

The Causative/Stative Alternation with Hebrew Placing Verbs

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Abstract

Cross-linguistically, there exists a sub-group of Placing verbs that may alternate between a causative-ditransitive variant (1) and a stative-transitive variant (2).

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| 1) | a. | she covered the screen with a blanket. | CAUSATIVE FRAME |
| | b. | hi kista et ha-masax im/ be-smixa. he covered.3.SG.F ACC the-screen with/ <i>be</i> -blanket | |
| 2) | a. | the blanket covered the screen. | STATIVE FRAME |
| | b. | ha-smixa kista et ha-masax the-blanket covered.3.SG.F ACC the-screen | |

This study focuses on the morphosyntactic properties of the stative variant in Hebrew *kisa* ‘cover’ type verbs. The most striking property exhibited by the Hebrew data (1b, 2b) is the non-distinct templatic spell-out of the verb in each variant. This is quite unexpected in a language like Hebrew that tends to mark both the operation of causativization and the operation of decausativization. Due to the language’s verbal system, of consonantal roots that are spelled out in distinct templatic forms, Hebrew data shed some light both on the study of verbal alternations crosslinguistically, as well as on the derivation of verbal statives (in contrast to the more common adjectival states).

This unique morphological behavior is accounted for by a close examination of the frame’s syntactic structure and semantics interpretation. For this purpose, it is compared other types of transitive verbal statives in Hebrew. Syntactic tests show that the stative variant of *kisa* ‘cover’ verbs share properties both with transitive Subject-Experiencer (SE_{ACC} ; e.g., *ahav* ‘love’, *yada* ‘know’) and with transitive Object-Experiencer (OE_{ACC} ; e.g., *hifxid* ‘frighten’, *ši’amem* ‘bore’). On the one hand, like SE_{ACC} constructions, the subject is (directly) mapped externally. On the other hand, the stative *kisa* ‘cover’ patterns with OE_{ACC} constructions in assigning the accusative case inherently, rather than structurally. The data presented demonstrates that Hebrew morphology is sensitive to the distinction between base-generated and derived subject, therefore always marks related alternations. However, as opposed to syntax, the morphology is oblivious to the distinction between inherent and structural transitivity, thus allows the same templatic form for both variants.