

Blocking and Manipulation of Valence Changing: Evidence from Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic

This paper examines morpho-phonological constraints that restrict the application of valence changing operations in Modern Hebrew (hereafter MH) and Palestinian Arabic (hereafter PA). Different thematic realizations of the same verbal concept (e.g. passive, unaccusative and reflexive) are assumed to be derived via operations that manipulate the syntactic valence of verbs. Such operations in MH and PA usually manifested by relations among prosodically distinct configurations called *binyanim* (e.g. *CiCeC*, *hitCaCeC*). Following Reinhart & Siloni (2005), I assume these operations apply in the lexicon in these two languages, apart from MH passivization that applies in the syntax. Lexical operations are considered relatively less productive than syntactic ones, that is, they demonstrate gaps in the derivation of predicates. What is it that restricts the application of such operations and prevents the formation of theoretically possible decausative, reflexive and reciprocal verbs? I contend that while some of the lexical gaps seem arbitrary, the blocking of verb formation in lexical operations is affected by morpho-phonological criteria. I present three cases of voice gaps within the two languages, where the lack of application can only be accounted for by morpho-phonology.

1. Gaps of the MH *CiCeC*- *hitCaCeC* paradigm

The *CiCeC*- *hitCaCeC* paradigm is considered very productive in verb formation and valence changing operations. *CiCeC* usually hosts transitive verbs that are basic entries in the lexicon, while *hitCaCeC* is mainly used for the formation of derived verbs via a reduction of the syntactic valence of transitive ones (e.g. *ximem* ‘make warm’ – *hitxamem* ‘become warm’). Verbs whose initial stem consonant is *t* or *d* usually escape *hitCaCeC*, since such derivation creates the homogenous /*tt*/ or /*dt*/ clusters, which are prohibited in Hebrew. It is not surprising that most of *CiCeC* transitive verbs with no intransitive alternate in *hitCaCeC* are ones whose initial stem consonant is *t* or *d*. The verb *dike* ‘make depressed’, for example, has no decausative alternate that demotes ‘become depressed’, as such a formation would result either in an undesired homogenous cluster (**hitdake*) or in deletion of a consonant (**hidake*). The morphological component escapes these two options and hence the formation of a possible predicate is blocked. Furthermore, some *CiCeC* verbs that begin with *d* have intransitive alternates in the *niCCaC* template. The *CiCeC*- *niCCaC* paradigm is highly rare and such formations are attested only in case where the *hitCaCeC* formation is blocked due to morpho-phonological reasons. The verb *diber* ‘talk’, for instance, has a derived reciprocal alternate in *niCCaC* (*nidbar* ‘talk to one another’) rather than in *hitCaCeC* (**hitdaber*/**hidaber*).

2. Blocking of passive formation in PA

PA passive verbs are formed in two main templates: *inCaCaC* and *tCaCCaC*. I argue that PA passivization is lexical and that morpho-phonological criteria restrict its application. Specifically, passive formation is possible only when the input transitive verb is formed in certain template, *CaCaC* and *CaCCaC*. The former is used as a base for *inCaCaC* passive verbs (e.g. *ba‘a* - *inba‘a* ‘sell - ‘be sold’), while the latter is used for the formation of *tCaCCaC* passive verbs (e.g. *s'allah* - *ts'allah* ‘fix’ - ‘be fixed’).

There are verbs in other templates such as *iCtaCaC* (e.g. *iqtarah* ‘suggest’) and *istaCCaC* (e.g. *istaqrad* ‘borrow’), which have no passive alternates. Which factors prevent the formation of such passive verbs? There seem to be no thematic, syntactic or pragmatic reason for this blockage of valence changing. Furthermore, passive counterparts of such verbs exist in other languages cross-linguistically (e.g. MSA and English). Again, I contend that the

reason is morpho-phonological. Forming such passive verb in one of the passive templates would involve a rather complex morpho-phonology. Non-existing (but theoretically possible) forms such as **inqarah* ('be suggested') or **iqarrad* ('be borrowed') cannot be derived directly from transitive alternates by adding a prefix (*iqarah* 'suggested' and *istaqrad* 'borrowed' respectively). The morphological component cannot handle such formations and therefore they are entirely blocked. Such a restriction is typical to derivations that apply in the lexicon and therefore PA passivization should be regarded as lexical.

3. Blocking in defective verbs in MH

Some transitive verbs, whose external theta role is a cause, have no decausative counterpart (e.g. *hecik* 'hassle'). I argue that this results from their irregular morpho-phonology (e.g. *he'ir* 'wake X up' → *hit'orer* 'wake up'). The formation of such verbs is considered exceptional and unproductive in terms of innovation. I assume that such forms are lexicalized and their formation is not a part of the morphological component in the lexicon. I contend that their irregular morpho-phonology blocks the derivation of their decausative counterparts. Examining their thematic grids does not explain why they do not undergo this operation, as there is no observed difference compared to other verbs that undergo this operation.

The analysis reveals the effect of morpho-phonological constraints on thematic operations. The voice gaps within the three cases discussed above can only be explained via morpho-phonological restrictions. Such restrictions are mostly typical to operations that apply in the lexicon, in contrast to syntactic operations (e.g. MH passivization) that are much more productive with no morphological limitations. The analysis, therefore supports the claim that morpho-phonology is an independent component of the grammar that interacts with the lexicon (Aronoff 1976, Anderson 1977, Scalise 1984 among others), hence it can also be responsible for blocking effects on valence changing.

References

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