Modern Hebrew in transit: the shift from a V-framed to an S-framed profile
Malka Rappaport Hovav (HUJI)

Talmy (1985) and Berman and Slobin (1994) classify Modern Hebrew as a V-framed language. Doron and Dubnov (2017) classify Biblical Hebrew as V-framed and suggest that Modern Hebrew shows certain characteristics of S-framedness. Henkin (1998) suggests that MH shows both S-framed and V-framed characteristics, but that the rhetorical profile remains predominantly V-framed. This talk looks more deeply at the status of both BH and MH in light of theories about the factors in the grammar of languages which give rise to the typological profiles. Explicit theories of these factors should predict which properties cluster together in languages of different kinds, and concomitantly change together when a shift in typological profile occurs. The shift from V- to S-framedness in Hebrew is the mirror-image of the shift documented from Latin (S-framed) to the Romance languages (all V-framed). I examine whether the same cluster of properties which changed together in the latter shift did so in the former as well. The result can shed light on what property of the grammar changed. Finally, I explore what factors triggered the change.

Studies of the grammatical factors underlying the typology distinguish between lexical and compositional factors. Lexically, V-framed languages typically have small manner-verb vocabularies and lack articulated directional satellites; locative complements may be interpreted directionally only in the context of verbs encoding direction. S-framed languages (Latin, English, Finnish) have an articulated locational-directional distinction. Compositionally, V-framed languages do not allow directionals to compose directly with verbs which do not select directional complements. If one assumes that manner verbs do not select directional phrases (cf. Rappaport Hovav and Levin's 2010 manner/result complementarity) having directional phrases is not sufficient to allow manner verbs to appear with directional complements; a compositional mechanism is needed to allow manner verbs to compose with directional phrases (Acedo-Matellán and Mateu 2013, Zubizarreta and Oh 2007, Snyder 2012). Acedo-Matellán and Mateu take an argument-structure augmenting mechanism to be the core of the V-vs. S-framed distinction and argue that the availability of this mechanism should give rise to a variety of constructions involving non-subcategorized complements. They document a range of such structures which were available in Latin and which disappeared in the Romance languages.

I show that BH did not possess an articulated direction-location satellite distinction. I show that both ṭel (typically translated as 'to' or 'towards') and what has been taken to be the directional suffix -3 (ה-3) have a basic locative meaning (1-3) and receive a directional interpretation only in the context of verbs which encode direction (4). Conversely, clear manner of motion verbs in BH do not appear with complements or adjuncts with directional meaning. Mishnaic Hebrew developed a strategy for combining manner and direction in the same clause with the development of a productive process forming derived nominals (5). This structure is still V-framed.

MH is developing a more systematic direction/location contrast, with ~a (the MH counterpart of BH -3) being systematically directional (6,7; see also Henkin 1998). ṭel has lost all its locative uses and is only directional in MH. The manner
vocabulary is expanding somewhat. Moreover, a wide variety of manner verbs appear with non-selected directional phrases (8). If directional phrases can combine with manner verbs only with an argument-structure-augmenting process, we expect MH to develop other constructions with non-subcategorized complements. I show that MH has developed two constructional idioms with non-subcategorized complements. The objects in (9, 10) are both non-subcategorized. However, one finds the construction in (9) without reflexives as well (11). More recently, non-subcategorized complements not tied to a constructional idiom have been documented (12). The S-framed pattern in (8) is becoming frequent than the V-framed pattern in (5).

Historically speaking, phrases such as ha-huca – ‘outside.dir’ appeared with stative and manner verbs early in the Revival period and developed under influence of contact with Russian and Yiddish. The constructional idioms with non-subcategorized complements appear only in the last few decades and seem to have developed under the influence of English. Thus while Hebrew does seem to show the mirror-image of the change from Latin to Romance the theory should be able to allow for a multi-layered process. What distinguishes the earlier from the later changes in Hebrew is that the former do not need a mechanism for case assignment across a SC boundary will the latter do. I suggest then that the two stage process was (i) the introduction of an argument-structure augmenting process and (ii) the introduction of a mechanism for case assignment across a SC boundary.

References