Wide-Scoping Bare Singulars and Reference to Kinds in Hebrew*

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss semantic aspects of bare singulars in Hebrew[1]. Previous research on the interpretation of bare noun phrases has been divided between the "Ambiguity Approach", which takes bare nominals to be ambiguous between a kind-referring and a weak-indefinite interpretation (Diesing, 1992), the "Kinds Approach" which considers all NPs as kind-referring (Carlson, 1977; Chierchia, 1998), and the idea that these nominals are neither kind-referring, nor indefinites (Krifka, 2003). In this paper I show that bare nominals in Hebrew can be both kind-referring and indefinites. Taking as a starting point Chierchia's (1998) proposal for a typological mapping of languages according to their flexibility in allowing bare nouns as arguments, I will be looking into the following puzzles. First, Hebrew seems problematic for Chierchia's (1998) Blocking Principle since it makes use of both a covert type-shifter and a lexicalized definite marker. Second, in Hebrew, bare singulars can refer to kinds without being definite from different syntactic positions, while other languages allow, for example, bare reference to kinds only for bare plurals, as is the case for English. According to Chierchia's system, the prediction for the utterance in (1) would be that the definite article should be obligatory for kind-reference. This prediction is not borne out in Hebrew where this article is optional.

(1) *(ha)namer* hitpate'ax me *(ha)xatul* [Hebrew]
(the) tiger developed from (the) cat
'The tiger evolved from the cat.'

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[1] Hebrew is an SVO language, with relatively free word order. It lacks an indefinite article, but does have a definite marker – *ha-* 'the'.

A third and final puzzle for this paper concerns the observation that, in Hebrew, bare singulars in object position can behave like indefinites and take wide scope relative to the VP. Bare NPs have been previously noted as having a clear preference for narrow scope. In particular in languages lacking the indefinite article, bare NPs seem unable to obtain wide scope interpretations. Hebrew, however, does allow a wide scope reading for bare singulars, in certain contexts. This type of problematic data is illustrated in examples (2) versus (3) and shows the difference between the interpretations of a bare plural noun phrase in comparison with a bare singular noun phrase in this language.

(2) Dani roče lifgoš *kohav-$_{SG}$ kolnoa*. [∃ > VP / VP > ∃]
Dani wants to-meet star cinema
'Dani wants to meet a movie star.'

(3) Dani roče lifgoš *kohvei-$_{PL}$ kolnoa*. [VP > ∃]
Dani wants to-meet stars cinema
'Dani wants to meet movie stars.'

In example (2) the bare singular noun phrase 'movie star' can take both wide and narrow scope relative to the VP, unlike the bare plural in (3), which can only be interpreted with narrow scope. Under the narrow scope (non-specific) interpretation, the bare singular NP can be seen as kind-referring, while under the specific interpretation – there is a movie star *x*, such that Dani wants to meet *x*, the bare NP parallels the behavior of the English singular indefinite. Thus, it seems that bare nouns in Hebrew are interpretable as kind-referring and as indefinites, specific and non-specific.

My proposal is that nouns in Hebrew are kind denoting and that they start out as type <e>. In episodic contexts, the existential reading of bare noun phrases can be accounted for through Chierchia's Derived Kind Predication rule (to be explained below). The generic interpretation of kind-referring bare singulars is obtained via a generic (Gn) operator. As indefinites, bare singulars are interpretable via choice functions, with either local or wide scope relative to the VP.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 summarizes the main theoretical approaches that form the basis of the analysis to be proposed here - Chierchia (1998) and Doron (2003). Section 3 presents the data. Section 4 gives a syntax-semantics account of these data in view of Chierchia's (1998) proposal. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Previous studies

Two studies are of immediate relevance to this work: Chierchia's (1998) approach to kinds and Doron's (2003) account of kind-reference in Hebrew. These accounts are briefly summarized below.

2.1 A Neocarlsonian Approach

Chierchia (1998) proposes a Neocarlsonian account according to which nouns are kind-referring, and which distinguishes between object- vs. kind-selecting predicates. One such case is shown in (4a) where an object-selecting predicate interacts with a kind-referring noun phrase giving rise to an apparent type-mismatch problem. In order to resolve this type-mismatch, Chierchia introduces the Derived Kind Predication rule, in (5). This rule applies whenever an object-level argument slot in a predicate is filled by a kind (in an episodic frame). The type of the predicate will be automatically adjusted by introducing existential quantification over instances of the kind, as in (4b) (Chierchia, 1998:364).

(4) a. That kind of animal is ruining my garden.

b. $\exists x[^{\cup}$that kind of animal(x) $\wedge$ ruin my garden(x)]

(5) *If P applies to objects and k denotes a kind, then P(k) = $\exists x[^{\cup}k(x) \wedge P(x)]$* (Chierchia, 1998:364)

However, the main part of Chierchia's system is concerned with the typological mapping of languages according to their flexibility in allowing bare nouns as arguments by using a set of binary features [± argument, ±predicate]. Applied to Hebrew, where bare nouns are allowed as arguments, the Nominal Mapping Parameter (henceforth, NMP) maps this language to [+arg, +pred], in the same group, in this typology, as Germanic and Slavic languages. This means that noun phrases in these languages denote either kinds or predicates and their phrasal projections can shift between argumental and predicative ($NP_{pred} \Leftrightarrow DP_{kind}$). This is achieved through a system of type shifting operators in the following way: if a noun is argumental, it can be predicativized via the 'up' operator $^{\cup}$

[<e> → <e,t>]; as predicates, count nouns are shifted via the 'down' operator $^{\cap}$ to argumental [<e,t> → <e>]. In turn, these type shifts are constrained by the blocking principle defined in (6):

(6) *The Blocking Principle (Type Shifting as Last Resort)*: *For any type shifting operation τ and any X: *τ(X) if there is a determiner D such that for any set X in its domain, D(X) = τ(X)* (Chierchia, 1998:360)

This principle asserts that if a language has an overt means of expressing type shift, such as a lexical item/determiner, the language has to use it before resorting to covert type-shift. Hebrew seems to pose a problem for this principle. According to Chierchia, if a language has a definite determiner, then it must be used with bare singulars when referring to kinds. This does not work in Hebrew where the definite marker is optional for kind-reference, as seen in (1). In the case of Hebrew, an account which stays mostly within the boundaries of Chierchia's system has been proposed by Doron (2003), summarized below.

2.2 The NMP and Semantic Incorporation

In her account of kind-reference in Hebrew, Doron (2003) proposes that the above mentioned problem could still find a semantic solution within Chierchia's system, with some adjustments, such as resorting to semantic incorporation and thus making Derived Kind Predication redundant/ unnecessary. Doron states that kind-reference in Hebrew is dependent on the bare noun being either plural, or a categorical subject (marked by movement to the left-periphery, or by contrastive focus intonation) and interpreted as definite, e.g. *maxšev* 'computer', in the example below.

(7) a. babej himci maxšev
Babbage invented computer
not 'Babbage invented the computer.' * kind

b. maxšev babej himci
computer Babbage invented
not 'Babbage invented the computer.' √ kind
(Doron, 2003:12)

In the next section, I point out data that cannot be explained under these assumptions. I will also depart from Doron's analysis in suggesting that what is crucial for my proposal is that the kind interpretation depends first of all on predicate type and context. I suggest that a semantic incorporation mechanism is not needed, and a solution that explains the Hebrew data can be found by working within Chierchia's system.

The following questions are addressed by this paper – first, how to reconcile the optionality of the lexicalized definite determiner in Hebrew with the requirement of the blocking principle, and second, to what extent the type of predicate (kind- vs. object selecting) plays a role in the distribution of bare singulars in this language. In analyzing the Hebrew data, I focus on bare singulars and I distinguish between (bare) singular nouns in subject vs. object position.

3. The distribution of singular nouns in Hebrew

In Hebrew, bare nouns are allowed as internal and external verbal arguments, with both kind- and object-selecting predicates. However, some contexts select only for the kind interpretation of the verbal arguments (8), while other contexts are less restrictive (9):

(8) *xatul* nir'a kmo *namer*. √ kind # obj
cat looks like tiger
'The cat resembles the tiger.'
[kind hunting kind; or the instantiation in (9) below]

(9) b-a-tmuna efšar lirot *xatul* čad *axbar*. √ kind √ obj
in-the-picture possible to-see cat hunt mouse
'In the picture, we can see a cat hunting a mouse.'
[if definite, only object reading]

In the context in (8), a predicate such as '*x* resembles/looks like *y*' seems to require a *kind* complement, and accordingly, both the subject and the object nouns are kind-referring rather than object-referring. In contrast, a predicate such as '*x* sees *y*' in (9) seems to be more flexible in that it allows for both kind and object readings of its arguments.

3.1. Bare vs. definite reference to kinds in subject position

The subject position in Hebrew is associated with the pronominal copula clitic *hu/hi* 'he/she (is)'. For kind-reference, this clitic is (almost always [see (12)]) obligatory in the absence of the definite determiner (10), and optional in its presence (11). With kind-selecting predicates, such as 'be rare' and 'be common', bare and definite nouns can only receive a kind interpretation:

(10) *namer* hu haya nedira. √ kind
tiger he animal rare
'The tiger is a rare animal.'

(11) *ha-namer* (hu) haya nedira. √ kind
the-tiger (he) animal rare
'The tiger is a rare animal.'

√ kind

(12) *dvora xuma* nefoča mi kav ha-roxav
bee brown common from line (of) the-latitude
šel yam ha-melax daroma.
of sea (of) the-salt southwards
'The brown bee is common from the Dead Sea southward.'
(Doron, 2003:2)

With object-selecting predicates, (i) in episodic contexts, we find both kind- and object readings of bare/definite singulars. The bare noun 'dog' in (13) can be interpreted as either a non-specific indefinite or as referring to an instance of the 'dog kind', while the definite noun in (14) can be interpreted as either referring to the 'dog kind' or as introducing a new discourse referent, e.g. Fido.

(13) *kelev* noveax. √ kind √ obj
dog barks
'A dog is barking'; 'Usually, a dog barks (= Dogs bark)'

(14) *ha-kelev* noveax. √ kind √ obj
the-dog barks
'The dog barks/is barking.' (= Dogs bark)

And (ii), in generic contexts, bare singular nouns in Hebrew can denote both singular and plural (group) instances of the kind. This is best illustrated in (15) where the bare noun can point to the group (the 'lion' as a species), and also to one instance of this kind (i.e., there is one tiger that is hunting as we speak). In addition, example (16) shows that unlike in English where a singular noun has to be definite in order to achieve the 'group' reading, in Hebrew, the definite marker is optional. The fact that the predicate in (16) does not allow an object interpretation of its complement, while (15) does allow it, is once more due to the flexibility and the requirements of specific predicates and their respective contexts. In (16) we have a situation that coerces the utterance into referring or pointing out a specific trait of a certain species, while (15) is ambiguous in this respect, as it can be both about traits and about present happenings.

(15) *namer* čad le-or yareax. √ kind √ obj
tiger hunts to-light moon
'The/A tiger hunts in the moonlight.'

√ kind # obj

(16) *(ha)namer* mit'asef leyad mekorot maim b-a-erev.
(the) tiger gathers near sources water in-the-evening
'The tiger gathers near water sources in the evening.'
(example from Doron, 2003:10)

The picture that emerges from these data is that in Hebrew the definite article does not seem to be a necessary condition for kind reference, especially in contexts that select for kind-referring nouns in the first place. This can be interpreted as evidence in favor of a type <e> approach to nouns in Hebrew (to be elaborated in section 4).

There are, however, some problematic examples with respect to the optionality of the definite marker. In the contexts illustrated below, the definite marker is obligatory for kind reference in the subject position. This observation is important on two fronts. First, so far we have only seen data where the definite marker was optional (this, in object position), and second, this shows an asymmetry between bare nouns in the subject- vs. the object position, since the definite marker seems to be obligatory for kind-reference only in the subject position, regardless, it seems, of predicate type.

(17) *ha-axbar* higiya le-ostralia be-1770. √ **kind** ? obj
the-rat reached to-Australia in-1770
'The rat reached Australia in 1770.'

(18) *axbar* higiya le-ostralia be-1770. **# kind** √ obj
rat reached to-Australia in-1770
'A rat reached Australia in 1770.'

In (17), for the kind interpretation, the assumption is that the definite marker *ha-* functions as a massifying function[2] which points to the 'rat species' as a whole, while the object reading is only possible if the noun refers back to a specific rat, perhaps from a story. In (18), the bare noun can only refer to objects and, unexpectedly, its kind reading is unavailable. A plausible explanation for these apparently contradictory data has to do with the fact that we are dealing in this case with a predicate ('reached Australia') which selects for objects, rather than kinds, differently from predicates that are either strictly kind-selecting ('be extinct', 'be rare') or from predicates that are more flexible in their requirements ('bark'). These data can be explained within Chierchia's system by allowing for the bare noun in (18) to be sort-shifted to a property type - $reached(^{\cup}rat)$. Since there is no definite determiner to type-shift it to kinds, the bare noun in this case cannot refer to kinds. This outcome conforms to Chierchia's type-shifting and interpretation system.

In the next section, we turn to the data in object position in order to explore the effects of the interaction between syntactic position, type of predicate and definiteness (or lack thereof).

3.2. Bare vs. definite reference to kinds in object position

With object-selecting predicates, bare singulars in Hebrew can refer to kinds, in (19), while definite singulars, in (20), cannot.

(19) Raiti *namer* [non-specific indefinite] √ kind √ obj
I-saw tiger
'I saw a tiger.'

[2] Chierchia, 1998:381.

(20) Raiti et *ha-namer* √ obj # kind
i-saw ACC the-tiger
'I saw the tiger.'

The bare singular in (19) can receive both a kind- and an object interpretation. A scenario for the kind reading would be, for example, that at a zoo, three kinds of animals were seen – a tiger, a crocodile and a zebra. The object reading would come about if someone has seen one tiger at the zoo, but cannot be sure if this is the tiger named Joe, or some other tiger. In contrast, in (20) where the definite marker is used, only the object (specific) reading seems to be available.

Once again, it seems that kind-reference in Hebrew is 'determined' by predicate type and its flexibility in selecting for kinds or for objects. It is also apparent that the optionality of the definite marker in Hebrew is constrained by factors such as syntactic position.

If we look at kind-selecting predicates such as 'create' and 'invent', they clearly show that both bare and definite singulars in Hebrew can refer to kinds, regardless of the presence or absence of the definite marker.

√ obj √ kind

(21) Elohim bara *tanin* / et *ha-tanin*
God created crocodile / ACC the-crocodile
b-a-yom ha-xamiši.
on-the-day the-fifth
'God made/created the crocodile on the fifth day.' (example from Doron, 2003:12)[3]

(22) Bell himči *telefon* / et *ha-telefon*. √ obj √ kind
Bell invented telephone / ACC the-telephone
'Bell invented the telephone.'

The effect of the type of predicates and their flexibility in lending themselves to kind readings, object readings or both is also shown in (23) to (25) below, which confirm that bare singular reference to kinds is sometimes restricted, especially in episodic sentences such as (25).

[3] These judgements differ from Doron's (2003) where the bare singular (in these examples) is not kind-referring unless preposed/in categorical subject position and/or with contrastive focus intonation.

(23) Leo roče *xatul* ve *kelev*. √ kind √ obj
Leo wants cat and dog
'Leo wants a cat and a dog.'

(24) bi-ršima zo nixlalim *lutra*, *namer* √ kind √ obj
in-list this are-included otter, tiger,
xatul xolot ve kama miney *leta'ot*.
cat (of) sands and several species (of) lizards
'This list includes the otter, the tiger, the sand cat and several species of lizards.' (*Ha'aretz* Newspaper, 6.3.2003 – from Doron, 2003:2)

(25) Leo biker *xaver*. # kind √ obj
Leo visited friend
'Leo visited a friend.'

To sum up, while in Chierchia's (1998) system singular nouns cannot refer to kinds without being definite (singular properties cannot be shifted to kinds by the nominalization operator), bare singular nouns in Hebrew can be kind-referring without being (marked as) definite. The data show that bare singulars in this language are interpretable as kind-referring and/or as non-specific/specific indefinites, depending on the type of predicate. The next section sketches a syntax-semantics interface analysis of bare singulars in Hebrew.

4. The syntax-semantics of bare singulars in Hebrew

We have seen so far that Hebrew differs from languages discussed by Chierchia, for example Italian or French, in that its singular bare nouns do allow kind-reference. In this paper, I argue that a syntax-semantics analysis of bare singulars in Hebrew is possible within the boundaries of Chierchia's (1998) system. The assumption here is that bare singulars in Hebrew are kind-referring noun phrases which start out as type <e>. The system will work for Hebrew in the following way. Since a bare singular noun is kind-referring (type <e>), this means that in the subject position of kind-selecting predicates there will be no type mismatch problem. If, however, a noun is marked for definiteness, it will have to shift via the 'up' operator to a property <e,t> type. This property then combines with

the definite determiner in the following way: *the*($^{\cup}$*dog*). Now, in the subject position of object-selecting predicates, the generic (Gn) operator is introduced for the 'kind' reading, while the object reading is obtained from existential closure via Derived Kind Predication. These interpretation options are shown in (26).

(26) *Kelev* noveax. 'Dog barks.'
  (a) Kind reading: bark(dog)
  (b) Generic reading: Gn($^{\cup}$dog)(bark)
  i.e., it is generally the case that if something is a dog, it barks.
  (c) Existential reading (via DKP): $\exists x[^{\cup}\text{dog}(x) \,\&\, \text{bark}(x)]$
  i.e., there is something which is a dog and barks.

Recall the problematic examples, repeated below, involving the non-optionality of the definite marker for kind-reference. This was the case in the subject position of object-selecting verbs. Contrary to our initial prediction, in the subject position in (27), the bare singular cannot refer to kinds, while in (28), for the kind-reference, the noun is marked for definiteness. According to the present approach, the predicate *reached Australia* is not flexible in the sense that it requires an object denoting argument, yet it receives a kind. The type mismatch is resolved through covert type-shift via the 'up' operator – *reached Australia*($^{\cup}$*rat)*, where the noun is type-shifted from an <e> type to an <e,t> type, i.e., from an argument to a property, which becomes the only option in the case of (27). The existential reading of *rat* is derived via the DKP.

(27) *axbar* higiya le-ostralia be-1770. # **kind** √ obj
  rat reached to-Australia in-1770
  'A rat reached Australia in 1770.'

For the kind-reference in (28), the definite determiner introduces a massifying function[4] so that *the rat* refers to the group rather than its instances.

[4] Chierchia, 1998:381.

(28) *ha-axbar* higiya le-ostralia be-1770. √ **kind** √ obj
the-rat reached to-Australia in-1770
'The rat reached Australia in 1770.'

Now, in the object position of object-selecting verbs, shown in (29), the bare singular *xaver* 'friend' is sort-shifted to a property via the 'up' operator – *biker(∪xaver)*. The bare singular receives a non-specific indefinite interpretation via DKP. By applying the derived kind predication rule, we derive the existential interpretation for properties, which also accounts for their narrow scope.

(29) Leo biker *xaver*.
Leo visited friend
'Leo visited a friend.'

Finally, in the object position of kind-selecting verbs, illustrated in (30), since bare singulars are argumental, there is no type mismatch.

(30) Bell himči *telefon* / et *ha-telefon*. [kind-referring]
Bell invented telephone / ACC the-telephone
'Bell invented the telephone.'

When the NP is definite, the noun is sort-shifted to an <e,t> type via the 'up' operator $^{\cup}$, and it then combines with the definite determiner resulting in an <e> type argument ranging over kinds.

So far, by staying within Chierchia's system, we have been able to explain the first two puzzles that concerned us in relation to the interpretation of bare singular noun phrases in Hebrew, their distribution and definiteness effects. Moving on to the third and final puzzle, another difference between Hebrew and languages discussed or mentioned in Chierchia (1998) has to do with the unexpected cases where bare singulars are interpretable as specific indefinites, with wide scope. This is true for object indefinites, but not necessarily for subject indefinites. For specificity in indefinites in other languages, choice functions have been proposed before (Kratzer 1998, 2003, Matthewson 1999, Reinhart 1997, Winter 1997, among others). I suggest that the bare nouns in Hebrew indeed receive their wide scope interpretation via a choice function. This function picks an individual out of a set and existentially closes at the sentence level thus giving us the desired reading. The fact that this reading

is not usually available for bare singulars in subject position is left for future research. Some examples are given below.

(31) Dani mexapes *kelev*. [∃ > VP / VP > ∃]
Dani is-looking-for dog
'Dani is looking for a/any dog.' [∃ > VP / VP > ∃]

(32) Dani mexapes *ish* she-mekaseax et ha-deshe kol yom.
Dani is-looking-for man that-maws ACC the-lawn every day
'Dani is looking for a/any guy that maws the lawn every day.'

(33) Dani mexapes et *ha-kelev*. [∃ > VP]
Dani is-looking-for ACC the-dog
'Dani is looking for the dog.'

(34) *kelev* noveax ba-dira leyad. [VP > ∃]
dog barks in-the-apt next-to
'A/some dog barks in the apt. next door.' [∃ > VP / VP > ∃]

In (31) and (32), the bare singular NPs *kelev* 'dog' and *ish* 'man', respectively, can take both wide scope (as specific indefinites) and narrow scope (as non-specific indefinites) relative to the VP. The definite singular in (33) only has a wide scope interpretation – e.g. Dani is looking for Fido, while the bare singular in the subject position of (34) unexpectedly receives only narrow scope, in contrast with the English indefinite which can take both scope options.

In the case of Hebrew, a solution involving choice functions is also motivated by the assumption that bare nouns in Hebrew are NPs[5], rather than DPs (which is generally the case in languages that have an indefinite determiner). Since only DPs can usually be moved through existential quantification to receive the wide scope reading, a choice function would derive the wide scope interpretation while the NP remains in situ, as desired.

[5] For a detailed syntactic analysis of Hebrew noun phrases see Danon's work, referenced here.

5. Summary

The conclusion of this paper is that Hebrew works within Chierchia's (1998) typology as a [+argument, +predicate] language. The initial concern regarding the Blocking Principle seems not to be borne out since Hebrew uses either the covert 'up' operator for type-shifting nouns from argumental <e> to predicative <e,t>, or an overt type-shifter, the definite determiner, to switch from predicative to argumental. This explains why the definite determiner in Hebrew does not block the occurrence of kind-referring bare nouns. The emerging paradigm is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: The use of the definite determiner for kind-reference in Hebrew

With kind-selecting verbs
Optional definite determiner *1. (ha)dinozaur nikxad* *(the)dinosaur extinct* *'(The)Dinosaur is extinct.'*
Optional definite determiner *2. Bell himči (et ha-)telefon* *Bell invented (ACC the-)telephone* *'Bell invented the telephone.'*
With object-selecting verbs
Obligatory definite determiner *3. ha-kelev noveax* *the-dog barks* *'The dog barks.'* *→ property of the 'dog'-kind*
No definite determiner for kind-reference *4. raiti namer* **vs.** *raiti et **ha**-namer* *saw$_{1sg}$ tiger* *saw$_{1sg}$ ACC the-tiger* *'I saw a tiger.'* → √kind *'I saw the tiger.'* → # kind √obj.

I conclude that bare singulars in Hebrew start out as kind-referring and are interpretable as follows. First, as kind-referring in generic contexts, they are interpreted through a generic operator. Second, as non-specific indefinites their existential meaning comes about via the application of the Derived Kind Predication rule. Lastly, as specific indefinites, their meaning is selected via a choice function. Encompassing all this, the type of predicate, kind- vs. object-selecting, plays a crucial role in the distribution of kind-referring bare singulars in Hebrew.

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