

The Grammar of the Possession Link: Modern Hebrew *yeS* Constructions:

Nora Boneh, Universit de Paris III

Possessive constructions across languages make use either of HAVE or BE as the possession link. With the first, the possessor surfaces with Nominative case while the possessum bears Accusative case, with the second the possessor receives Dative case from the preposition accompanying BE, and the possessum is assigned Nominative case by the copular element. This state of affairs is accounted for by the incorporation analysis developed by Freeze (1992) and Kayne (1993). The properties attributed to the possession link HAVE/BE (+P) - whether it appears in possessive constructions or non-possessive ones — are (i) the incapability of assigning theta-roles to the arguments of its construction; (ii) the possibility to select either a DP/NP or a SC; (iii) base-generation in V_i (Ritter & Rosen 1993, Hoekstra 1994, Gu ron 1986, Moro 1997 among others). Harley (1995) proposes a finer grained analysis for the generation site of BE, i.e., that it occupies the highest projection of a split-VP (Event_i in her analysis).

>From a semantic point of view, the possession link and its paradigm of constructions is considered by some as an element void of semantic meaning *per se*. Ritter & Rosen (1993), relying on Bach (1967) have proposed that it contributes to the construction of meaning by its combination with the other elements in its environment. Contrary to them, Belvin (1996) shows, relying mainly on evidence from causative *have* constructions, that English *have* and Spanish *tener* mean **inclusion**: inclusion of an object and/or an event in the Θ_{one} of the possessor. And thus, that the possession link is by no means void of meaning.

In this paper we will be interested in comparing the paradigms of constructions containing possession-link HAVE vs. BE with respect to data from Modern Hebrew in which it will be claimed that the (preset tense) possession link *yeS* behaves syntactically neither as HAVE nor as BE. More specifically, we will be centered on finding out what is the generation site of the element *yeS*, thus trying to understand its nature, taking as a base assumption that we are dealing with one and the same morpheme throughout its different environments of apparition. With respect to Belvin's proposal, we will be interested to see how it can apply to the BE+P languages, and in our case to *yeS*, knowing (as will be shown in (1) through (4)) that causative constructions cannot be formed using *yeS* in Modern Hebrew, or inversely, that English *have* cannot be used in constructions such as (4).

Thus, in Modern Hebrew, possessive constructions are formed with the particle *yeS* (translatable roughly as: *exist*) and the preposition *le-* (*to*) which precedes the possessor:

- (1) a. Le-Dani *yeS/haya/yihiye* Θ_t ha-sefer ha-ze
To-Dani exist/was/will be Acc the-book the-this.
Dani has/had will have this book.
- b. *YeS/haya/yihiye* le-Dani Θ_t ha-sefer ha-ze
Exist/was/will be to-Dani Acc the-book the-this.
Dani has/had/will have this book.

YeS is equally found in the following constructions:

- *Existentials*:
- (2) a. *YeS* sefer ba-sifriya/ Θ_l ha-madaf
Exist book in-the-library/on the-shelf
There is a book in the library/on the shelf.
- b. *YeS* Θ_t ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya/ Θ_l ha-madaf
Exist Acc the-book the-this in-the-library/on the-shelf
This book is (to be) found in the library/on the shelf.
- *Modals*:
- (3) *YeS* le-na Θ_r lifnei SimuS
Exist to-shake before using
Shake before use.
- and in sentences such as:
- (4) *YeS* ve-ha-Sama Θ_m mitkadrin
Exist and-the-skies darken.
Sometimes(it happens that) the skies darken.

As is visible from example (1), Modern Hebrew possessive sentences do not fall into either of the groups suggested above with respect to the cases on the possessor and the possessum: the former bearing Dative

case — as in the BE languages, and the latter bearing Accusative case — as in the HAVE languages. This corroborates with the fact that *yeS* is not the suppletive form of the copular verb *h.y.y*. (BE) in present tense sentences (Doron 1983). In order to form the negated counterparts of (1)-(3) *yeS* is substituted by the element *Qn* (*not-exist*), while *h.y.y* is negated as any other Hebrew verb: with *lo* (*no*). Furthermore, unlike *h.y.y*, *yeS* does not appear in copular constructions (with non-verbal predication), it is neither used as an auxiliary in composite tenses. It bears no phi-features (Shlonsky 1987). Thus, we will suppose that *yeS* and *h.y.y* have distinct generation sites.. The state of affairs in possessive constructions across the tenses is as follows:

- (5) Present: \bar{E}_i T_i fl [ASP_i fl [X_i *yeS* [SC/DP \bar{E}_i]]].
 Past/Future: \bar{E}_i T_i fl [ASP_i *h.y.y* [X_i fl [SC/DP \bar{E}_i]]]].
- 

In the present tense, T_i is null (D chaine 1993) and *yeS*, a light verb, is generated in a high layer of an extended VP which is yet to be determined (in the spirit of Harley 1995). In the past and future tenses, T_i hosts *h.y.y* (BE) after raising from its base position in Asp_i (D chaine 1993) and the position of *yeS* is null.

Moro (1997) notes that possession is the most generic relation that can connect two entities (DPs) and thus there is no theta-role assignment going on, as noted above. Hebrew provides empirical evidence for this claim. Borer & Grodzinsky (1986) note that both possessor and possessed DPs are necessary arguments for the sentence to be well-formed. It is rather the particle *yeS* that can be dispensed with. Consider (6) taken from the lyrics of a song:

- (6) La-*Q*strim (yeS) Snitsel ta \bar{Q} n.
 To-the-Austrians (exists) Vienner Schnitzel delicious.
The Austrians have delicious Vienner Schnitzel.

But notice that the example in (6) denotes an Individual Level Predicate and in the case of a Stage Level Predicate, *yeS* is necessary to the well formedness of the sentence, and not for theta-role or case assignment reasons as the example in (6) shows:

- (7) Kol pa \bar{Q} m Se- \bar{Q} ni mitkaSer, le-Dani *(yeS) \bar{Q} rxim.
 Each time that-I call, to-Dani (exists) visitors.
Each time I call, Dani has visitors.

The Example in (7) together with sentences like (4) and (2) will lead us towards the assumption that *yeS* is an element linked to the marking of eventiveness..

References:

- Belvin, R.S., 1996, Inside Events: the non-possessive meanings of possession predicates and the semantic conceptualization of events. Ph.D. dissertation, USC.
 Borer, H. & Grodzinsky, Y., 1986, Syntactic Cliticization and Lexical Cliticization, in *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 19: The Syntax of Pronominal Clitics*, Academic Press.
 D chaine, 1993, *Predicated Across Categories: Towards a Category-Neutral Syntax*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Massachusetts.
 Doron, E., 1983, *Verbless Predicated in Hebrew*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Austin, Texas.
 Freeze, R., 1992, Existentials and Other Locatives, *Language* 68, 553-595.
 Gu ron, J., 1986, Le verbe *Q*avoir *Q* Recherches Linguistiques de Vincennes 14/15, 155-186.
 Harley, 1995, *Subjects, Events and Licensing*, MIT Working Papers in Linguistics.
 Hoekstra, T., 1994, HAVE as BE plus or minus, in Cinque, G. et alii (Eds.), *Paths Towards Universal Grammar: Studies in Honor of R. S. Kayne*, Georgetown University Press.
 Kayne, R., 1993, Towards a Modular Theory of Auxiliary Selection, *Studia Linguistica* 47, 3-31.
 Moro, A., 1997, *The Raising of Predicates: Predicative Noun Phrases and Theory of Clause Structure*. Cambridge University Press.
 Ritter, E. & Rosen, T., 1993, Deriving Causation, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 11, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 519-555.
 Shlonsky, U., 1987, *Null and Displaces Subjects*. Ph.D. Dissertation. MIT.