Verb second in Hebrew

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1. V2 and Inversion

Subjects of Hebrew clauses can either appear preverbally, as in (1), or immediately after the verb, as in (2).

(1) ha-mistara 9acra harbe pegilim ba-psita
the-police detained many activists in-the-raid
ha-leilit.
the-nightly.

(2) ba-psita ha-leilit 9acra ha-mistara harbe
in-the-raid the-nightly detained the-police many
activists.

'The police detained many activists in the nightly raid.'

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When subjects follow the verb, the verb must be preceded by some constituent, as shown in the contrast between (2) and (3).  

(3) *9acr~ ha-mist~ra harbe pe9ilim.

detailed the-poll.ce many activists.

(2) te9ac ha-mist~ra harbe pe9ilim.

'the police detained many activists.'

Although we give the same gloss for (1) and (2), thereby admitting that the two have the same truth conditions, it should be borne in mind that the two variants have different discourse functions and illocutionary force: The subject-initial clauses are pragmatically more neutral.

Following Shlonsky (1987), we label the phenomenon illustrated in (2) TRIGGERED INVERSION, to distinguish it from a different phenomenon, mentioned in note 2, which resembles Romance FREE INVERSION.

Confining ourselves, then, to the contrast displayed in (1) and (2), we see that Hebrew clauses cannot begin with a verb. This restriction is observationally similar to the V2 constraint, familiar from the Germanic languages.

However, unlike, say, Standard German, Hebrew V2 phenomena are not restricted to root clauses or to clauses embedded under verbs belonging to a particular class. Subjects may follow the verb in clauses embedded under all verbs which take sentential complements. Nonetheless, in embedded clauses as in root clauses, some constituent must precede the verb, as shown by the unacceptability of (4b). In this respect Hebrew is more like Yiddish and Icelandic than German (see e.g., Vikner (1990, section 2.3) for a recent discussion).

We believe that this analysis does not carry over directly to Hebrew, primarily because Hebrew embedded V2 clauses constitute strong Islands for extraction which they apparently do not in these two Germanic languages. We discuss extraction out of embedded V2 structures in section 5.3

Our view is that Hebrew triggered inversion is a case of CP recursion, along lines suggested also for Germanic by e.g., Platzack (1986), Holmberg (1986). We shall try to defend the view that the structure of triggered inversion is as in (6), where the verb has raised to an empty C node and is preceded by the trigger.

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2 However, if the verb is unaccusative, presentational or passive, the preverbal constituent is optional, as in (1). We put these cases of 'free' inversion aside.

(i) (ba-psita ha-leilit) ne9ecru harbe

in-the-raid the-nightly PASSIVE-detain many pe9ilim.

activists

'Many activists were detained (in the nightly raid.)'

3 The grammatical status of extraction out of an embedded V2 clause in Icelandic and Yiddish is both complex and controversial. See Vikner (1990) for a lucid presentation of the various views on this matter.
We argue that when the subject is clause-initial, however, there is no need to posit this extra layer of structure; preverbal subjects are in [Spec/I] at S-structure. We claim that the different position occupied by preverbal subjects and triggers for inversion is what accounts for their different syntactic properties.

2. What Can Be a Trigger?

Triggers can be sentential adverbs, adverbal PPs and clauses, direct and indirect objects of the verb, and all types of clausal complements. A partial illustration is given in (7).

(7)  
a. Temporal Adverb  
'etmol 9acra ha-miStara harbe pe9ilim.  
'Yesterday the police detained many activists."

b. PP Adjunct  
ba-psita ha-leilit 9acra ha-miStara harbe  
in-the-nightly raid detained the-police many  
pe9ilim.  
'The police detained many activists in the  
nightly raid."

c. Clausal Adjunct  
mi-bli lekabel 'iSur mi-gavoha 9acra  
with-out to get permission from-high detained  
ha-miStara harbe pe9ilim.  
'the police many activists.  
'The police detained many activists without  
getting authorization from higher up.'

d. Direct Object  
harbe pe9ilim 9acra ha-miStara ba-psita  
many activists detained the-police in-the-raid  
ha-leilit.  
'the nightly.  
'The police detained many activists in the  
nightly raid.'

e. Indirect Object  
la-taxana hesi9a ha-miStara 'et ha- 
to-the-station drove the-police acc the- 
9acurim.  
detainees.  
'The police brought the detainees to the  
station.'

f. Clausal Complement  
l0 la9asot ra9aS be-meSex ha-mesi9a bika9a ha- 
eg to-make noise during the-ride asked the- 
miStara min ha-9acurim.  
police from the-detainees.  
'The police asked the detainees not to make  
noise during the ride.'

There are several restrictions on what can serve as  
a trigger. First, VP (manner) adverbials may not be  
triggers, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (8).  

(8)  
a. *le'at likek ha-xatul 'et Rina.  
'slowly licked the-cat ace. Rina  
'The cat slowly licked Rina.'

b. *maher naSax ha-xatul 'et Rina.  
'quickly bit the-cat acc. Rina  
'The cat quickly bit Rina.'

We assume that adverbs do not move. This implies  
that when sentential adverbs serve as triggers, they must  
be base-generated in trigger position. One syntactic  
difference between VP adverbs and sentential adverbs is  
that the former may be generated only in positions  
adjointed to some VP projection while sentential adverbs  
may appear in a variety of positions, as shown in the  
contrast between (9a) and (9b), where _ indicates a  
possible adverb position.  

Following Travis (1988), one might also argue  
that manner adverbs are heads and perform, barred from  
trigger position, a position which can only host XPs.
The direct object is evidence that V raises to I in the syntax of Hebrew.

(9) a. Positions of Sentential Adverbs
   ^ Dani ^ 'axal ^ lexem ^
   Dani ate bread

b. Positions of VP Adverbs
   Dani 'axal ^ lexem ^

Second, only an XP belonging to the clause where inversion occurs can serve as a trigger. Thus, (10) is only acceptable if the PP le-harbe pe9ilim 'to many activists' is construed with the higher verb, as shown in the glosses. We assume that long movement proceeds through a [Spec/C] marked [+WH]. Since triggers are [-WH], they cannot make use of [Spec/C] as an escape hatch.

(10) a. le-harbe pe9ilim hodi9a ha-mistara se-
   many activists announced the-police that-
   hi tagiS tv19a.
   she presses charge.
   i. 'The police told many activists that it
      will press charges.'
   ii. *The police announced that it will
      press charges against many activists.'

3. Topics

Triggers must be distinguished from topicalized constituents, i.e., constituents which precede the subject. While topics may also appear in both root and embedded clauses, they obey a number of restrictions which set them apart from triggers. First, in Hebrew, topics must be definite while triggers may be indefinite. The difference between (7d) above and (11a) below is that the clause-initial direct object in (11a) is followed by the subject; hence it is not a trigger but a topic, since triggers are followed by the verb. The sentence is unacceptable because topics cannot be indefinite. In (11b), the direct object is definite and thus licensed as a genuine topic.

(11) a. ^harbe pe9ilim ha-mistara 9acra
    many activists the-police detained
    ba-pSita ha-leillit.
    The police detained many activists in the
    nightly raid.'

b. 'et ha-pe9ilim ha-polityim ha-mistara
   acc the-activists the-political the-police
   9acra ba-pSita ha-leillit.
   The police detained the political activists
   in the nightly raid.'

c. noda9 la-nu Se-'et ha-pe9ilim ha-
   was known to-us that-acc the-activists the-
   politiyim ha-mistara 9acra ba-pSita ha-
   political the-police detained in the-raid the
   leillit.
   'It became known to us that the police detained
   the political activists in the nightly raid.'

Second, topics, unlike triggers, are not clause-bound. Contrast (10) above with (12) below and note the ambiguity in the interpretation of the topic, absent in (10).

(12) a. la-pe9ilim ha-polityim ha-mistara
    to-the activists the-political the-police
    hod19a Se- hi tidros ma'asar
    announced that-she will demand jail
    ba-po9al.
    sentence.
    i. 'The police told the political activists
       that it will demand a jail sentence.'
    ii. 'The police announced that it will demand
        a jail sentence for the political
        activists.'

We assume that topics are adjoined to IP, as in

(13) ... [IP the activists [IP the police arrested... ]]

4. Triggers and Topics

Consider, now, the fact that triggers and topics cannot cooccur. (14a) shows a case of a topic preceding a trigger and (14b) of trigger preceding a topic. Both are bad.

(14) a. Topic > Trigger

   *'et ha-pe9ilim ha-polityim ha-pSita
   acc the-activists the-political in-the-raid ha
   leillit 9acra ha-mistara.
   the-nightly detained the police.
   'The police detained many Arab activists in
   the nightly raid.'
b. Trigger > Topic

\[
\text{harbe pesilim ba-psita ha-leilit many activists in-the-raid the-nightly 9acra ha-mistara. detained the-police. 'the police detained many activists in the nightly raid.'}
\]

If triggers were in [Spec/I], nothing should prevent (14a), where a topic precedes a trigger, since triggers are in [Spec/I], while topics are adjoined to IP. However, if triggers were in [Spec/C], then the word order displayed in (14a) could only mean that the topic is adjoined to CP. Adjunction to CP is independently ruled out, as shown by the unacceptability of (15).

(15) *le-mi yadaati 'et ha-tapuax ha-ze le-mi neg (I) knew acc the-apple the-this to whom Dani natan. Dani gave. 'I didn't know to whom Dani gave this apple.'

(14b), where the trigger precedes the topic, is ruled out on par with wh-extraction over a topic: (16) shows that topics create islands for wh-movement.

(16) *'eize pesilim ba-psita ha-leilit ha-mistara 9acra? which activists in-the-raid the-nightly the-mistara 9acra? police detained?' Which activists did the police detain in the nightly raid?'

5. Triggered Inversion and Wh-movement

One major difference between Hebrew and the Germanic languages with embedded V2 has to do with the interaction of V2 with wh-movement, as mentioned briefly above.

In this section we show that clause-initial subjects and clause-initial triggers diverge in their interaction with wh-movement.

The data in (17a)-(20a) demonstrate that both long and short wh-movement is grammatical over a preverbal subject while similar movement over a trigger is ungrammatical (17b)-(20b).

(17) *le-mi hari natan harbe sfarim 'etmol? to whom Dani gave many books yesterday? 'To whom did Dani give many books yesterday?'

b. +le-mi harbe sfarim natan Dani 'etmol? to whom many books gave Dani yesterday

(18) Long Wh-Movement

a. le-mi Rina xoSevet Se- Dani natan harbe to whom Rina thinks that Dani gave many books? 'To whom does Rina think that Dani gave many books?'

b. +le-mi Rina xoSevet Se- harbe sfarim to whom Rina thinks that many books natan Dani? gave Dani

(19) Relativization

a. Ze ha-sefer Se- Dan natan le-Rina. this the-book that-Dan gave to-Rina. 'This is the book that Dan gave to Rina,'

b. *Ze ha-sefer Se- le-Rina natan Dani. this the-book that-to-Rina gave Dani.

(20) Adjunct Movement

a. 'eix. xasavta se-Dani tiken 'et ha-mexonit t? how (you) thought that-Dani fixed the car t? 'How did you think that Dani fixed the car t?'

b. **eix; how Dani? Dani? xasavta Se- 'et ha-mexonit tiken (you) thought that-acc the-car fixed Dani?

In fact, we note a three-way divergence in judgements. Extraction over a subject is perfect, as expected. Extraction of an argument over a trigger is bad but adjunct extraction over a trigger is worse.

These data can explained if we adopt the structure proposed in (6) for triggered inversion. The additional CP node created in these cases of triggered inversion is not an L-marked category and hence forms a barrier to extraction. The structure in (6) also predicts that extraction of arguments over a trigger should constitute a milder violation than extraction of adjuncts. This is confirmed by the data in (20). Extraction over a subject, on the other hand, is predictably perfect, since
subjects are in [Spec/I] and there is no additional CP node barring wh-movement directly to [Spec/C].

6. Locality of Triggers

A further prediction entailed by the adoption of (6) is that the trigger itself should not be able to move, since it would have to cross CP which is a non L-marked category. This prediction is also borne out by the data in (21a) which shows that the dative object cannot serve as a trigger in a lower clause and then move and topicalize, that is, adjoin to an IP of a higher clause. Notice that long topicalization is in general not ruled out in Hebrew, as shown by (21b).

(21) a. le-Dani, MoSe siper Se-kanta Ruti to-Dani Moshe told that-bought Ruti matana. present 'Moshe told that Ruti bought Dani a present.'

b. le-Dani, MoSe siper Se-Ruti kanta to-Dani Moshe told that-Ruti bought matana. present 'Moshe told that Ruti bought Dani a present.'

7. Wh-Movement and Inversion

Wh-words seem to be able to also serve as triggers for inversion, as shown in (22) below. Although preferred by purists, inversion under a wh-phrase is optional in spoken Hebrew so that (22) is also perfectly acceptable.

(22) a. 'et ma 'axal Dani? acc what ate Dani? 'What did Dani eat?'

b. le-mi natna Ruti matana? to-whom gave Ruti present? 'to whom did Ruti give a present?'

(23) a. 'et ma Dani 'axal? acc what Dani ate? 'What did Dani eat?'

b. le-mi Ruti natna matana? to-whom Ruti gave present? 'to whom did Ruti give a present?'

In this section we discuss some differences between WH triggers and non-WH triggers and account for them by arguing that inversion under a WH word does not involve the creation of an additional CP category, but rather movement of the inflected verb to a C0 which contains either a WH-word or its trace.

One difference between fronted WH words and triggers is that WH phrases can licence inversion in an embedded clause and then raise up to a higher clause. This is impossible for non-WH triggers, as we saw in (21a). Contrast the sentences in (24) with that in (21a). Note that (24a) is ambiguous: The fronted wh-word can either be interpreted as the goal of the higher verb or the benefactor of the lower verb. Crucial to our analysis, however, is that it may be interpreted as the benefactor of the lower verb kanta/kana 'bought'.

(24) a. le-mi siper Dani Se- Ruti kanta matana. to-whom told Dani that Ruti bought present

i. 'to whom, did Dani tell t; that Rina bought a present?'

ii. 'to whom, did Dani tell that Rina bought a present?'

b. ['eize matana], siper Yosi Se- MoSe which present tell Yossi that-Moshe kana le-Rina t,? bought-to-Rina? 'which present did Yossi tell that Moshe bought Rina t,?'

The ability of wh-words fronted from a lower clause to trigger inversion in a higher clause is not the only property which sets them apart from other triggers. A clearly related characteristic of wh-words is that they can licence inversion cyclically, i.e., they can licence inversion in a lower clause and then move up to a higher clause and licence inversion there as well. This is illustrated in (25).

(25) a. le-mi siper Dani Se- kanta Ruti to-whom told Dani that-bought Ruti matana? present? 'to whom did Dani recount that Ruti bought a present?'

b. ['eize matana], siper Yosi Se- kana MoSe which present tell Yossi that-bought Moshe le-Rina to-Rina? 'which present did Yossi tell that Moshe bought Rina?'

Moreover, wh-words, but not other triggers, can licence inversion in a lower clause and then proceed upwards to [Spec/C] in a higher clause. Triggers, as we
clauses. We argued that positing an extra CP layer which
hosts the verb and the XP preceding it, allows us to
straightforwardly explain the interaction of V2 and WH
movement in Hebrew. Finally, we argued for a distinction
between inversion due to the fronting of V and an XP into
an extra CP category and inversion triggered by a Comp
marked [+WH].

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