

**THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM**

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Webb 103

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**Subject to Change: Agreement Patterns with Unaccusatives**

In various languages that allow both S(ubject)V(erb) and VS word-orders, it has been observed that lack of  $\phi$ -agreement occurred in VS structures but not in SV. This phenomenon has been referred to in the literature as SV-VS asymmetry (Kinjo, 2015; Kobayashi, 2013; Soltan, 2006). One of these languages is Hebrew, whose default word-order is SV(O), yet it allows a VS order in several cases. One of these cases is VS order with verbs whose subject is an internal argument, i.e., passives and unaccusatives (Reinhart & Siloni, 2005; Shlonsky, 1997). In colloquial Hebrew, such VS examples may fail to exhibit  $\phi$ -agreement between the verb and its internal argument: the verb shows default agreement (i.e., 3M.SG) although its subject is feminine or plural (or both) (1) The same lack of  $\phi$ -agreement is impossible in the SV counterpart (2).

(1) nafal        le-dina    ha-maftexot  
      fell-3M.SG DAT-Dina the-key-M.PL  
      'Dina's keys fell'

(2) \*ha-maftexot    nafal        (le-dina)  
      the-key-M.PL fell-3M.SG (DAT-Dina)

Preminger (2009) argues that it is the intervention of a possessive dative (*le-dina* in (1-2)) between the verb and its subject which licenses lack of  $\phi$ -agreement, or in his terms, failure to agree.

In this talk, I will discuss corpus examples as well as experiments showing that lack of agreement is improved by – but does not require – intervention, as illustrated by the attested example (3) where an intervener is absent.

(3) nigmar        ha-tutim  
      ended-3M.SG the-strawberry-M.PL  
      'There are no more strawberries'

Further, I will suggest that such lack of agreement is a colloquial variation representing a step in the same developmental process that Hebrew existential and possessive constructions have undergone. In Modern Hebrew they are 'accusative constructions' lacking agreement that have developed from 'nominative constructions' exhibiting agreement (in previous stages of the language) (4). The first step in the process is loss of nominative case on internal argument subjects in the complement position. This enables lack of  $\phi$ -agreement on the verb, which in turn leads to the emergence of accusative marking. Indeed, unaccusative verb-subject order in contemporary Hebrew fails to license nominative pronouns (5), and exhibits lack of  $\phi$ -agreement (1). Moreover, certain unaccusatives even allow for the insertion of the accusative marker (6), which has already been claimed to morphologically mark caseless arguments (Siloni, 1997).

(4) haya        (li)        et ha-sfar-im    ha-ele    al ha-madaf  
      was-3M.SG (DAT-me) ACC the-book-M.PL the-these on the-shelf  
      'These books were on the shelf' / Dative: 'I had these books on the shelf'

(5) \*nafal        hu  
      fell-3M.SG him  
      'He fell'

(6) hofi'a        li        et ha-mila        ha-zot        ba-milon  
      appeared-3M.SG DAT-me ACC the-word-F.SG the-this-F.SG in-the-dictionary  
      'This word appeared in the dictionary'