

Niffal: A Defective Story

Niffal: A Detective Story

Based on true events

Prologue

Prologue



Prologue



jad 'hand' jad-an-i
 'manual'

χuf 'sense' χuf-an-i
 'sensual'

sof 'end' sof-an-i
 'terminal'

but also

sof-i
 'final'

Prologue

[ji-taxen]

3msg-be.possible

'it is possible'

Prologue

nifʕal binyan

Past	Present	future	infinitive	Act.N	Gloss
niQTaL	niQTaL	jiQaTeL	lehiQaTeL	hiQaTLut	
niʕmaʕ	niʕmaʕ	jiʕameʕ	lehiʕameʕ	hiʕamʕut	‘be careful’
niʕʕam	niʕʕam	jiʕaʕem	lehiʕaʕem	hiʕaʕmut	‘sign up for’
nilmad	nilmad	jilamed	lehilamed	?hila-mdut	‘be studied’
*nitkan	*nitkan	jitaxen	??lehitaxen	hitaxnut	‘be possible’

▪ Jitaxen is a verb:

jitaxen gʕʕem ‘rain is possible’
jitaxan-u gʕʕamim ‘showers are possible’

Chapter 1. The missing nifal forms

Chapter 1. The missing nif'al forms

nif'al binyan – missing strong verbs

Past	Present	future	infinitive	Act.N	Gloss
niQTaL	niQTaL	jiQaTeL	lehiQaTeL	hiQaTLut	
niftav	niftav	*jiratev	*lehipatev	*hifamvut	'pass away'
niflam	niflam	*jifalem	*lehifalem	*hifalmut	'come to completion'
nitsavx	nitsavx	*jitsavex	*lehitsavex	*hitsavxut	'be obligated to'
nivraf	nivraf	*jivaref	*lehivaref	*hivarefut	'be scandalized'

Chapter 1. The missing nif'al forms

nif'al binyan – missing verbs with strong radicals

Past	Present	future	infinitive	Act.N	Gloss
niQTaL	niQTaL	jiQaTeL	lehiQaTeL	hiQaTLut	
niftav	niftav	*jiratev	*lehipatev	*hifamvut	'pass away'
niftav	niftav	jiratev	lehipatev	hifamvut	'rid oneself of'
niflam	niflam	*jifalem	*lehifalem	*hifalmut	'come to completion'
nitsavx	nitsavx	*jitsavex	*lehitsavex	*hitsavxut	'be obligated to'
nivraf	nivraf	*jivaref	*lehivaref	*hivarefut	'be scandalized'

Chapter 1. The missing nif'al forms

nif'al binyan – missing verbs with weak radicals

Past	Present	future	infinitive	Act.N	Gloss	
niQTaL	niQTaL	jiQaTeL	lehiQaTeL	hiQaTLut		
noʕad	noʕad	*jivaʕed	*lehivaʕed	*hivaʕadut	'be destined to'	vʷʕd
noʕad	noʕad	jivaʕed	lehivaʕed	hivaʕadut	'meet with'	
nizon	nizon	*jizon	*lehizon	*???	'feed on'	vzwn
(nidon	nidon	jidon	lehidon	*???	'be discussed'	vdwn)
nitsav	nitsav	*jinatsev	*lehinatsev	*hinatsvut	'stand (w/o moving)'	vntsv
(nitsal	nitsal	jinatseL	lehinatseL	hinatslut	'survive'	vntsl)
nihja	nijhja	*jihave	*lehihavot	*hihavut	'become'	vhjj
nitspa	nitspa	*jitsafe	*lehitsafot	*hitsafut	'be sighted'	vtsfj
(nijba	nijba	jjave	lehifavot	hifavut	'be captured'	v[bj)

Chapter 1. The missing nifʕal forms

There are quite a few **adjective** in nifʕal with no verbal equivalent

nimʕats	'w. stamina'	nivze	'evil'
nisbal	'tolerable'	nivpe	'feeble'
nimhav	'hasty'	nidle	'(in)exhaustible'
niʕbad	'respected'	nilʔe	'(in)defatigable'
nilhav	'enthusiastic'		
		nova	'terrible'
neʔeman	'loyal'	noʕaz	'brave'
nehedaʕ	'wonderful'		
neʕmad	'nice'	nidaʕ	'remote'
neʕvats	'unequivocal'	nadoʕ	'corny'

*nimʕats-nu, *nisbal-ti, *naʕmad-ta, *noʕaz-t etc.



Dedicated to the memory of Edit Doron 1951-2019

Chapter 1. The missing nifal forms

Chapter 1. The missing nifal forms



Chapter 1. The missing nif'al forms

Nif'al has no Present marking:

Binyan	Past	Present	Future/infinite
PaʕaL	QaTaL	QoTeL	j-iQToL
PiʕeL	QiTeL	m-QaTeL	j-QaTeL
hiʕiL	hiQTiL	m-aQTiL	j-aQTiL
hitpaʕel	hit-QaTeL	m-it-QaTeL	j-it-QaTeL
nifʕal	niQTaL	niQTaL	j-iQaTeL

Chapter 1. The missing nif'al forms

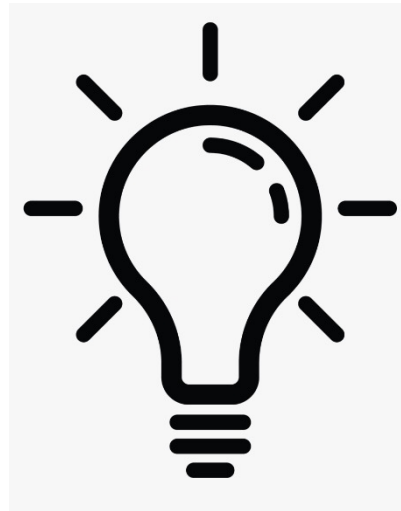
Nif'al is the only binyan to have Past-Present synchretism

Binyan	Past	Present	Future/infinite
Pa'al	QaTaL	QoTeL	-iQToL
Pi'el	QiTeL	-QaTeL	
hif'il	hiQTiL	-aQTiL	
hitpa'el	QaTeL		
nif'al	niQTaL		-iQaTeL

Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs



Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs



Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs

Lamed-yod verbs override general vocalization:

pst ⇔ a#; pres/fut ⇔ e#, inf ⇔ ot#

Binyan	Past	Present	Future	infinitive	gloss
Paʕal	Ɑatsa ^a χ	Ɑots ^e aχ	-iⱭts ^o aχ		‘murder’
	Ɑatsa	Ɑots ^e	-iⱭts ^e	-iⱭts ^o t	‘want’
Piʕel	Ɑits ^e f	-Ɑats ^e f			‘tile’
	Ɑitsa	-Ɑats ^e		-iⱭts ^o t	‘satisfy’
hiʕil	hiⱭts ⁱ n	-aⱭts ⁱ n			‘bec. serious’
	hiⱭtsa	-aⱭts ^e		-aⱭts ^o t	‘lecture’
hitpaʕel	-Ɑats ^e n				‘bec. serious’
	-Ɑatsa	-Ɑats ^e		-Ɑats ^o t	‘bec. satisfied’

Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs

... Except in nifʕal, where pst/pres *stem* synchretism wins over the prs/fut final vowel synchretism of Lamed-yod verbs:

Binyan	Past	Present	Future	infinitive	gloss
nifʕal	nijbaʕ		-ijaveʕ		'break (int.)'
	nijba		-ijave	ijavot	'be captured'
not	nijba	nijbe	-ijave	ijavot	

Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs



Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs

Binyan	Past	Present	Future	infinitive	gloss
hitPaʕeL	hitbakeʃ	m-itbakeʃ	j-itbakeʃ	le-hitbakeʃ	'be asked to'
	n itbakeʃ	m-itbakeʃ	j-itbakeʃ	le-hitbakeʃ	'be asked to'
		*m-n-itbakeʃ	*j- n itbakeʃ	*le- n itbakeʃ	

Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs

Binyan	Past	Present	Future	infinitive	gloss
hitPaʕeL	hitbakej	m-itbakej	j-itbakej	le-hitbakej	'be asked to'
	n itbakej	m-itbakej	j-itbakej	le-hitbakej	'be asked to'
		*m-n-itbakej	*j-nitbakej	*le-nitbakej	

Not surprising, since there is already a prefix

Surprising! Because there is exactly the same "prefix" as in the past form (*h-*).

Chapter 2. The two light-bulbs

n- is incompatible with imperfective aspect

Interim Summary

Interim Summary

Not every nifʕal verb has a future form

- 1) The ingredients of a [nifʕal] form are compatible with both perfective and present stems;
- 2) Possibly, something about the prefix *n-* doesn't match well with imperfective.
- 3) Some nifʕal forms are only adjectival.

Chapter 3. Another phone call



Chapter 3. Another phone call



Chapter 4. Some hard-to-handle prosodic changes

Past ⇔ Future stem relation are most opaque in nifʕal

Binyan	Past	Present	Future/infinite	past ⇔ future
PaʕaL	QaTaL	QoTeL	-iQTol	apophony+ prosodic change
PiʕeL	QiTeL	-QaTeL		apophony
hifʕiL	hiQTiL	-aQTiL		apophony
hitpaʕel	QaTeL			apophony
nifʕal	niQTaL		-iQaTeL	apophony+prosodic change +loss/addition of <i>n</i> -

Chapter 4. Some hard-to-handle prosodic changes

<i>Past</i>	<i>Future</i>	
nisvaχ	?jisaveχ	'tag along unwillingly'
histaveχ	jistaveχ	'tag along un/willingly'
nismaχ	?jisameχ	'rely on (physically/metaphorically)'
histameχ	jistameχ	'tag along (only metaphorically)'
nilva	?jilave	'accompany unwillingly (e.g after taste)'
hitlava	jitlave	'accompany un/willingly'

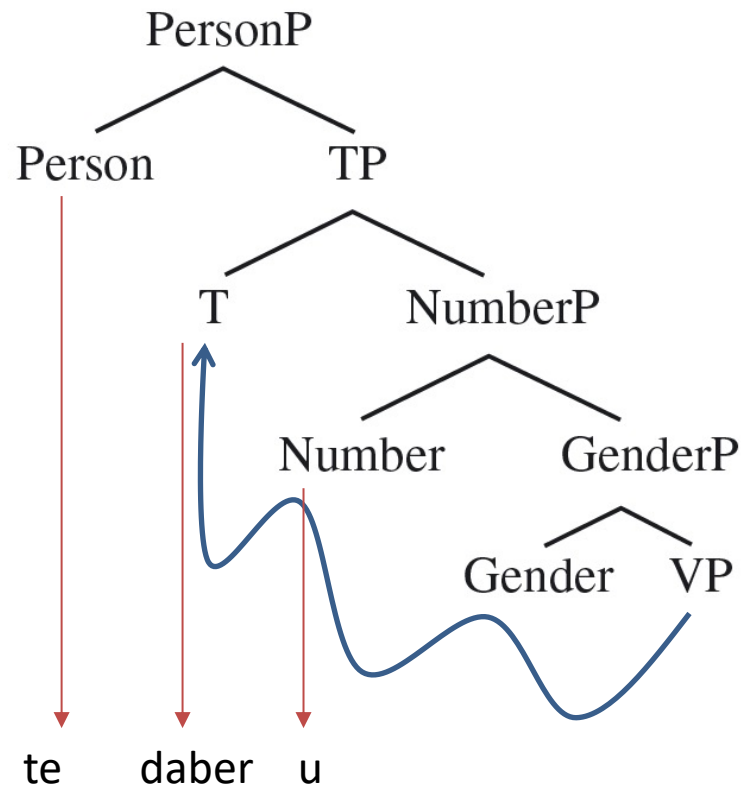
Chapter 4. Some hard-to-handle prosodic changes

- ⇒ Hard-to-handle prosodic changes
- ⇒ Lack of prefix in future form
- ⇒ Passive meaning
- ⇒ Competition from hitpaʕel
- ⇒ Opaque segmental alternations in weak verb

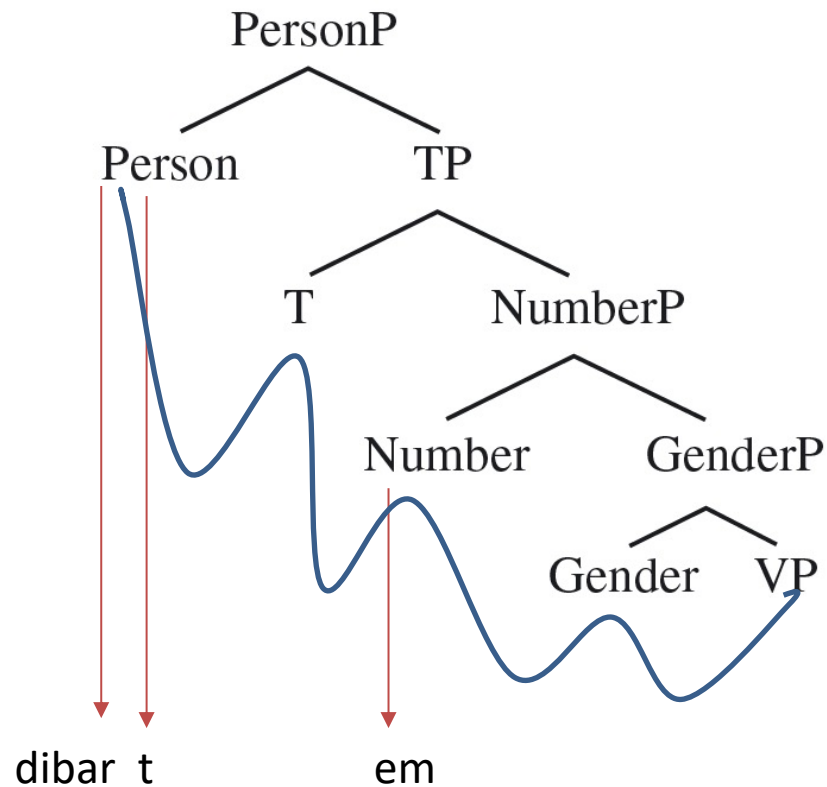
⇒ Speakers need positive evidence that the future form is legitimate.

Chapter 5. You got to move

Chapter 5. You got to move



Chapter 5. You got to move



Chapter 5. You got to move

Speak.PRF → 2P → dibar-t-em
|
PL

Speak.IMPRF → 2P → *daber-t-u
|
PL

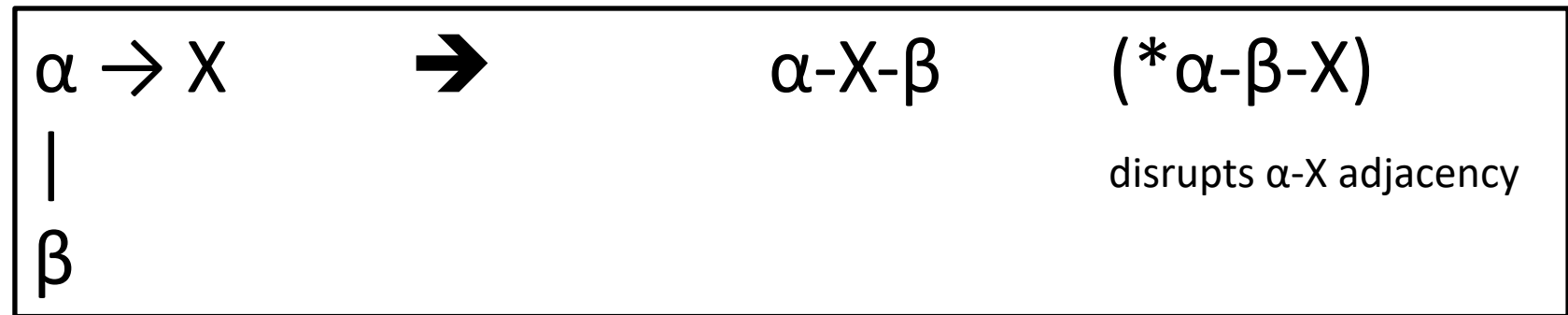
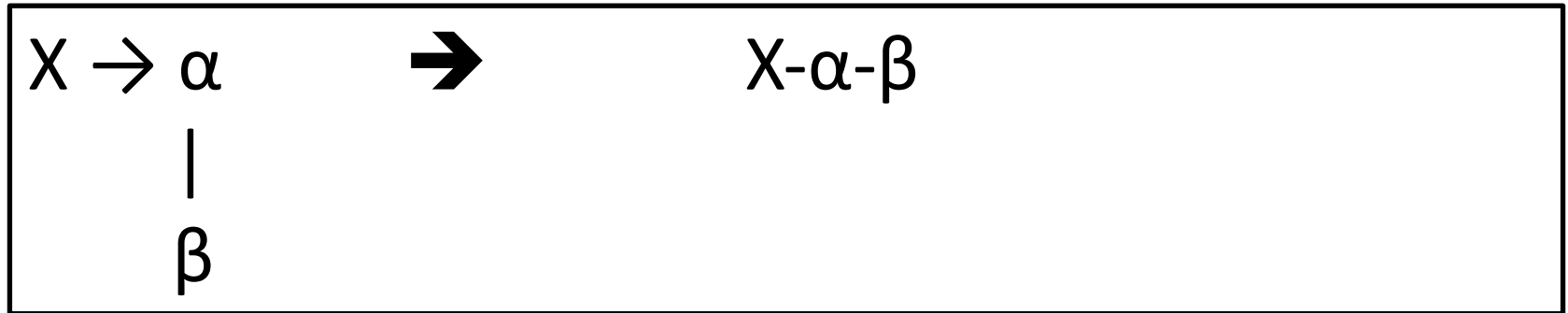
Chapter 5. You got to move

Speak.PRF → 2P → dibar-t-em
|
PL

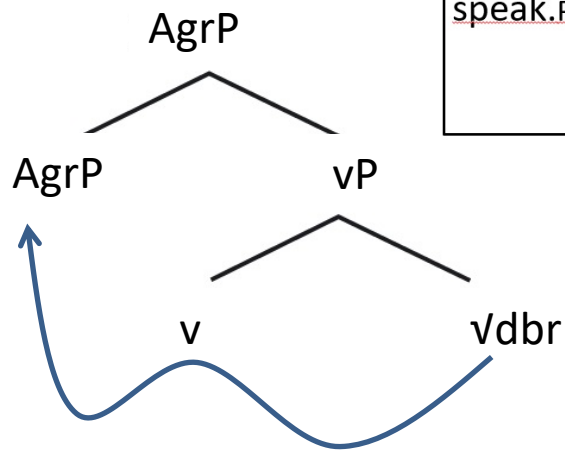
Speak.IMPRF → 2P → 2P → Speak.IMPRF → t-dabr-u
| |
PL PL

« Morphological Metathesis »

Chapter 5. You got to move

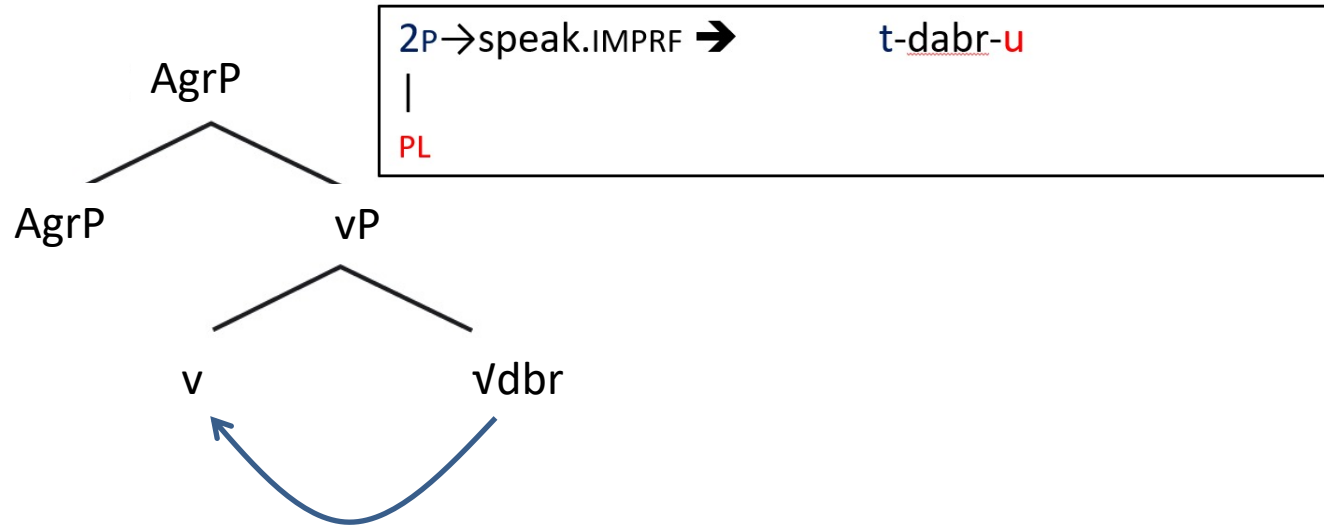


Chapter 5. You got to move

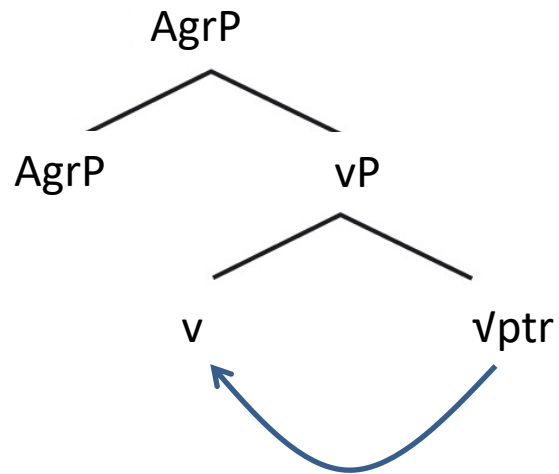


speak.PRE → 2P →	dibar-t-em
PL	

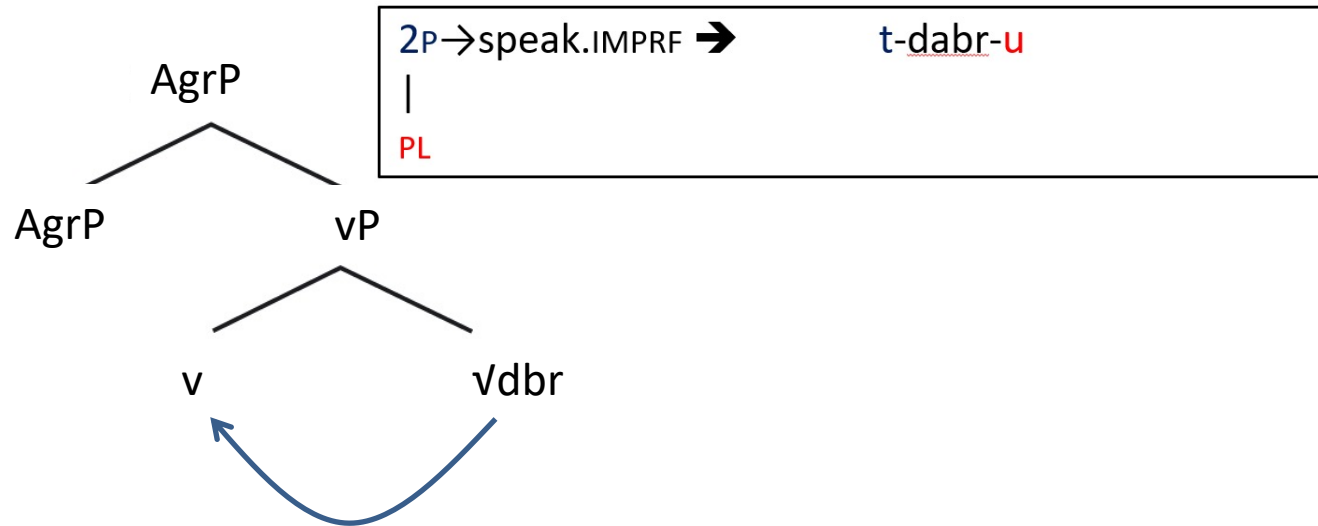
Chapter 5. You got to move



Chapter 5. You got to move



Chapter 5. You got to move



Within this approach, why would a nifʕal verb be defective ? And why only in the future?

Chapter 6. Answers?

Chapter 6. Answers?

- Mendes and Nevins (2021): Two types of defectiveness.

Conceptual: The semantics of the missing word-form is problematic.

morpho-phonological: The form of the missing word-form is problematic:

Chapter 6. Answers?

- Mendes and Nevins (2021): Two types of defectiveness.

Conceptual: The semantics of the missing word-form is problematic.

Cannot be salvaged by ellipsis

He should beware of dogs but *he doesn't _____.

morpho-phonological: The form of the missing word-form is problematic:

Can be salvaged by ellipsis

E.g. **French** [ʒe klo] 'I close', [vu ???], *[kloz-e]

French [ʒə klo la diskysjõ, e vuz _____ la reynjõ]

'I end the conversation, and you the meeting'

Chapter 6. Answers?

- Can nifʕal FUT/INF forms be « salvaged » through ellipsis?

hu axal kol ma je-haja eʕjar le-exol
he ate all what comp-was possible ~~to eat~~
'he ate all it what possible to eat'

hu nizon mi-kol ma je-haja amur *lehizon
he fed from-all what comp-was supposed.to ~~feed~~
'he fed off all he was supposed to feed off of'

Chapter 6. Answers?

- Can nifʕal FUT/INF forms be « salvaged » through ellipsis?

Similarly

Ad axfav axal-ta basar, me-axfav al ~~toxal basar~~
until now ate-2msg meat, from-now don't ~~eat.fut meat~~
'until now you ate meat, from now on don't'

*Ad axfav nizonta mi-basar, me-axfav al ~~*tizon mibasar~~*
until now fed-2msg from-meat, from-now don't ~~feed.off.ofmeat~~
'until now you fed off of meat, from now on don't'

Chapter 6. Answers?

- Can nifʕal FUT/INF forms be « salvaged » through ellipsis?

Similarly, **with an object** (not crazy about these)

nitsav-nu b-a-makom ʃe-**b**-o haji-nu amur-im *lehinatsev
stood-1pl in-the-place comp-**in**-3msg was-2pl supposed.to-pl
'we stood in the place in which we were supposed to'

ha-dvaʃ nigar mi-kol ʁor ba-kaveret ʃe-**mi**-meno haja jaʁol *lehinager
the-honey poured from-every hole inthehive comp-from-3msg was be.able.to
'the honey poured out of every hole in the beehive out of which it could.'

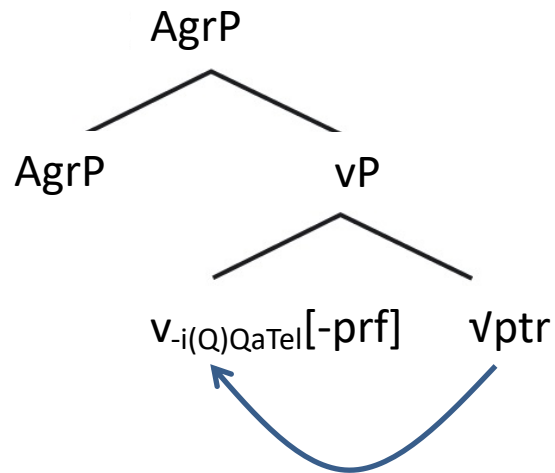
Chapter 6. Answers?

- Can nifʕal FUT/INF forms be « salvaged » through ellipsis?
- Suppose it can – what does that mean??
- Imperfective forms are not morpho-syntactically impossible, they are morphologically impossible.
- Ok, but why??? That's the entire question!

Chapter 6. Answers?

- Assume (in keeping with the morphophonological facts), that nifʕal verbs employ *two* templates
 - i(Q)QaTeL (imperfective)
 - niQTaL (perfective)
- -i(Q)QaTeL forms are clearly verbs, and only imperfective.
niQTaL forms are ambiguous adj/verb and perfective/stative.
- nifʕal is not inherently verbal.
- Hypothesis: -i(Q)QaTeL verbal forms, inherently imperfective, *require* the *n-* prefix and the nifʕal template in order to be perfective.

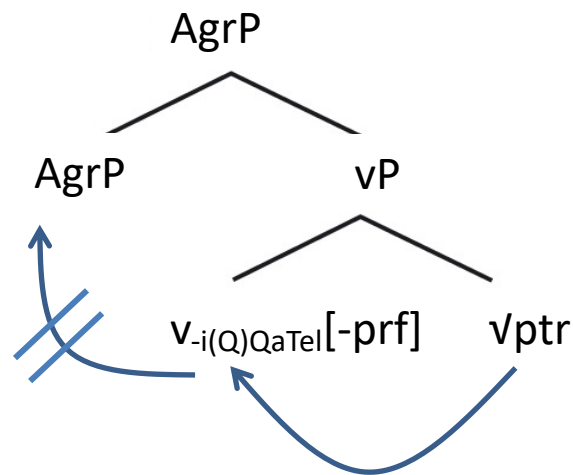
Chapter 6. Answers?



An imperfective form

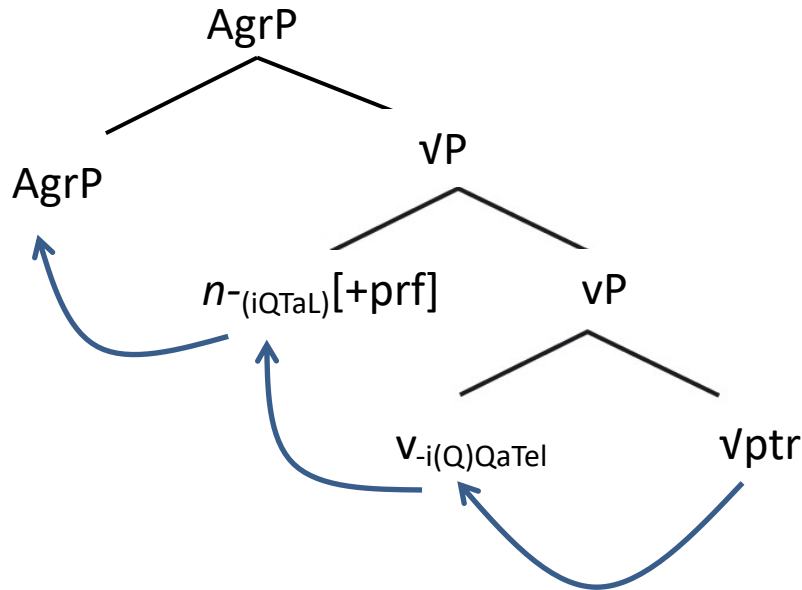
-ippater 'will get rid of'

Chapter 6. Answers?



Further movement to the perfective position is not possible because the template is [-perfect]

Chapter 6. Answers?

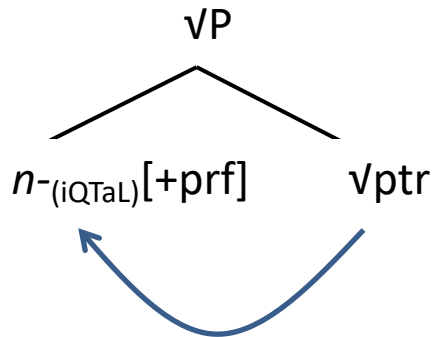


Creation of perfective is made possible by addition of *n-* and its template.

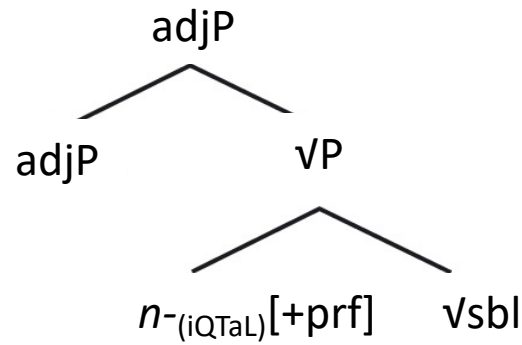
niftar 'got/gets rid of'

Chapter 6. Answers?

Now, suppose that *n-* and its template can also attach directly to a root.



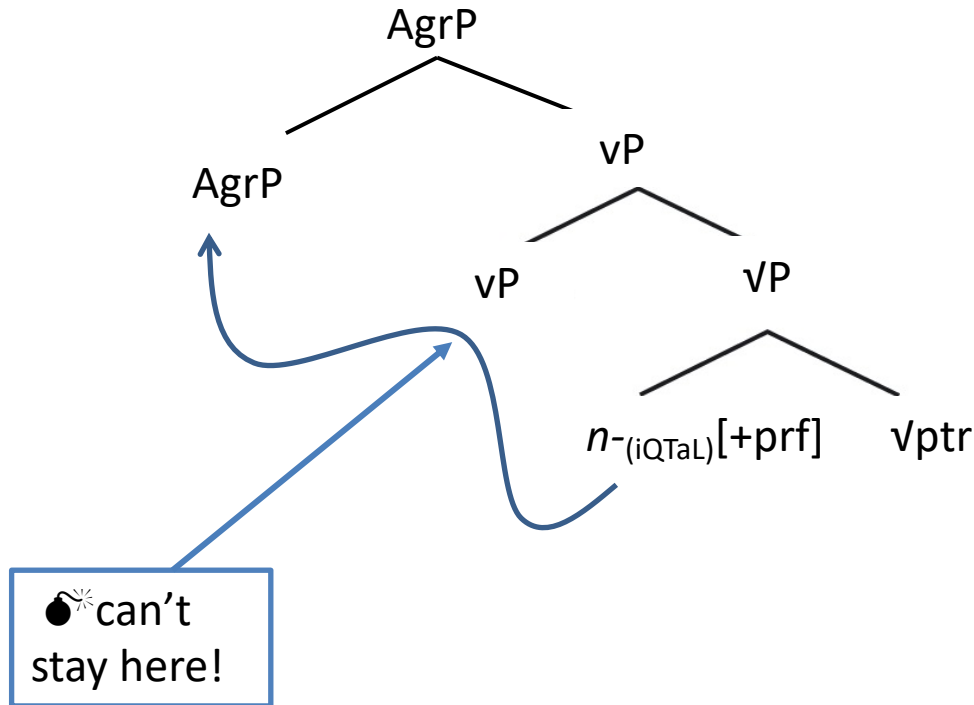
Chapter 6. Answers?



That sequence can be selected by an adjectival head to derive an adjective with no verbal equivalent

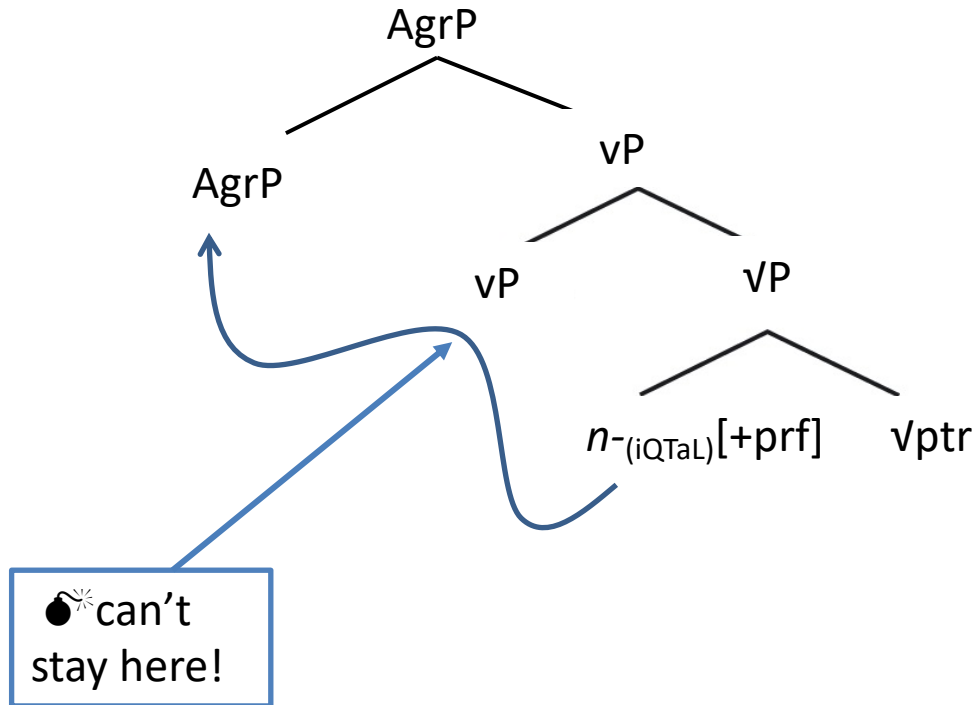
e.g. nisbal 'tolerable'

Chapter 6. Answers?



If niQTaL+V is selected by a verb, in turn, we get a niQTaL form that may move up to the position of perfective, but may not stop at vP (the position of imperfectives)

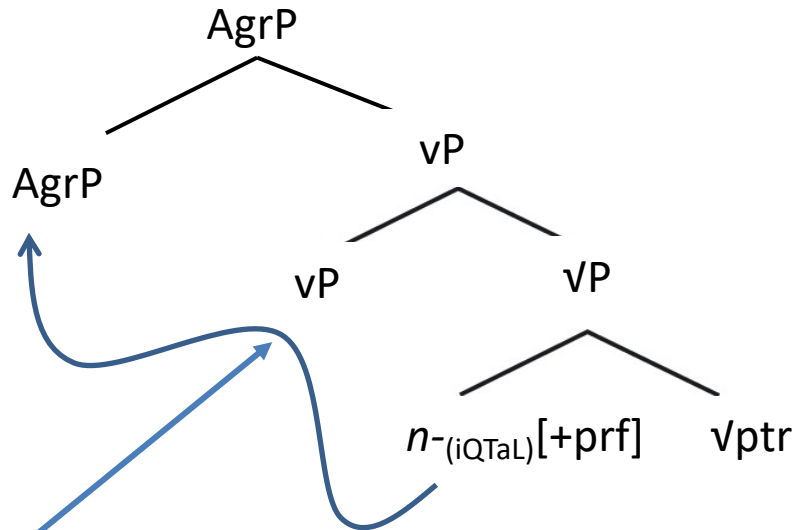
Chapter 6. Answers?



If niQTaL+v is selected by a verb, in turn, we get a niQTaL form that may move up to the position of perfective, but may not stop at vP (the position of imperfectives).

And we've derived defective nifʕal form.

Chapter 6. Answers?



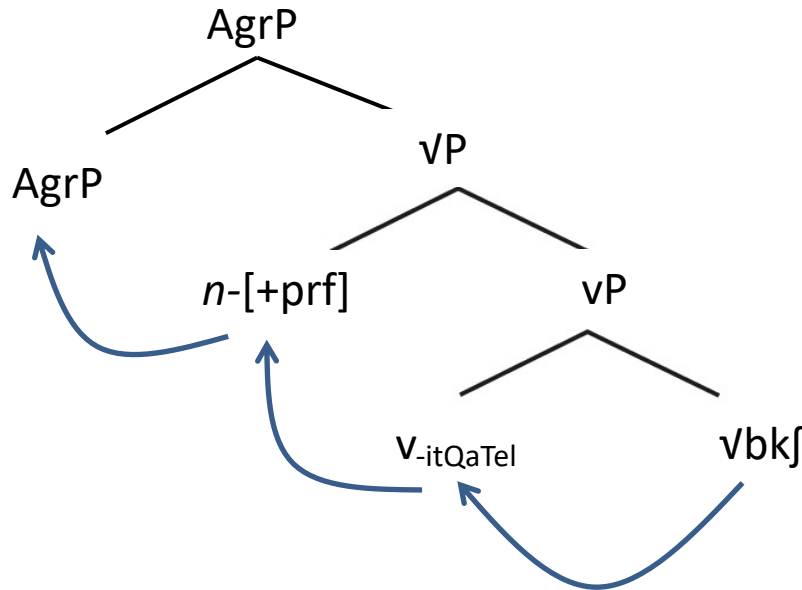
☛ can't stay here!

If niQTaL+v is selected by a verb, in turn, we get a niQTaL form that may move up to the position of perfective, but may not stop at vP (the position of imperfectives).

And we've derived defective nifsal forms.

Defective nifsal forms are cases of the template nifsal being merged directly with the root; as opposed to those where the nifsal template is called in order to derive a perfective form.

Chapter 6. Answers?



nitpaʕel verbs are probably of the first type: Certain vPs can be selected by [n] in the imperfective. But there is never a *nitpaʕel* form without a *hitpaʕel* alternative.

Nitbakef 'be asked to'

Epilogue



To be continued...

Songs

« Watching the Detectives », performed by Elvis Costello

« You got to move », performed by Mississippi Fred McDowell

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