on one or more of the *other* members of the subject: *x and y hit each other* means *x hits y and y hits x*.

Heim, Lasnik & May (1991) argue that in order to achieve this, a reciprocal expression such as *each other* is composed of two elements: a distributor (*each*) and a reciprocator (*other*). The distributor is associated with the subject (which in the theoretical framework that Heim, Lasnik & May use is expressed as a covert movement of the distributor to the subject) and thus turns a plural subject (*the men*) into a distributed subject (*the men each*). The reciprocator is in object position, and in a sense directs the action back to the subject.

Arabic employs several different methods of expressing reciprocity. In Classical Arabic, one method is to use the word *ba'd* 'part, portion; some' in a correlative manner. This reciprocal expression fits well with Heim, Lasnik & May's analysis: *ba'd* occurs twice, once associated with the subject, and once associated with the object:

1	a	wa-yuzāhiru	ba'd-u-hum	ba'd-an	
		and-help(3sg.m)	some-NOM-them	some-ACC.INDEF	
		'and they help each other'			
	b	la'in inqasama	l-nāširūna	ba'd-u-hum	'alā
		if be-divided(3sg.m)	the-publishers(NOM)	some-NOM-them	on
		ba'd-in			
		some-GEN.INDEF			

'if the publishers are divided amongst each other'

The *ba'd* associated with the subject can appear in subject position, as in (1a), in which case the verb agrees with it, taking 3rd person masculine singular form. The logical subject appears as a genitive (pro)noun on *ba'd*. If the subject is not pronominal, a different construction is often used, as in (1b). Here, the subject-*ba'd* does not appear in subject position but stands in apposition to the subject *al-nāširūna* 'the publishers'. It takes a genitive suffix that refers back to the subject.

The *ba'd* associated with the object stands in object position and is declined: in (1a) it appears as a direct object with accusative case. (In ditransitive verbs it can also appear as the indirect object). In (1b) it appears as the complement of the preposition 'alā 'on', which is a prepositional object of the verb *inqasama* 'be divided'. Here, *ba'd* takes genitive, because all prepositions in Arabic assign genitive case. The object-*ba'd* does not take any suffix, and is often indefinite, certainly in Classical Arabic, although in Modern Standard Arabic, it can also be definite:

2    yulāqī            ba'd-u-hum            al-ba'd-a  
      meet(3sg.m)    some-NOM-them        the-some-ACC  
      'they meet each other'

Obviously, the logical subject of the verb can also be a first or second person. In such cases, the verb may agree with *ba'd*, as in (3a), but it may also agree with the logical subject, as in (3b):

3    a    wa-yajibu        'an    yastami'a        ba'd-u-nā            ilā    ba'd-in  
      and-must        that    listen(3sg.m)    some-NOM-us        to        some-GEN  
      'we must listen to each other'

      b    'an lā            nusdiya        l-'afdāl-a            ba'd-u-nā  
      that not        we-confer        the-benefits-ACC        some-NOM-us

li-ba'd-in

to-some-GEN

'that we do not confer benefits on each other'

Example (3b) also shows an effect that is frequently found in reciprocals cross-linguistically: the distributor, here *ba'dunā*, is not in subject position or even in apposition to it. Instead, it is positioned after the object. This position puts it close to the reciprocator, which is the complement of the preposition *li* 'to'. This appears to be a common development in language: the distributor, although associated with the subject, has the tendency to remain close to the reciprocator, rather than appearing in or adjoined to subject position. This development is also clear in English, where *each other* normally appears as one phrase. (As opposed to constructions such as *they each hit the other* or *each of them hit the other*.)

As seen in (3b), where the distributor follows the object, Modern Standard Arabic shows this tendency as well. And it can in fact even go one step further, by making the distributor and the reciprocator appear more or less as a fixed unit. This is seen most clearly in prepositional objects:

4	wa-hum	yulawwiḥūna	bi-l-'aydī	li-ba'd-ə-hum	al-ba'd
	and-they	they.wave	with-the-hands	to-some-ə-them	the-some
	'and they wave their hands at each other'				

In (4), the case endings are not indicated, which is actually more in accordance with linguistic practice: spoken Arabic does not have case, and written Arabic usually does not indicate case. Therefore, speakers of Arabic rarely if ever have intuitions about case. (All examples from Modern Standard Arabic quoted here are from Kremers (1997), who collected them from a corpus of written Arabic. Case endings in the other examples are based on the descriptive grammar of Classical Arabic, but because the construction in (4) does not occur in Classical Arabic, it seems better not to

indicate case.) Speakers of Arabic will insert a vowel between *ba'd* and its suffix, but this vowel may vary, hence it is indicated as a schwa here.

In (4), the phrase *ba'dahum al-ba'd* occurs more or less as a single element, as can be seen by the fact that the distributor *ba'dahum* now appears in the complement position of the preposition together with the reciprocator, rather than before the preposition as in (3b). Occasionally, the second *ba'd* is indefinite. When this happens, it is often written with the indefinite accusative ending, which is one of the few case endings that *is* written:

5    fa-qa'adū      yaštaġilūna              bi-ba'd-ə-hum ba'd-an  
       and-they.sat    they.are.occupied      with-some-ə-them      some-ACC.INDEF  
       'and they sat there occupied with each other'

In (5), the second *ba'd* shows the indefinite accusative ending *-an*. However, because spoken Arabic has no case endings, we cannot assume that when a case ending appears in written form, it represents the intuition of the native speaker. According to classical grammar, there would be no explanation for the occurrence of accusative case on the second *ba'd* in (5). Instead, it seems safe to assume that the ending here is a fossilized form.

In fact, it is not unlikely that the phrase *ba'dahum ba'dan/al-ba'd* (with the appropriate suffix replacing *-hum* 'them') should be analyzed as a simplex (non-compound) form. This is exactly the final step of the development that draws together the distributor and the reciprocator, as can be seen in Dutch, for example, where the original *elk ander* 'each other' developed into modern-day *elkaar*. That this development has taken place in Arabic is obvious from the fact that occasionally, only one occurrence of *ba'd* expresses the reciprocal in Modern Standard Arabic:

6    a      yuḥaddiṭūna    ba'd-a-hum              'an      'axbār-i      l-qurā  
       they.speak.to    some-ACC-them      about    news-GEN      the-villages



as a reciprocal, while the dialect forms in (7) represent the end stage. In Classical Arabic, the reciprocal is expressed with a correlative use of *ba'd*: it occurs twice in the sentence, once in subject position, or as adjunct to the subject, and once in object position. The subject-*ba'd* takes a pronominal suffix that refers to the subject (or it takes the logical subject as possessive modifier). The object-*ba'd* is indefinite and does not take any suffix. In colloquial Arabic, the reciprocal is expressed with a single *ba'd*+suffix. Modern Standard Arabic shows a variety of methods, which are usually somewhere between the Classical and the colloquial expression.

It should be noted, however, that some dialects have chosen a different method. Iraqi Arabic, for example, uses a typical distributor-reciprocator structure, but not with the lexical element *ba'd*:

8	yšūfūn	wāḥid il-lāx	kull yōm	(Iraqi)
	they.see	one the-other	every day	
	'they see each other every day'			

In (8), the word *wāḥid* 'one' is used as the distributor, and *il-lāx* 'the other' as the reciprocator. The use of a word for 'one' as distributor is not unexpected, as witnessed by the English structure *they see one another every day*.

Apart from the method described here, Arabic has another way of expressing reciprocity, one which uses a derived verb stem. The sixth form of Arabic verbs, which is formed with the pattern taKāTaBa, often has a reciprocal meaning: *ḍaraba* 'to hit s.o.', *taḍārabā* 'to hit each other, to come to blows, to clash'; *āwana* 'to help s.o.', *ta'āwana* 'to help each other, to cooperate'; *kātaba* 'to write to s.o., to correspond with s.o.', *takātaba* 'to write to each other, to correspond'.

It should be noted, however, that this is at best a marginally productive process. Many sixth-stem verb forms have lexicalized meanings, as the examples show. Furthermore, there are sixth-stem forms that do not have a reciprocal meaning: *xādala* 'to leave, to forsake', *taxādala* 'to wane, to

decrease, to fade'; *bāraka* 'to bless s.o.', *tabāraka* 'to be blessed'; *saqata* 'to fall', *tasāqata* 'to fall down piece by piece, to collapse'. In fact, as Wright (1981) indicates, reciprocity is not the basic meaning of the sixth form of the verb.

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## References

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