

The zero-derived causative alternation in Hebrew is rare, but systematic

This talk resurrects a puzzle in the Modern Hebrew (MH) verbal template *hiXYiZ*, where verbs are mostly causative but can also be inchoative. The paper’s theoretical contribution is twofold, arguing for a specific role of roots in the derivation and claiming that feature valuation (“Agree”) can proceed in two different directions (upwards, then downwards).

Alternations in *hiXYiZ*. It is well-known that verbs in MH *hiXYiZ*—X, Y and Z are the root consonants—are predominantly causative or active (the template is often called “causative”):

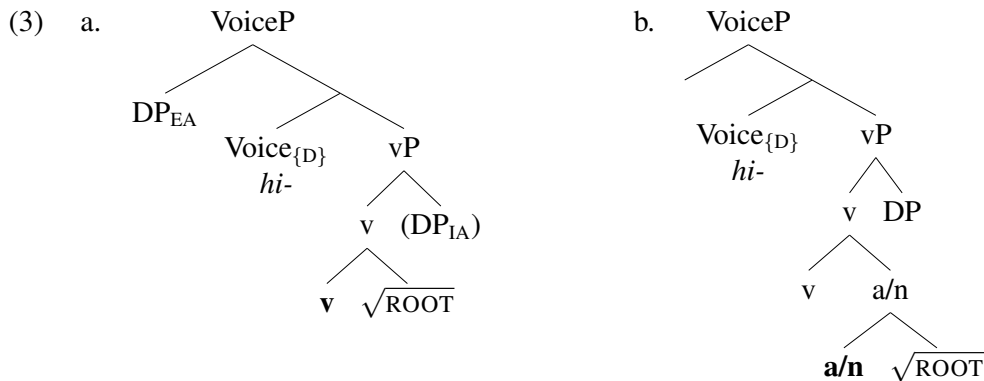
- (1) *hifmid* ‘destroyed’, *hixnis* ‘inserted’, *hikpi* ‘froze’, *hitsbi’a* ‘pointed’, ...

With the notable exclusion of Borer (1991) and brief mention in Doron (2003), it has been otherwise overlooked that a number of inchoative verbs are possible alongside a transitive use (compare English *widen* or *whiten*, which are available both as causatives and inchoatives):

- (2) *hiffir* ‘thawed’, *hifmin* ‘fattened’, *he’edim* ‘reddened’, *hilbin* ‘whitened’, ...

This is particularly striking since Hebrew does not employ zero-derivation for argument structure alternations, using distinct templates instead (Doron 2003; Arad 2005; Borer 2013). From a corpus (Ehrenfeld 2012) of 600 verbs in *hiXYiZ*, most of which are solely causative or unergative as in (1), 37 were identified as undergoing this alternation as in (2). The issue is why specifically this template and why these roots, questions not addressed in Borer (1991).

Syntax: Causatives. If *hiXYiZ* normally has an external argument, (1), the presence of this argument should be encoded in the syntax. This goal is achieved using the functional head **Voice_{D}** (Schäfer 2008; Wood 2015), a strongly active counterpart of Voice (Kratzer 1996; Pytkänen 2008): it requires that a DP be merged in its specifier, guaranteeing that an external argument appear. In the active case (3a) the external argument (EA) and potential internal argument (IA) are merged in the structure. The EA satisfies [D] on Voice_{D} and the derivation converges. At PF, Voice_{D} is spelled out as the prefix *hi-* and the appropriate stem vowels.



Syntax: Inchoatives. Following Borer (1991), I claim that *hiXYiZ* inchoatives are derived from an underlying adjective or noun. At least some inchoatives are unaccusative as in (3b). To account for them, assume that the [D] feature on Voice_{D} requires valuation of ϕ -features. This valuation proceeds straightforwardly under Spec-Head Agreement but something else needs to be said if the only DP in the local domain is the IA. In this case, I propose that Voice_{D} probes into its specifier upwards, finds no target, and then probes downwards and is valued by the IA. The syntactic requirements of Voice_{D} are then satisfied.

The structure in (3b) is supported as follows. I adopt the so-called Arad/Marantz hypothesis: the first categorizing head selects the alloeme of the root (cf. Anagnostopoulou and Samioti 2014). We predict that a causative might have a meaning that an inchoative does not share,

