

Negation Using 'laysa and '?dyn' in the light of Generative Syntax, a Comparative Case Study

دراسة مقارنة لحرفي النفي "ليس" و "?dyn" في ضوء النحو التوليدي

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Abstract

This paper investigates the syntactic properties of negative markers in Arabic and Hebrew, '?dyn and laysa. It has suggested that both markers behave as lexical verbs in the sense that they display an asymmetry of rich and poor agreement (henceforth AGR). Such asymmetry depends heavily on VSO and SVO word-order variations, operating within TP-system (Temporal Phrase). However, it has argued that the Arabic NEG-marker laysa differs slightly from the Hebrew negative particle '?dyn, since it carries an intrinsic AGReement-suffix and also assigns accusative Case to nominal or adjectival predicate. This leads us to suppose that both negative markers occupy two different positions in the syntactic structure: '?dyn in NEGP (henceforth, Negative Phrase) and laysa in AGRP (Agreement Phrase).

To shed light on these facts, we have adopted a descriptive and analytical analysis by presenting data of these negative markers in both languages and then lay out different facets of syntactic similarities and distinctions.

However, one suggestion for further research would be to look at a wide variety of negation. It would be interesting to look at, for instance, other negative markers existing in both languages that share the same syntactic features.

Key-words: Détermination, Annexion, Acceptabilité.

ملخص

في هذا المقال، نحاول كشف بعض الخصائص النحوية للأحرف النافية 'ليس' و'ynδ?' في اللغة العربية والعبرية من منظور النحو التوليدي. خلافاً للأحرف النافية الأخرى، فإن هذه الأحرف تعتبر أفعالا، بحيث أنه يمكن لكل منهما أن يعمل عمل الفعل، ويجري استعمالهما في صيغة "فعل وفاعل" أو صيغة "فاعل وفعل". إضافة إلى كونهما ينسجمان مع الفاعل، وتظهر عليهما ضمائر الربط كما تظهر على باقي الأفعال. ومع أن حرف النفي 'ليس' في اللغة العربية يتشابه مع حرف النفي 'ynδ?' في اللغة العبرية من بعض الوجوه إلا أن حرف النفي 'ليس' يتفرد ببعض السمات أبرزها أنها تعد من النواسخ. فهي مثل سائر النواسخ ترفع المبتدأ وتنصب الخبر. وهذا مقارنة بحرف النفي 'ynδ?' في اللغة العبرية، فإنه لا يمتلك هذه الخاصية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العربية، العبرية، حرفي النفي "ليس" و"ynδ?"، النحو التوليدي.

1- Introduction:

In this paper, we deal with the function of negative system in Arabic and Hebrew. We focus our attention, in particular, on the syntax of negative structures with *laysa* and *?dyn*. Such investigation needs a study of others aspects of language such as the verbal system, the nominal system; but also a very approximate approach to others categories of part of speech. This task sets out to do two things: we aim initially to discover the contexts where these negative markers are employed. Then, we are determined to discuss the relevant issue, connected to the properties of negation, in the hope that it will spur further comparative work within the Semitic languages.

This research is divided in two major parts. In the first part, we will investigate syntax of negative structure with *laysa* and *?dyn* within generative framework. In the second part, we will identify syntactic properties of these negative markers in attempt to figure out their nature whether they are negative verbs or merely negative particles. Also, we will show the fact that Arabic and Hebrew share something in common, particularly in syntax of negation. Such thrilling fact explains the reason why we have conducted such investigation.

2. Syntax of ?dyn and laysa within Generative Framework:

2.1 Use of lo and ?dyn:

Hebrew disposes two negative forms *lo* and *?dyn* (c.f. Ur Shlonsky, (1991-(1997)). *Lo* is a canonical negative marker without intrinsic temporal value, and consequently, admits to combine with tensed verbs [*lo-V* {+tense α } where α is variable]:

(1) - a Daniela *lo* katav
Daniela NEG wrote
Daneila didn't write.

- b Daniela *lo* kotev
Daniela NEG writes
Daneila doesn't write.

- c Daniela lo yixtov
Daniela NEG will write
Daniela won't write.

The use of the second negative marker is more restrictive: *ʔəyn*, which resembles syntactically to *laysa* (in Arabic) is only employed with present tense – *Benoni* –, with verbal and non verbal predicates: (*benoni* is a form that denotes the present tense). This form can be employed in participial sentences as well as in embedded sentences:

- (2) - a ha-ʔanaš im magiḥ-im be š mone
The people arrive.3plm at eight
The people arrive at eight.

- b raʔi-ti ʔet ha-ʔanašim magiḥ- im
see.1sg acc the people arrive.3plm

Semantically, *benoni* signifies 'intermediary'. At temporal level, this form is located halfway between the past and future, and hence exhibiting a present form. According to Uri Shlonsky, this form is ambiguous due to the fact that it functions as present participial, active /passive (3-a-c) and as tensed verb (3-b-d)):

- (3) - a Dani haya kotev sipurim.
Dani be.past3msg write-Benoni.msg histories
Dani wrote histories.
- b ʔəyn tal kotev
NEG Tal writes
Tal doesn't write.
- c ha- ṣugot šam hay-u mugaš-ot ṣal yedei robotim.
The-cakes here be.past.3msg serve-Benoni.msg by robots.
These cakes were served by robots.

-d ?ðyn Ruti yode ➔ çat ?et ha-t uva
 NEG Ruti know(benoni)-fs acc the-answer
 Ruti doesn't know the answer.

-e *?ðyn Tal katav
 NEG Tal 3.sg.write-past

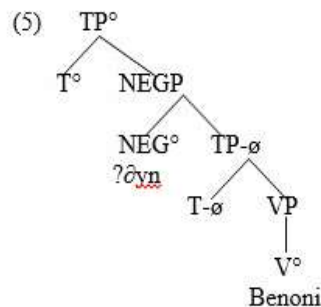
2.2 Restriction Use of ?ðyn and Tense-feature:

Note that only benoni can be embedded under the negative marker ?ðyn or auxiliary be. This contrast is apparent in (4-a) and (4-b):

(4) -a *?ðyn Tal katav
 NEG Tal wrote

-b Daniela hayta Katv-a sipurim
 Daniela was wrote-3sg histories
 Daniela was writing histories.

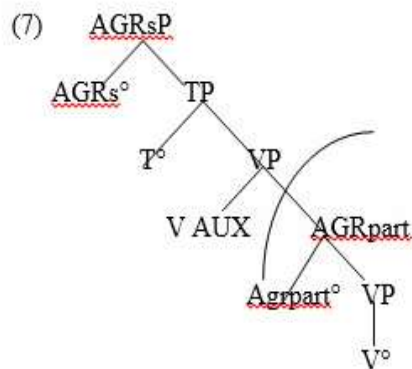
The ungrammaticality of (4-a) shows that two lexical verbal forms carrying a grammatical tense can not co-exist in a sentence. The negative particle ?ðyn in (3-b) is in present tense. The particle moves up to T° to convey present reading. By contrast, benoni verb occupies the head TP-ø (tense without morphological content) and can not accede to T°. Accordingly, T° is inaccessible for Benoni verb and hence can not check its [Temporal] feature in this position: the output of such operation is outlined in the following construction:



There exists a consensus among scholars that a participial is a verb which is intrinsically non-specified for Tense. Syntactically, we can interpret this supposition by stipulating that what characterizes the participial is that its inflectional features are checked in the low position of the structure, precisely below TP° . Consider the example of past participle in French:

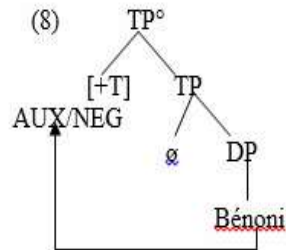
- (6) Marie est sortie.
Mary went out.

The accessible domain for displacement of past participle sortie (went out) is delimited by the bow in (7).



Being intrinsically non-encoded for temporal specification, the participle sortie does not need to check its temporal feature by moving up to T° . The T feature, on the contrary, is checked by the auxiliary « be » which moves to T° . In this perspective, we deposit the following hypothesis:

Benoni is a participial form which is temporally unmarked. Only its co-indexation with T of auxiliary or negation provides it a temporal value. Hence, the temporal projections of benoni would be represented as in (8), where TP° and $TP-\emptyset$ form a temporal chain:



In addition to its vast use in verbal sentences, the particle ?eyn can be perfectly used with nominal sentences:

- (9) - a ?eyn Tal ha-more
 NEG Tal the-professor
 Tal isn't the professor.
- b ?eyn Tal ha-š?eyn šel ha-yeladim
 NEG Tal the-gardian of the-boys
 Tal isn't the gardian of the boys.
- c ?eyn Tal xole
 NEG Tal ill
 Tal isn't ill.

We deduce that:

?eyn c-selects categorically NP (Nominal Phrase).

Differently from lo, ?eyn is also designed, as being a negative marker, to negate the existential particle yeš (Ur Shlonsky (1997)):

- (10) - a yeš yladim ba-gina
 exist boys in the-garden
 There are boys in the garden.

- b ?ðyn yladim ba-gina
 NEG boys in the-garden
 There aren't boys in the garden.

3. The Syntactic Properties of laysa and ?ðyn:

3.1 laysa and ?ðyn as Verbs:

As shown above, the negative marker laysa inflects for AGR-features (Agreement- features) as similar as an ordinary verb does. If this is likely the case to be, then a crucial question arises here: What common points do laysa /?ðyn and the lexical verb share? To answer this question, let us look closely at the following examples:

- (11) - a lays-a t-talaamiid-u mušta3id-iina... (Arabic)
 NEG the-students-nom ready-3pl-acc
 The students aren't ready...
- b t-talaamiid-u lays-uu mušta3id-iina...
 the-students-nom NEG-3plm ready
 The students aren't ready...
- c *t-talaamiid-u lays-a mušta3id-iina...
 the-students-nom NEG-3sgm ready
- d ?ðyn yladim ba-gina (Hebrew)
 NEG boys in the-garden
 The boys aren't in the garden.
- e yladim ?ðyn-am ba-gina
 enfants NEG-3plm dans le jardin
 the biys aren't in the garden.
- f *yladim ?ðyn ba-gina
 boys NEG in the-garden

The examples in (11) shows that *laysa* and *?odyn* converge on certain number points : both of them can carry AGR-features, both are inflected for present tense, and the NP subject can not precede them unless they carry pronominal features. The chart in (12) resumes agreement suffixes of *laysa* and *?odyn*:

(12)

Pronouns	<i>layssa</i>	<i>?odyn</i>
1sg	<i>las-tu</i>	<i>?odyn-i</i>
1pl	<i>las-naa</i>	<i>?odyn-enu</i>
2sgf	<i>last-i</i>	<i>?odyn-ex</i>
2dlf	<i>last-um-aa</i>	<i>?odyn-ex</i>
2plf	<i>las-tun-na</i>	<i>?odyn-xen</i>
2sgm	<i>las-ta</i>	<i>?odyn-xa</i>
2dlm	<i>las-tum-aa</i>	<i>?odyn-xa</i>
2sgf	<i>las-tum</i>	<i>?odyn-xem</i>
3sgf	<i>lays-at</i>	<i>?odyn-a</i>
3plf	<i>las-at-aa</i>	<i>?odyn-a</i>
3sgm	<i>lays-na</i>	<i>?odyn-nan</i>
3dlm	<i>lays-a</i>	<i>?odyn-o</i>
3plm	<i>lays-aa</i>	<i>?odyn-o</i>
3plm	<i>lays-uu</i>	<i>?odyn-am</i>

Another salient point of *laysa* concerns assignation and checking of structural Case. As V, *laysa* selects a complement to which it assigns accusative Case:

- (13) - a *last-u* *mas?uul-an*
 NEG-1sg responsible-acc
 I amn't responsible.
- b *lays-a* *Zayd-un* *?ustaad-an*
 NEG Zayd-nom professor-acc
 Zayd isn't professor.

Otherwise, identification of laysa as being a verb implies the presence of a verbal phrase (VP) in negative copulative constructions. Also, it is plausible to affirm that the Case-assignment in (13) is a robust argument in favor of the existence of VP dominated by one or plenty of functional categories. Accordingly, the abstract verbal structure can be depicted as below:

$$(14) \quad [(\text{AGR} [(\text{T} \dots (\text{v}))])]$$

The verbal functional categories as AGR and T can only constitute an extended verbal conjunction and can only combine with a verb. If this correlation between T, AGR and V is correct, then all predicative constructions will contain an extended verbal projection, and therefore a verb.

Hence, the proposed arguments here lead us to consider that laysa exhibits the same properties that of an ordinary verb:

- (a) Both of them can carry AGR features.
- (b) They can assign accusative Case.
- (c) The NP subject can not precede laysa unless it carries AGR features.

3.2 laysa and ?āyn displaying SVO and VSO order:

3.2.1 Rich and weak AGR(ement):

The structural relation between two lexical constituents is reflected in exhibiting AGR (agreement). According to Chomsky (1986), X-bar theory, as theoretical foundation, splits a sentence into fragments and set up different types of relations between these fragments. With AGR phenomenon, this theoretical foundation presents apparently two major relations: head-complement and Spec-head. In constructions of SVO word order, the subject and the verb are in Spec-head configuration (=Specifier-head):

- (15) - a lays-a l-?awalad-u mas?uul-iina (Arabic)
 NEG-3sg the-boys-nom responsible-3plm-acc
 The boys aren't responsible.

- **b** *l-ʔawalad-u lays-a masʔuul-iina
the-boys-nom NEG-3sg responsable-3plm-acc
- **c** l-ʔawalad-u lays-uu masʔuul-iina
the-boys-nom NEG-3plm responsable-3plm-acc
The boys aren't responsible.
- (16) - **a** ʔəyn yladim ba-gina (Hebrew)
NEG boys the-gardin
There aren't boys in the garden.
- **b** *yladim ʔəyn ba-gina
Tal NEG the-garden
- **c** yladim ʔəyn-am ba-gina
boys NEG-3plm the-garden
There aren't boys in the garden.

The Spec-head relation between the subject and negative verb, in the examples (15-16), is morphologically translated by incorporating AGR-features into verb: third person of plural.

This case doesn't hold true with structures of VS word order. In these constructions, AGR between the NP subject and the negative verb does not trigger:

- (17) - **a** lays-a t-talaamiid-u musta3id-iina...
NEG the-students-nom ready-3pl-acc
The student isn't ready...
- **b** ʔəyn yladim ba-gina
NEG boys in the-garden
There aren't boys in the garden.

Whatever nature of DP subject is, the form of the negative verb ʔəyn remains invariable. Laysa, by contrast, carries the third person of singular. This latter is dubbed neutral or unmarked form in traditional

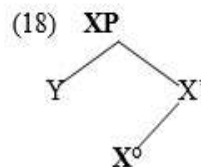
grammar.

AGR in SV order is rich, whereas it is weak /poor (17-a) or absent (17-b) in VS order (Fassi F., (1989)-(1992)) and Mohammad, (1990)).

The crucial question arises here is: which mechanism allows to accounts for theses contrasts?

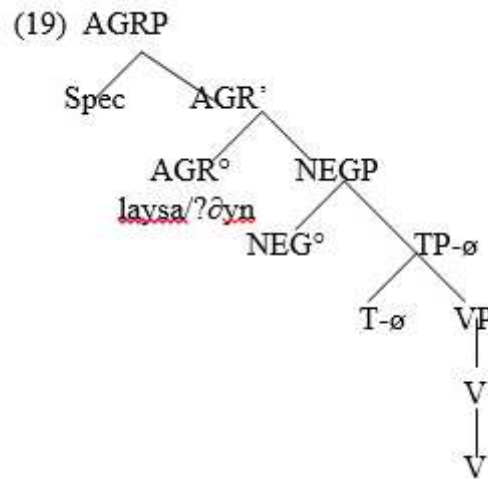
3.2.2 Spec-Head Agreement Mechanism:

Suppose that AGR is checked in Spec-head relation, and that this relation is checked in S-structure. This leads to suppose that the phrases which agree fully entertain a relation of Spec-head agreement, as depicted in the structure (18):



If the configuration (18) is theoretically valid, then it reflects that AGR between the DP subject and verb is satisfied only in SV order because it is the only way to allow DP subject to be apt to entertain Spec-head relation.

Our task, now, is to realize how to translate these affirmations into syntactic interpretations. In order to concretize these facts, we postulate the structure of sentences as in (19):



We start with scrutinizing nature of ?*dyn*. Relying on the facts of Hebrew cited above, Ur Shlonsky (1997) notes that ?*dyn* shows up only in present tense, with verbal and nominal predicates. He notes that this particle can carry AGR-features:

- (20) - a ?*dyn* Tal Kotev/ ha-more
 NEG Tal writes / the professor
 Tal doesn't write/ Tal isn't professor.
- b Tal ?*dyn*-o Kotev/ ha-more
 Tal NEG-3sgm writes/ the-professor
 Tal doesn't write/ Tal isn't professor.

The examples in (20) illustrate the fact that the DP subject must follow ?*dyn* if it does not carry AGR-features. Ur Shlonsky analyses this by saying that ?*dyn* occupies the head NEG° which is projected between TP and AGRP in D-structure. ?*dyn* is inflected exclusively for present, because in past and future the verb raises in higher position, notably AGR°; but, the verb in present and non-verbal predicates does not accede to this

position. The DP/NP subject can precede negation exclusively when it moves up to AGR° , a position where negation incorporates to AGR-features.

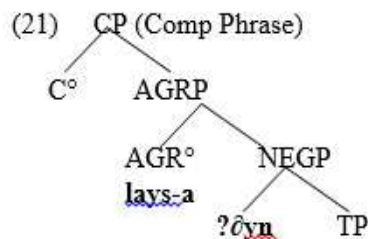
Ur Shlonsky's analysis is thrilling because it deals elegantly with syntax of $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$. However, the idea that tense is checked in AGR° is not persuasive. Hence, it is difficult to privilege this idea in a language which exhibit two alternative orders:

a - Subject- $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$.AGR

b - $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$ -Subject

If the verb checks its features of T and AGR (as supposed by Ur Shlonsky, (1997)), then what prevents the verb $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$ to check its features in (20-b) where $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$ raises to AGR° .

Contrary to what Ur Shlonsky pretends, the structure we propose projects C° node which dominates immediately AGR° , which in its turn, dominates NEG° . The representation (21) illustrates the order of these constituents:



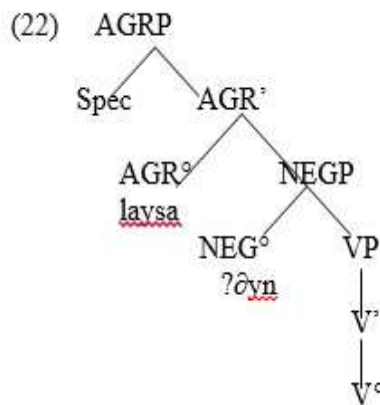
C° occupies the highest position within inflectional domain of negative verb. Given that $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$ occupies an intermediary position between the high position AGRP and the low position TP, then it is reasonable to assume that $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$ does not entertain a checking relation with T. The T node is supposed to be situated lower than NEGP in the configuration, as depicted in (21). Anticipating a little on our analysis, we can consider that $\text{?}\partial\text{yn}$

is a verb that does not possess a temporal specification [-T]. If negation is not specified for T, the NEGP projection validates its temporal interpretation from speech time, which is the present tense. Accordingly, we confirm that ?eyn is functionally related to C° by transiting via AGRP°.

With regard to AGR-feature that shows up on ?əyn, we suppose that its checking holds on Spec-AGR° configuration. The AGR-feature of laysa, by contrast, is intrinsic. In this perspective, Ouhalla (1993) writes that:

«It is possible to decompose laysa into a combination of distinct morphemes, one of which, i.e. -s-, is a kind of copula. The others are the subject agreement morphemes, which is at- ..., and the unmarked negation element laa.» p.278.

Inspiring from the citation of Ouhalla, we propose a configuration as in (22), where ?əyn and laysa occupies different positions:

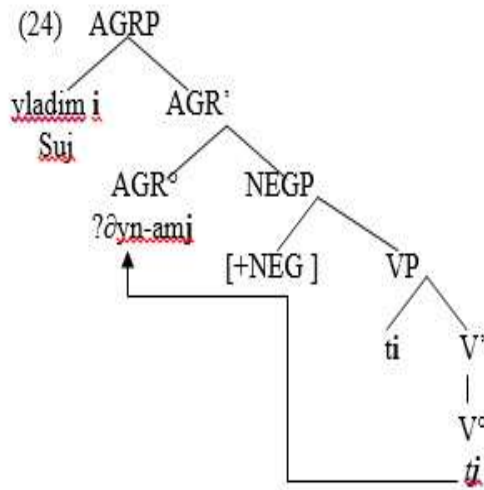


The structure, depicted in (22), supposes that Spec-head position is not always projected in S-structure: it is present in the case of [Subject-V] order, but absent or poor when V precedes the NP subject. Following the VP-internal Subject Hypothesis (cf. Kuroda, (1986)), Koopman and Spor-

tiche, (1988)), we suppose that the NP subject is basically generated in Spec-VP position.

²Spec-AGR° in (22) constitutes a potential site for movement of NP subject. The structure (22) offers two options of relation which can hold between the NP subject and negative verb. Hence, if we suppose that AGR is realized only under Spec-head relation, then the NP subject must raise overtly to Spec-AGRP, where the verb constitutes the head. The structure in (24) represents the case of (23):

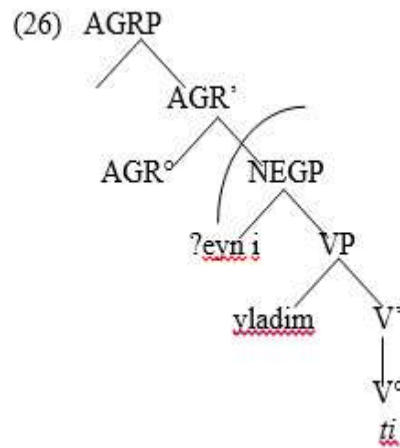
- (23) yladim ?əyn-am ba-gina
 boys NEG-3pl the-garden
 There aren't boys in the garden.



This case doesn't hold in constructions with [[?]eyn-Subject] word order. In Hebrew, AGR between the NP subject and the verb can't be realized:

- (25) ?ðyn yladim ba-gina
 NEG boys in the-gardin
 There aren't boys in the garden. .

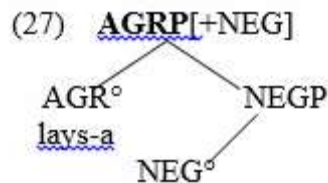
The accessible domain for ?ðyn movement in the [?ðyn-Subject] order is delimited by the bow in (26) below. The fact that ?ðyn is deprived of inflectional specification, notably AGR, would be then reduced to interaction between morphology and syntax. ?ðyn does not have intrinsic features of AGR and therefore does not need to check its features by moving up to AGR°.



Contrary to Arabic negative marker laysa, the inflectional paradigm of ?eyn is significantly impoverished. In fact, the form of laysa manifests gender [1sgm], whereas ?eyn does not manifest any morphological feature in lexicon.

Therefore, in Arabic, where the negative verb laysa raises overtly to AGR°, the negative verb ?ðyn does not undergo any movement. Laysa entertains a privileged relation with AGR features in the way a lexical verb does. We can suppose that movement of laysa towards AGR° ope-

rates to actualize such relation. If negation is inflected for AGR features in lexicon, it must raise to adjoin to AGR° . Also, it is plausible to affirm that *laysa* is basically generated in AGR° . The representation depicted in (27) illustrates this case:



To be precise and concise, the NEG-marker *laysa* behaves differently from the negative particle *?dyn*. In fact, *laysa* behaves as a copula in copulative constructions, since it carries AGR suffixes and assigns accusative Case to nominal or adjectival predicate.

The salient property of *laysa* is that it is bestowed with intrinsic AGR feature, notably GR, and hence must be associated to AGR° . To account for this, two possibilities are conceivable in this case (J. Moumni, (2008)).

The first possibility supposes that *laysa* is intrinsically associated to morphological AGR features and that these features are checked before any movement in syntax. The idea that the lexical entities are projected with their inflectional charge (Chomsky, (1995)) can support this hypothesis.

The second possibility would be to say that *laysa* is basically generated under AGRP, and that Spec-AGRP shelters an expletive « E » in Spec-head relation with AGR° . In this case, AGR features affixed to verb which agrees with the expletive in Spec- AGR° , exhibiting [+3sgm] feature.

Relying on the above examples, we suppose that a strong correlation exists between the position of NP-subject and negative verb. Given

the fact that NP subject occupies VP-internal position, and negation occupies the head of NEGP, we suppose that negative verb, in VSO order, raises overtly to AGR° to acquire AGR features via Spec-head relation with Spec-AGR. But, since Spec-AGRP isn't filled with overt NP subject, Spec-head relation can't be held, and then poor AGR is triggered on verb. However, this isn't likely the case in SVO, where the NP-subject moves up to Spec-AGR, a rich AGR has to be shown up on verb:

- (28) - a l-ʔawalad-u lays-uu masʔuul-iina (Arabic)
the-boys-nom NEG-3plm responsible-3plm-cc
The boys aren't responsible.
- b [NEGPlaysa] [SpecDP l-ʔawalad-u] masʔuul-iina
NEG the-boys-nom responsible-3plm-acc
The boys aren't responsables.
- (29) - a yladim ʔodyn-am ba-gina (Hebrew)
boyss NEG-3plm the-gardin
There aren't boys in the garden.
- b [NEGPʔodyn] [SpecDP yladim] ba-gina
NEG boys the-garden
Here aren't boys in the garden.

We therefore suggest that the presence or absence of AGR features in (28/29) is explained syntactically by the fact that AGR suffixes encoded in Spec-AGR can be checked only via Spec-head AGR with laysa /ʔodyn . The subject must occupy the initial position if AGR features are shown on negation; otherwise it must occupy the pos-verbal position.

4. Conclusion:

We have shown that Hebrew disposes two negative forms lo and ʔodyn. Lo is a canonical negative marker without intrinsic temporal value, and consequently, admits to combine with tensed verbs. On the other hand, ʔodyn, which resembles syntactically to laysa, is only employed with

present tense, with verbal and non-verbal predicates. Being intrinsically endowed with tense feature, *ʔəyn* and *laysa* convey present tense reading, and hence admit to construct exclusively with verbal and nominal constructions, exhibiting present interpretation.

Differently from the other negative markers, *ʔəyn* and *laysa* behave similarly to lexical verb in the sense that they display rich and poor AGR depending on VSO and SVO order. However, the NEG-marker *laysa* differs slightly from the negative particle *ʔəyn* since it carries an intrinsic AGR suffix and also assigns accusative Case to nominal or adjectival predicate. This leads us to suppose that both negative markers occupy two different positions in the syntactic structure: *ʔəyn* in NEGP and *laysa* in AGRP.

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