

# Non-Active Verbs in Hebrew and the Input to Nominalization

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## Overview

- ❖ **Puzzle:** in Hebrew the verbal form niXYaZ hosts non-active verbs. Within this one and the same morphological form, unaccusative verbs nominalize, but passives do not.
- ❖ **Competition within the template paradigm:** we account for this gap by showing that for niXYaZ passives, competition exists between the nominalization of the passive and that of the active alternant, where both may convey a reading which entails an (implicit) agent.
  - The active form is preferred over the derivationally more complex non-active.
- ❖ **No competition with the unaccusative form:** the active form however cannot be used to convey the unaccusative reading (no external argument), and hence no competition exists, and the non-active form is used.

## Nominalization and Passivization

**Complex Event Nominals (CENs)** (Grimshaw 1990, Alexiadou 2001, Argument Structure Nominals in Borer 2013, 2014): nominalizations which preserve event reading and argument structure of corresponding verb.

- Hebrew Active/transitive verbs**
- (1) a. *ba-mitnadvim šikmu et ha-ya'ar*  
the-volunteers rehabilitated.3PL ACC the-forest  
'The volunteers rehabilitated the forest'.
- ✓ **Produce CENs** (Ahdout, in prep)
- b. *ba-šikmu šel ha-ya'ar (al yedey ba-mitnadvim)*  
the-rehabilitation of the-forest by the-volunteers  
'The rehabilitation of the forest by the volunteers'.

- ❖ Nominals of transitives pattern like passive verbs: subject is optional even in the presence of obligatory object, and optionally surfaces as a *by*-phrase.
- ❖ It has often been suggested that **nominalization is akin to passivization** (Grimshaw 1990, Alexiadou 2001, 2017, Borer 2013, Bruening 2013).
- ❖ What do we expect to find with verbs which **lack** an external argument, namely I. **unaccusatives?** II. **passives?**

## Non-Active verbs I: Unaccusatives

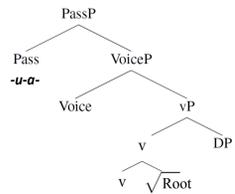
- ❖ Alexiadou (2001 on Romance/Greek, see 2017): **unaccusatives produce CENs.**
  - ❖ **Hebrew?** 4 morphological classes hosting unacc. verbs were checked (not incl. niXYaZ, see below, and Ahdout in prep).
  - ❖ Unaccusativity established based on following diagnostics: licencing of *by-itself* (Levin & Rapaport-Hovav 1995 a.o.), for **Hebrew** – verb-subject inversion (Shlonsky, 1987); presence of possessive datives (Borer and Grodzinsky, 1986), see also Kastner 2017.
- ✓ **Produce CENs** (Ahdout, in prep)
- (2) a. *ba-even nafla me-ha-kotel (me-acmo)*  
the-stone fell.3SG.F from-the-western.wall by-itself.FSG  
'The stone falling from the western wall'.
- b. *nefilat ha-even me-ha-kotel*  
the.fall (of) the-stone from-the-western.wall  
'The stone falling from the western wall'.

## Non-Active verbs II: Passives – Two Classes

### Pass-Passives: Pass templates

Hosts **passives** only

**Passive verb:** (Doron 2003, Alexiadou and Doron 2012, implemented by Kastner and Zu 2017 and Kastner 2018 as):



[[Pass]] = λPλe ∃x.e & Agent(x,e) & Theme(...)

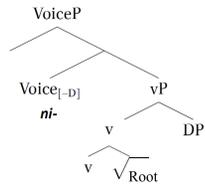
- (3) *ba-xeder sudar al yedey ha-yeled*  
the-room be.tidied.up.PASS by the-boy  
'The room was tidied up by the boy'.

**No deverbal noun form**

### NonAct-passives: niXYaZ

Hosts **intransitives**: unaccusative, **passive**, (unergative)

**Unaccusative/passive verb:** ("expletive Voice" of Schäfer 2008, Alexiadou et al. 2015)



[[Voice(-D)]] = a. λPλe ∃x.e & Agent(x,e) & Theme(...)  
/ {√rcx murder', √amr 'say', ...}  
b. λP.P (elsewhere = unaccusative)

- (4) a. *ba-xalon nisgar al yedey ha-more*  
the-window be.closed.MID by the-teacher  
'The window was closed by the teacher'.
- b. *ba-xalon nisgar me-ha-rux/ me-acmo*  
the-window closed.MID from-the-wind/by.itself

Deverbal noun: **hiXaYZut**

## Data: Nominalization of niXYaZ Passives

Data and examples: primary list of verbs from Ehrenfeld (2012), processed and checked for CEN (based on diagnostics in Grimshaw 1990), using speaker judgments and corpora consultation (Itai and Wintner 2008, heTenTen, Google), see Ahdout (in prep).

STRUCTURE	PASS	UNACC	UNERG	EXAMPLE	NOMINALS/VERBS PER SUBGROUP	%
PASSIVE	a	+	-	<i>ne'exal</i> 'be eaten (by)'	7/172	4%
MEDIO-PASS	b	+	-	<i>nisgar</i> 'close/be closed (by)'	11/78	14%
UNACCUSATIVE	c	-	+	<i>nigmar</i> 'ended'	25/91	27%
UNERGATIVE	d	-	+	<i>neevak be-</i> 'wrestled'	19/32	59%
	e	-	+	<i>nitsmad (le-)</i> 'attached'	12/17	71%
AMBIGUOUS	f	+	+	<i>nitla</i> 'hung on to/be hanged (by)'	12/15	80%
	g	+	+	<i>niftax</i> 'open up/get/be opened (by)'	10/10	100%

- (5) **Unacc. Verb** a. *ba-uga nim'exa ba-a-tik*  
the-cake got.squished.MID.3SG.F in-the-bag  
'The cake got squished in the bag'.
- Passive Verb** b. *ba-psyolet nim'exa al yedey ha-mexona*  
the-waste got.squished.MID.3SG.F by the-machine  
'The waste was squished using a machine'.
- (6) ✓ **Unacc. Noun** a. *ba-hima'asut šel ha-uga ba-a-tik*  
the-squishing.MID of the-cake in-the-bag  
'The cake getting squished in the bag'.
- X Passive Noun** b. \* *ba-hima'asut šel ha-psyolet al yedey ha-mexona*  
the-squishing.MID of the-waste by the-machine

## Analysis: Competition

- ❖ Hebrew has a morphological Active-Middle/non-active alternation: **non-active derived on the basis of active:** (Doron 2003, Arad 2005, Reinhart and Siloni 2005, Laks 2013, Kastner 2016; the following examples are adapted from Siloni and Preminger 2006:369)

- (7) a. *oman šveycari yacar et ha-pesel* → b. *ha-pesel nocar al yedey oman šveycari*  
artist Swiss created.ACT ACC the-sculpture sculpture created.MID by artist Swiss  
'A Swiss artist created the sculpture' 'The sculpture was created by a Swiss artist.'
- c. *ba-yoveš yacar et ha-sedek* → d. *ha-sedek nocar (me-ha-yoveš/ me-acmo)*  
the-dryness created.ACT ACC the-crack the-crack formed.MID from-the-dryness/by.itself

Template	Voice marking	Reading	Verb	Nominal
XaYaZ	ACT	Transitive	<i>yacar</i> 'create'	<i>yecira</i> 'creating, creation'
niXYaZ	MID (non-active)	Unacc. AND/OR passive	<i>nocar</i> 'be created (from/by)'	<i>hivacrut</i> 'being created (from/*by)'

**Our proposal:** exemplified using the root √ycr

0.

The **discourse** level:

- \* Choice of passive vs. unacc. reading.
- \* Choice of verbal vs. nominal form.

1.

In the **verbal** domain:

Active form is transitive (1a), (7a)

2.a

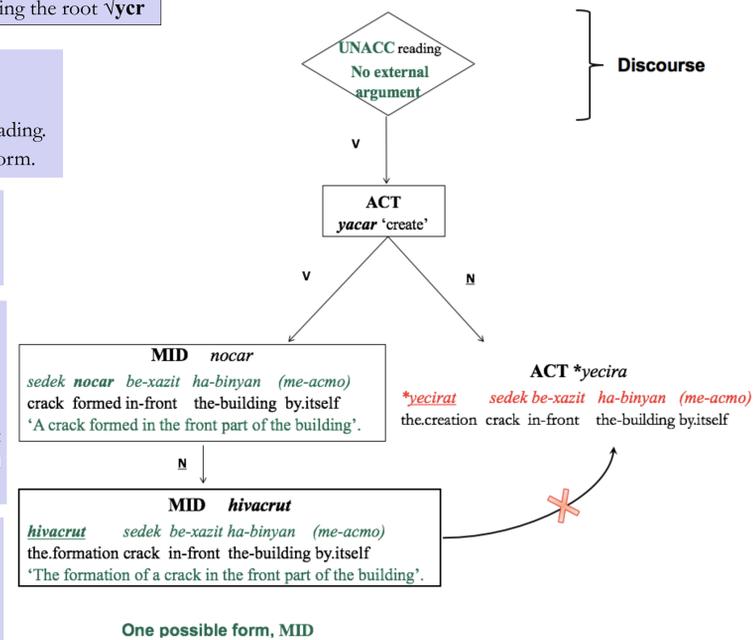
In the **nominal** domain:

An unaccusative reading is **banned** with the Active form:

Agent is implied, even when not realized via *by*-phrase (See Sichel 2009, 2010).

2.b

MID form is not in competition with the ACT form, and the MID noun is grammatical.



One possible form, MID

1.

In the **verbal** domain:

Passive reading is available only with **Middle** (or passive) marked forms (3), (4a), (5b), (7b)

2.

In the **nominal** domain:

Both **Active** and **Middle** forms may convey a **passive** reading (1b)

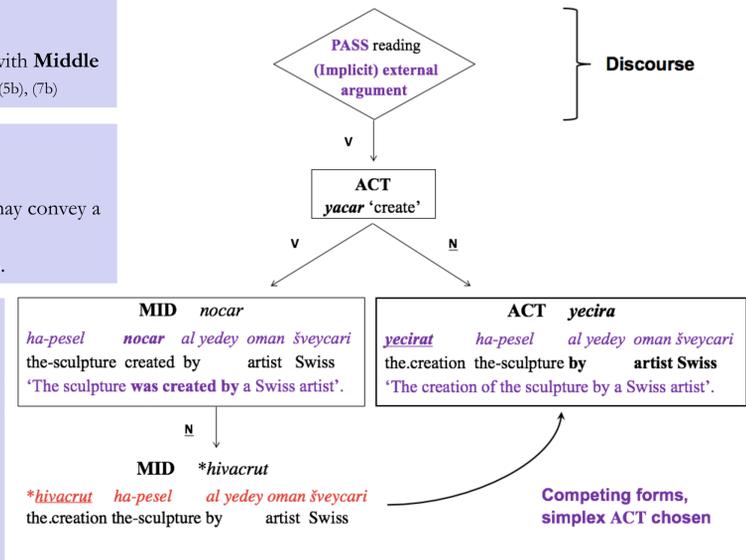
(Ahdout in prep, Ahdout and Kastner 2018).

3.

In usage:

Simplex **ACT** is preferred over complex **MID**, deeming the choice of **MID** nominal **ungrammatical** (6b).

\* **Prediction:** MID nominals are not categorically ungrammatical if there is a semantic distinction.



**Prediction is borne out:** when Active and Middle forms are not interchangeable, e.g. in a fantastic context for √akl.

- (8) a. *#axila b-a-xaim al yedey mijflecet* b. *he'axlut b-a-xaim al yedey mijflecet*  
eating.ACT in-the-life by a.monster being.eaten.MID in-the-life by a.monster  
'Being eaten alive by a monster'. (Itai and Wintner 2008)

## Against a Uniform (syntactic) Account for Both Classes of Passives

- ❖ **Kastner & Zu (2017):** **Observation:** Pass-passives lack an imperative, infinitive and nominal form.  
**Claim:** Pass head requires [+fin] complements, Imperative/Infinitive/Nominal heads: [-fin]

❖ Doron 2003, Alexiadou and Doron 2012, Kastner 2017: **no Pass head** in niXYaZ non-active passives:

1. **Passive templates** are a vocalic variation of an active template, while niXYaZ is morpho-phonologically independent:

- (9) *ba-yeled sidar et ha-xader > ba-xeder sudar*  
the-boy tidied.up.ACT ACC the-room the-room got.tidied.PASS

⇒ niXYaZ has no pass head, Sectional restriction account **rejected**

2. **No paradigm gaps**, as described in Kastner & Zu (2017), exist for niXYaZ:

- (10) niXYaZ: *le-hiXXaYeZ* [infinitive], *hiXXaYeZ* [imperative], *hiXaYZut* [nominal]

## Conclusions

**Our goal:** addressing the nominalization patterns of **non-active** verbs: unaccusatives, and mainly passives, in a language in which Voice distinctions are carried on to the nominal domain.

- In accordance with existing literature, we showed that **unaccusatives produce CENs.**
- **Passives**, however, were shown to be **incompatible** with nominalization.
- For passives with a Passive head in their underlying structure, a selectional restrictions account could be adopted, but we claimed that a similar account is incompatible with NonAct-passives, for which a Pass head is absent.
- For NonAct passives, we suggested an explanation in terms of **competition**, where the simplex and Active nominalization is preferred over the complex NonAct/Middle form, thus accounting for the scarcity of NonAct-passive nominals.