

RECONSIDERING THE IMPLIED EXTERNAL ARGUMENT IN NOMINALIZATION: EVIDENCE FROM HEBREW AND ENGLISH

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Overview

1. Certain Hebrew deverbal nominalizations show evidence of an agentive Voice projection.
 - (a) But the external argument cannot be merged in SpecVoiceP, as it would in a verbal structure.
2. This provides a parallel with verbal passives, where the external argument is understood to be existentially quantified.
3. Based on this parallel, it can be posited that the nominalizing head n^0 brings about existential quantification just like passive.
 - (a) It has been claimed, however, that event nominals feature syntactically active null pronouns in the external argument position.
4. It will be shown that these arguments – which suggest a fundamental difference between deverbal nominalization and passive – do not hold.

1 Templatic morphology and external arguments

The Hebrew verbal templates seem to **manipulate argument structure** – specifically the presence or absence of an external argument. This can be modelled by treating the Voice head as the primary locus of the templatic morphology (Kastner 2016).

1.1 Verbal templates

template	verb (\sqrt{qm})
simple <i>CaC</i>	qam ‘rise’
“causative” <i>heCiC</i>	<i>heqim</i> ‘raise, establish’

Only in the so-called “causative” template is an external argument licensed.

- (1) *Yosi qam et ha-xevra
Yosi rose.SIMPL ACC the-company
- (2) Yosi *heqim* et ha-xevra
Yosi established.CAUS ACC the-company
‘Yosi established the company.’

According to the Voice model, the “causative,” *h*-prefixed template can be represented as featuring a Voice head with a [D] feature, meaning that this head may project a specifier.



1.2 Deverbal nominalizations

All of the verbal templates feature corresponding nominal derivations.

template	nominalization
simple <i>CiCa</i>	<i>qima</i> ‘rising’
“causative” <i>heCiC</i>	<i>haqama</i> ‘raising, establishing’

Here we see the same phenomenon again, where only the *h*-prefixed template licenses an agent.

- (3) *qimat ha-xevra al yade Yosi
rising.SIMPL the-company.GEN by Yosi
- (4) *haqamat* ha-xevra al yade Yosi
establishing.CAUS the-company.GEN by Yosi
‘the establishing of the company by Yosi’

The agent can also merge as complement to the event nominal in the construct state (6).

- (5) *haqamat* Yosi et ha-xevra
establishing.CAUS Yosi.GEN ACC the-company
‘Yosi’s establishing of the company’

2 The puzzle

Considering that there is evidence for an agentive VoiceP in these structures, **what exactly happens to the external argument slot in the “short” version of deverbal nominalization?**

- (6) *haqamat* ha-xevra
establishing.CAUS the-company.GEN
‘the establishing of the company’

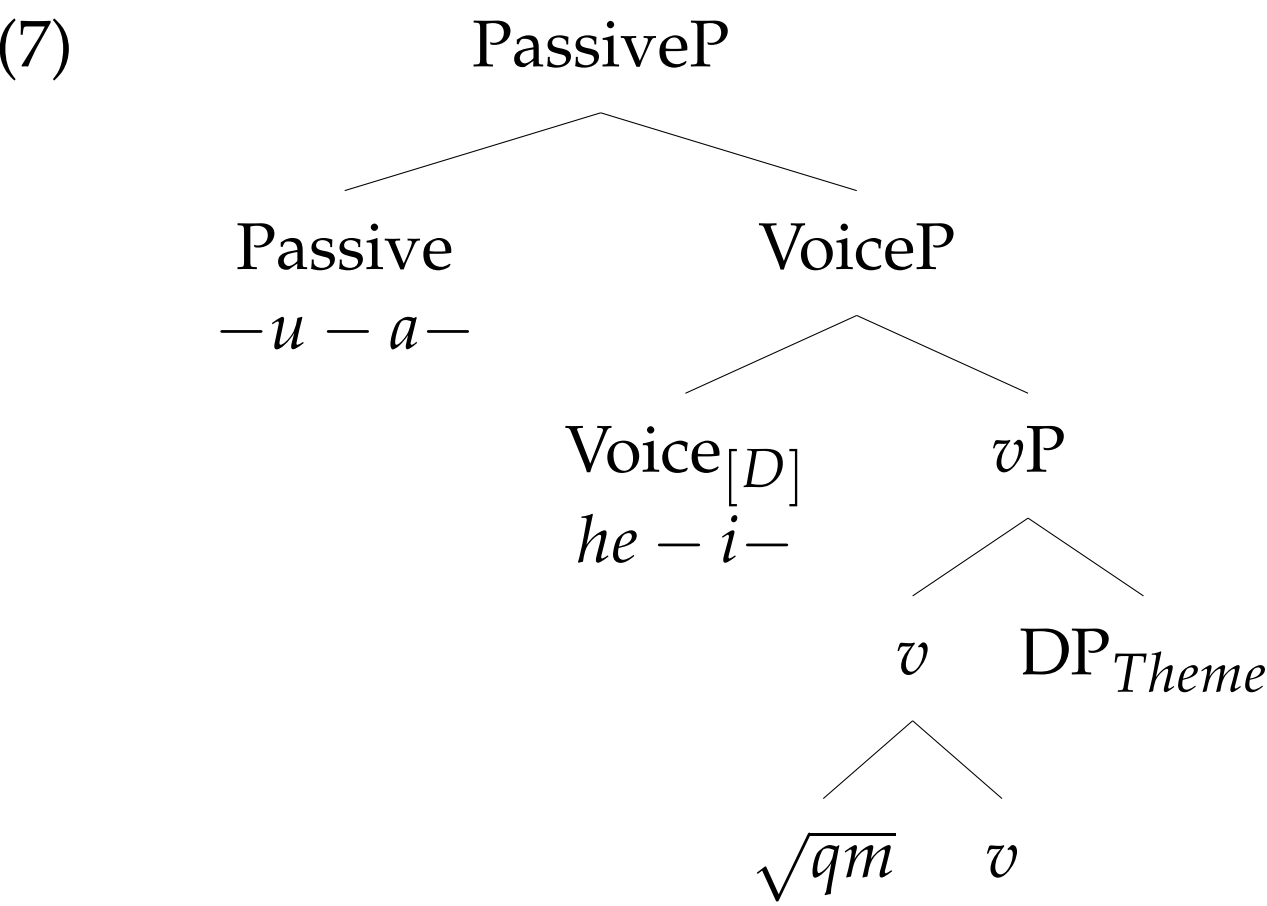
To conform to Full Interpretation, this argument position must be saturated or closed.

3 Parallel with passive

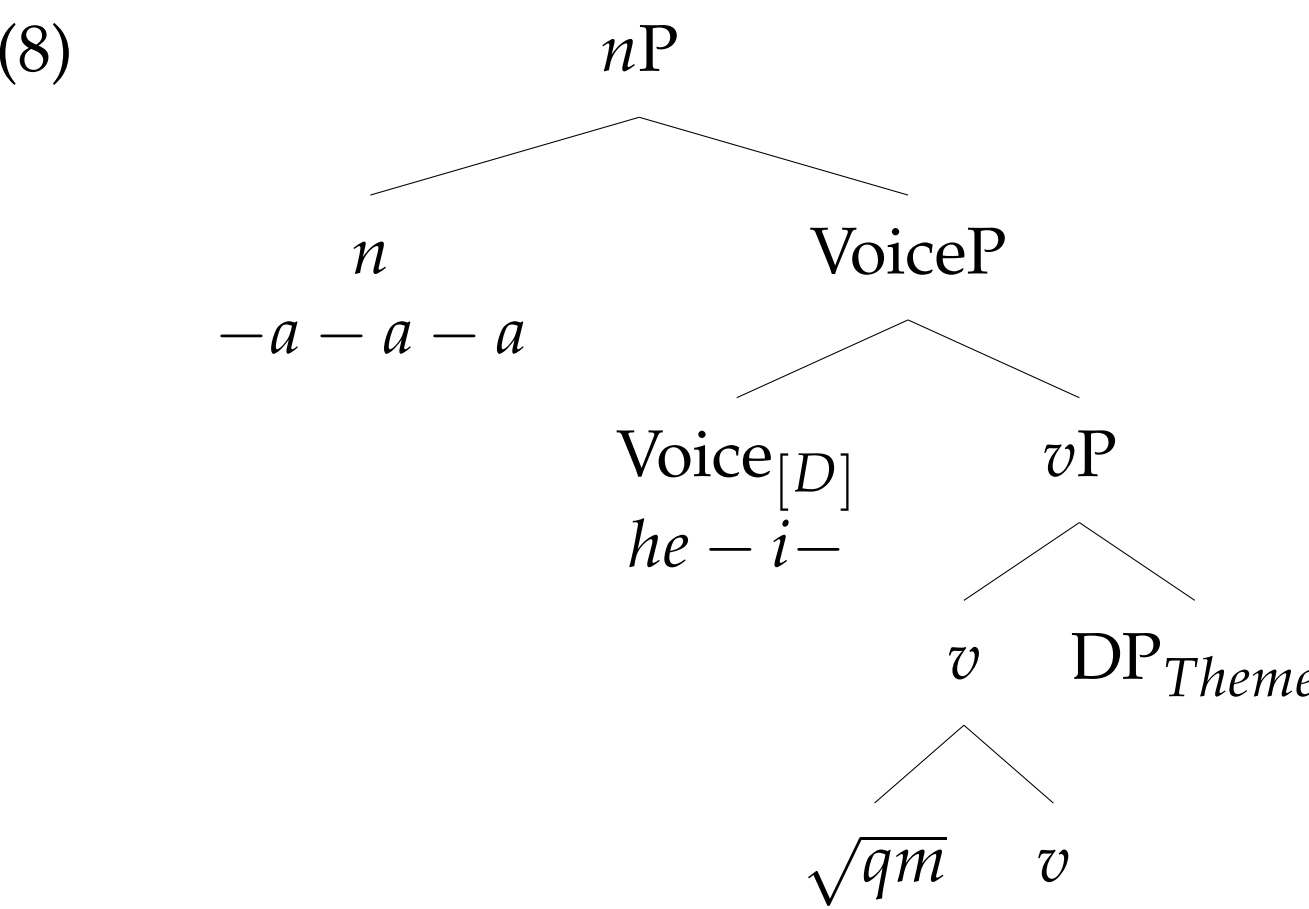
Much as with deverbal nominalizations, every passive verb has a corresponding active verb from which it seems to be derived (thus contrasting with the middle templates *niCCaC* and *hitCaCeC* in this respect).

	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
<i>heCiC</i>	<i>heqim</i> ‘raise’	<i>huqam</i> ‘be raised’
<i>CiCeC</i>	<i>šiber</i> ‘smash’	<i>šubar</i> ‘be smashed’

In part because of such morphological facts, several scholars have recently converged on the view that Passive⁰ is merged “on top of” an active, agentive structure (Doron 2003, Alexiadou & Doron 2012, Bruening 2013).



This passive structure provides an analog for deverbal nominalization, where the nominalizing head *n* must merge above the external argument-introducing Voice_[D] (likewise bringing about a vowel readjustment in the process).



So what suppresses the agent in the passive (7)?

- The most prominent viewpoint is that this is brought about by the existential quantification of the external argument (Doron 2003; Bruening 2013; Reed 2013; Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer 2018).

- (9) Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schäfer (2018:426):
 - a. $\llbracket \text{VoiceP} \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda e. \text{agent}(e, x) \ \& \ V(e, \text{DP}_2)$
 - b. $\llbracket \text{Passive} \rrbracket = \lambda f_{e, st} \lambda e [\exists x. f(x)(e)]$
 - c. $\llbracket \text{PassiveP} \rrbracket = \exists x \lambda e. \text{agent}(e, x) \ \& \ V(e, \text{DP}_2)$

Hypothesis: n^0 existentially binds the external argument just like Passive⁰.

Conclusion

The implicit external arguments of deverbal nominalizations and verbal passives *do not minimally differ* – the former is no more “syntactically active” than the latter.

- Neither binding nor control are possible, but given proper context, what appears to be a “control” reading can result in both.
 - This makes sense if both are existentially quantified.

References

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4 Challenges

Sichel (2009) and Bruening (2013) have argued that a null DP is actually projected as the external argument in deverbal nominalizations.

4.1 Could the implied argument be *pro*?

On the basis of Hebrew, Sichel (2009) has argued that the implicit agent of event nominals is projected as a null pronoun.

Counterargument

Deverbal nominalizations do not allow bound readings, which should be possible if the implied external argument were a free variable pronoun.

- (10) kol poše’a xošev še-haxxašat
every criminal thinks that-denial.CAUS
ha-ašama hayta amina
the-guilt.GEN was credible
‘Every criminal thinks that the denial of guilt was credible.’
(criminal cannot be the ‘denier’)

This is also true of Spanish, where *pro* is more widespread and typically favors a bound reading (Montalbetti 1984).

4.2 Could the implied argument be PRO?

For English, Bruening (2013) has argued that the implicit argument of deverbal nominalizations is projected as PRO. (10) is meant to show that ‘control’ is possible in nominalization but not in passive:

- (11) Bruening(2013:19-20)
 - a. John wants Mary to be seen (cannot mean ‘John wants to see Mary’)
 - b. Marc Antony is bent on the complete destruction of his enemies. (Marc Antony can be the destroyer)

Counterargument

Even passives sometimes allow coreferential readings.

- (12) The technician expects the computer to be fixed by Wednesday. (technician can be the one fixing the computer)

Bruening also provides evidence for binding:

- (13) Bruening (2013:19-20)
 - a. Every journalist₁ wants the president to be interviewed (cannot mean ‘by him₁’)
 - b. Every journalist hopes that a conversation with the president will be forthcoming (converser can be bound by quantifier)

Counterargument

(12b) does not actually feature an event nominal, as obvious result nominals can be substituted for ‘conversation.’

- (14) Every journalist hopes that lunch with the president will be forthcoming.

The reading Bruening highlights is simply one way of construing $\forall > \exists$. Further, if we construct a minimal pair, passives and nominalizations behave similarly (cf. (10)).

- (15) a. Every astronomer thinks that the discovery of aliens will happen soon.
b. Every astronomer thinks that aliens will be discovered soon.
(astronomer cannot be the ‘discoverer’ in either (a) or (b))