Paradigm Gaps in The Hebrew Passive: Licensing, Referentiality and Agentivity

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Overview

A puzzle: passive verbs in Hebrew have no infinitival, nominalized or imperative forms.

Assuming that **only T can license Pass**, it automatically follows that passive nominalizations and imperatives are rare (if they exist at all).

Something else can be said about infinitives, because infinitival passives do exist in many languages. We relate the lack of passive infinitival forms to the peculiarity of Hebrew implicit external arguments.

Specifically, implicit external arguments in Hebrew are more referential than in languages like English:
- The external argument of a passive verb must be an Agent (Doron 2003, 2013).
- Implicit arguments in Hebrew are sensitive to the [±animate] feature (Landau 2010).

Our analysis: the more features the implicit external argument carries, the more referential it becomes, and the more likely it is to interfere with control of PRO.

Some facts about periphrastic passive constructions fall out naturally. Our account predicts that the periphrastic passive forms in Hebrew do not have implicit external arguments. In other words, they are adjectival passives.

Hebrew Paradigms

The verbal paradigm

Template	Agency	Voice	Gloss	Past	Future	Present
1 CaCac	—	—	'counted'	PaKaD	yiFKoD	PoKeD
2 niCCac	—	MID	'be absent'	niFKaD	yiPaKeD	niFKaD
3 CiCeC	INTNS	—	'commanded'	PiKeD	yeFaKeD	meFaKeD
4 CuCaC	INTNS	PASS	'be commanded'	PuKaD	yeFuKaD	meFuKaD
5 hiCCiC	CAUS	—	'deposited'	hiFKiD	yaFKiD	maFKiD
6 huCCaC	CAUS	PASS	'be deposited'	huFKaD	yuFKaD	muFKaD
7 hitCaCeC	INTNS	MID	'ally himself'	hitPaKeD	yitPaKeD	mitPaKeD

- Are derived from active verbs.
- Require that the external argument be an Actor, not a cause (Doron 2003, 2013; cf. Sichel 2010).

*ha-ir   hušmeda   al yedey ha-oyev / ha-miflecet / *ha-hurikan / *haznaxa*
the-city<F> destroyed.caus.pass.3sg.f by   the-enemy / the-monster / the-hurricane / neglect
'The city was destroyed (by the enemy/the monster/*the hurricane/*neglect)'

Template	Agency	Voice	Gloss	Infinitive	Imperative	Nominal
1 CaCac	—	—	'count'	liFKoD	PKoD	PkiDa
2 niCCac	—	MID	'be absent'	lehiPaKed	hiPaKeD	hiPaKDut
3 CiCeC	INTNS	—	'command'	leFaKeD	PaKeD	PiKuD
4 CuCaC	INTNS	PASS	'be commanded'	—	—	—
5 hiCCiC	CAUS	—	'deposit'	lehaFKiD	haFKeD	haFKaDa
6 huCCaC	CAUS	PASS	'be deposited'	—	—	—
7 hitCaCeC	INTNS	MID	'ally yourself'	lehitPaKeD	hitPaKeD	hitPaKDut

Analysis

- Only T can license Pass.
- Hebrew infinitival passives are ruled out by intervention.

Infinitives: an intervention account.

Argument PRO is typically controlled by an animate DP (see Landau 2013 for discussion).

In an infinitival active clause, PRO is the external argument, controlled by the matrix subject.
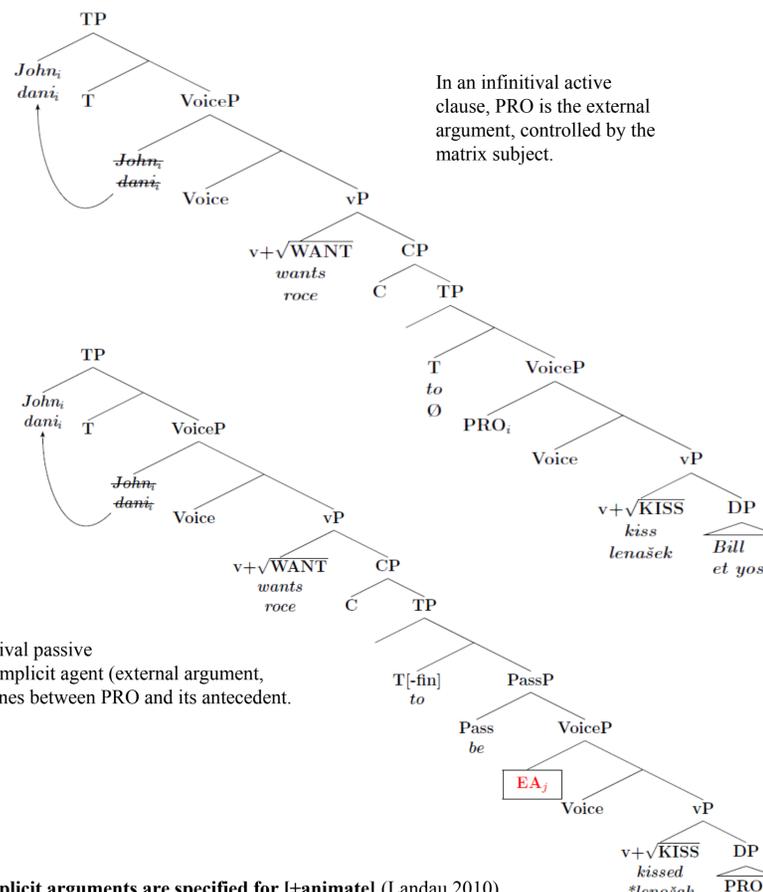
In an infinitival passive clause, the implicit agent (external argument, EA) intervenes between PRO and its antecedent.

Hebrew implicit arguments are specified for [±animate] (Landau 2010).

ha-uvda še-be-teksas tolim   IA be-xadarim bli   xalonot matrifa   oti
the-fact that-in-Texas they.hang in-rooms   without windows makes.crazy me
'The fact that in Texas, they hang people/*paintings in rooms without windows, drives me crazy.'

English implicit arguments are not specified for [±animate] (*the city was destroyed by the enemy/earthquake*), thus can be skipped over.

The Hebrew EA is more referential than English EA, acting as an intervener for control.

Imperatives:
- Imperatives lack TP (Platzack and Rosengren 1998), hence no T to license Pass.
- Passive imperatives are odd pragmatically and rare crosslinguistically.

Nominalizations:
- Nominalizations lack TP (Alexiadou 2008), hence no T to license Pass.
- Passive nominalizations are rare as well. Active forms are often used to express the otherwise passive reading (e.g. *the city's destruction by the enemy*).

Periphrasis

It is possible to create a periphrastic passive by using an auxiliary (the copula) and the participial form.

dani   yihie   mesorak   **PERIPHRASTIC FORM**
Danny will.be   comb.INTNS.PASS.ADJ
'Danny will (already) be combed' (agent = / ≠ theme)

Disjoint reference is possible in periphrastic passives. In the periphrastic construction Danny could have combed himself, but not in the "synthetic", verbal passive (Sichel 2009).

dani   yesorak   **SYNTHETIC FORM**
Danny comb.INTNS.PASS.FUT
'Danny will get combed' (agent ≠ theme)

Idioms are only possible in periphrastic passives.

ze yihie   muvan   me-el-av   **PERIPHRASTIC FORM**
it will.be understood from-to-him
'It will be self-evident.'

?? *ze yuvan   me-el-av*   **SYNTHETIC FORM**
it   understand.CAUS.PASS.FUT from-to-him

Conclusion: the periphrastic passive is adjectival, not verbal.

Since adjectival/periphrastic passives do not have implicit agents (Embick 2004, Meltzer-Asscher 2011), nothing intervenes between PRO and its antecedent in adjectival/periphrastic passives.

Analyses of paradigm gaps in languages such as Latin suggested that the missing forms can be filled in by periphrastic structures (Kiparsky 2004). Such an analysis would not work for Hebrew, and may need to rely on stipulation of certain features as marked (Bjorkman 2011).

Conclusions

Novel observation: Passive verbs in Hebrew do not have infinitives, nominalizations or imperatives.

Generalization: Finite Tense is necessary for Hebrew passives.
Assumption: Only T can license Pass.
Analysis: Implicit arguments in Hebrew are referential and intervene between PRO and its controller.

Consequences for theories of morphosyntax:
- The difference between (languages such as) Hebrew and (languages such as) English boils down to the featural makeup of the implicit argument.
- The implicit external argument in passives is active in the syntax to different degrees in different languages.

Consequences for paradigm gaps and periphrasis:
- Not all paradigm gaps can be treated uniformly.
- Disjoint reference and idiomatic readings are possible because periphrastic constructions are different from synthetic constructions.

Future work:
- Extension to Arabic and additional Semitic languages.
- Extension to other languages that place semantic requirements on implicit arguments.

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