Disentangling goals from recipients: Evidence from Hebrew
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Hebrew has two prepositions, *le* and *el*, both roughly equivalent to English *to*. In this paper, new data is provided which shows that the distribution of these prepositions is more complex than has been suggested by previous analyses. I adopt a proposal by Levin and Rappaport Hovav (2002) to explain this data. I show that the distribution of *le* and *el* is explained by alluding to a universal strategy for encoding recipients (i.e. animate goals), as datives or as oblique allatives. The explanation provided shows how Hebrew falls in with a typological generalization about argument realization and in particularly the ditransitive construction.

As observed in previous studies (e.g. Landau 1994), Hebrew verbs that occur in ditransitive constructions fall into two groups. One group, exemplified in (1), marks the indirect object with both *le* and *el*, the other, exemplified in (2) marks it only with *le*.

(1) yosef holix   et   axiv   el ha- / la-   xeder.
    Yosef walked ACC brother.his EL the / LE.def room
    Joseph walked his brother to the room.

(2) dani natan le / *el nurit tapu'ax.
    dani gave LE / EL nurit apple
    Dani gave Nurit an apple.

What has not been observed is the behavior of the two prepositions in combination with pronominal suffixes, which presents a complication. Verbs that license only *le* and not *el* (cf. (2)) do the same when *le* is combined with a pronoun, as shown in (3). However, many verbs that license both prepositions with full NPs fail to license *le* with a pronoun. Thus, the verb in (1) fails to license *le* with a pronoun in (4)

(3) natati   l=a   / *el=eha   tapu'ax.
    give.PST.1.SG le.3.F.SG / el=3.F.SG apple
    I gave her an apple.

(4) ha-xeder$_i$ Se- yosef holix   et   axiv   el=av$_i$ / *l=o$_i$.
    the-room   that- Yosef walked ACC brother.his el=3.M.SG / le.3.M.SG
    The room that Joseph walked his brother into.

The distribution of pronominal forms brings out a clear semantic generalization. Verbs like *holix* 'walked' (causative) which inherently encode a change of location mark their non-theme argument with *el*, whereas verbs that encode a change of possession like *natan* 'gave' mark their argument with *le*.

The distribution of pronominal forms now reveals a third type of verbs, verbs that license both *el* and *le* with both NPs and pronouns:

(5) a. Salaxti   le / el dani et   ha-sefer
       sent.PST.1.SG LE / EL Dani ACC the-book
       I sent Dani the book

    b. Salaxti   l=a   / el=eha   et   ha-sefer
       sent.PST.1.SG LE=3.F.SG / EL=3.F.SG ACC the-book
       I sent her the book

The distribution of verbs and prepositional arguments is summarized in (6).

(6)

VERB	*le*+NP/*el*+NP/*el*+pron	*le*+NP/*le*+pron
holix 'walked' (causative)	+	
Salax 'sent'	+	+
natan 'gave'		+

Why is it that verbs like *Salax* 'sent' and *holix* 'walked' show different behavior with pronominal arguments? I suggest that while verbs of the type in (1) encode a change of location relation, and those of the type in (2) a change of possession relation, verbs of the type in (5) are verbs that encode a change of location construable also as change of possession. These verbs are a subset of recipient verbs.

If the alternating pattern of verbs like *Salax* is determined by the semantic construal of the recipient (as either possessor or goal), we expect some arguments that cannot be possessors to block this alternation for such a verb. It has often been observed that purely locational arguments such as place names cannot occur felicitously in the double object construction in English:

(7) *John sent London a letter.   (good only on institutional reading (e.g. *London office*))

This leads one to expect that similar arguments in Hebrew should not have the option of occurring with *le* when they are pronominal, even with a verb that licenses pronominal *le* in general, such as *Salax*. This is borne out, as shown in (8).

(8) a. ha-Staxim$_i$ Se-   Saron Salax el=ehem$_i$ / *l=ahem$_i$ xayalim.
       the-territories that- Saron sent   EL=3.M.PL / LE.3.M.PL soldiers
       The territories to which Sharon sent soldiers.

   b. ha-sarim$_i$ Se-   Saron Salax el=ehem$_i$ / l=ahem$_i$ mixtavim
       the-ministers that- Saron sent   EL=3.M.PL / LE.3.M.PL letters
       The ministers to whom Sharon sent letters.

Seen in this light, the Hebrew patterns can be naturally linked to a proposal made by Levin and Rappaport Hovav (2002), that dative and allative marking constitute two universal strategies for encoding recipients, as either possessors or as locational goals. I propose that *el* and *le* should be seen as an allative and a dative marker, respectively, and that their distribution is typical of dative and allative functions in other languages. Thus, possessor verbs like *natan* 'gave' mark their possessor argument with the dative marker, and locational goal verbs like *hoilx* 'walked' mark their goal argument with the allative marker. This is reflected in the distribution of pronominal forms with these verbs. Those recipient verbs which are compatible with both a directional and a possession reading can mark the recipient argument with either marker, which is why both pronominal forms surface with them. For example, the recipient role of a verb like *Salax* 'sent' in (5) can be both a locational goal (the location that the thing sent reaches) and a possessor (the person who comes to possess the thing sent). Notice that these three types of verbs would not be distinguishable without the data from pronominal inflection. In particular, it would be impossible to distinguish verbs like *Salax* from verbs like *holix*. Distinguishing the two types is important, since they figure in a typological generalization as to what kinds of verbs are more and less likely to occur in alternations.

The data concerning pronominal inflection discussed here has not been systematically discussed in previous studies (e.g. Landau 1994, Botwinik-Rotem, 2003). Besides revealing the full picture of the distribution of the Hebrew prepositions *el* and *le*, the Hebrew data supports studies in progress by Levin (WECOL2004) that suggest the three verb classes identified here are found in other languages. This data brings to light important generalizations about the grammar of ditransitive verbs in Hebrew, the nature of goals and recipients, and the typology of alternations in the encoding of these roles.

References

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