

## **Evidentiality (Modern Hebrew)**

Evidentiality is a category that indicates the speaker's source of information bringing her to utter the underlying proposition, and by doing this establish the reliability of the propositional content (Chafe & Nichols 1986). Cross-linguistically, the category is marked in quite a wide array of linguistic means (Willett 1988, Palmer 2001). Authors point to a correlation between grammaticalization of the category and the oral / written divide: oral languages tend to have dedicated morphemes or grammatical forms for expressing the category, while written languages tend to make more use of adverbial expressions, parenthetical and embedding under perception and mental verbs (cf. Cinque 1999, Rooryck 2001). Generally speaking, languages make a distinction between evidential markers for direct or indirect evidence to the underlying proposition (Willett 1988, Palmer 2001), where direct evidence is obtained via sensory means and indirect evidence depends either on report or reasoning inference. However, there is no overall agreement on how exactly to delimit the category and define it semantically in a uniform manner.

Modern Hebrew does not have dedicated morphemes that mark evidentiality. This meaning can be expressed by completive clauses, parentheticals and adverbial expressions, exemplified in what follows, each in its turn.

(1) a. *raʔi-ti*      *še-ha-yeladim*      *ʔaxl-u*      *šohorayim*  
 saw-1SG      that-the-children      ate-3PL      lunch  
 ‘I saw that the children ate lunch.’

b. *raʔi-ti*      *ʔet ha-yeladim*      *ʔoxl-im*      *šohorayim*  
 saw-1SG      OM the-children      eat-M.PL      lunch  
 ‘I saw the children eat lunch.’

(1a), which presents a full embedded finite clause under a perception verb, differs considerably from (1b), where the embedded clause is dependent on the time of the main clause. The former conveys that the speaker has indirect evidence for the underlying proposition, while in the latter the speaker is understood to be a direct witness to the happening.

Adding a parenthetical to a given sentence is a different means compared to complementation:

- (2) a. *hu hifsid 'et kol kasp-o, 'ani xošev*  
 he lost.3SG.M OM all money-his, I think.M.SG  
 'He lost all his money, I think.'
- b. *hu hifsid 'et kol kasp-o, kax 'omr-im*  
 he lost.3SG.M OM all money-his, so say-M.PL  
 'He lost all his money, so they say.'

In these examples, the parenthetical contributes the meaning that the speaker is not a direct witness to the information asserted in the proposition, hence the uncertainty about its content. Note that contrary to complementation, the content of the verb in the parenthetical is impoverished: in (2a) the parenthetical expresses a reservation not a conviction, in (2b) no actual saying has to occur in order for the sentence to be true, the speaker may have learned the alleged information by reading a newspaper (see Rooryck 2001 for a presentation of the discussion on the assimilation of parentheticals to adverbial expressions rather than to complementation).

Adverbials related to the expressions of evidentiality may be subsumed under parentheticals, for instance:

- (3) ...*le-ṭa'anato*,      *be'iqvot*      *ha-'eru'im*,  
 ...to-claim-his,      following      the-events,  
*ne'elaṣ*      *la'avor*      *ṣintur*      *be-gil 36*  
 was.forced.3SG.M      to.undergo      catheterization      at-age 36
- ‘According to what he claims, following the events, he was forced to undergo a cardiac catheterization at the age of 36.’      (Ynet 2006)

In this example, the adverbial expression conveys that the information provided is not to be entirely reliable given its source. This expression can be considered to be a parenthetical since it may be intonationally independent, as the comas in the example suggest.

The adverb *lix'ora*, roughly translatable as ‘allegedly’, deserves special attention in the context of evidentiality. The origins of the adverb are in the *Mishnaic* language; in Modern Hebrew, it is encountered to a growing extent in the language of the media and in juridical texts.

- (4) a.      *'eli rayfman*      *'aqas*      *lix'ora*      *'et 'iš ha-‘asaqim*  
 Eli Reifman      stung.3SG.M      allegedly      OM man the-business  
*'asaf barazani*  
 Assaf Barazani

‘Eli Reifman allegedly stung the business man Assaf Barazani.’

(Haaretz 2009)

b. *šomer ha-saf*      *ma‘al*      *lix’ora*      *be-’emun ha-šibur*  
keeper the-gate      embezzled      allegedly      in-trust the-  
public

‘The gate keeper allegedly embezzled the public’s trust.’

(glz-online 2010)

By using the adverb, the writer (or speaker) wishes not to commit herself to the truth of the reported facts or happenings. This use of the adverb can be paralleled to the use made in some Romance languages of the past conditional form:

(5) *Le Tupolev 154, qui tentait d’atterrir,*

The Tupolev 154, who tried to land,

*aurait accroché des arbres,*

have.cond.past.3sg entangled the trees,

*avant de s’écraser et de prendre feu.*

before crashing and taking fire.

‘The Tupolve 154, who tried to land, seemingly got entangled in the trees before crashing and burning.’ (Google)

The adverb has been described by Livnat (1994) as a speaker-oriented adverb that is used to negate the truthfulness of the underlying proposition in a situation where the speaker knows that the proposition is false while someone else might think that it is true. This is one of the examples provided by her:

(6) *ha-makom hu, lix'ora, mošava romantit bi-tqufat ha-mandaṭ,*  
 The-place is, seemingly, colony romantic in-time the-Mandate  
*ʔaval lema'ase zo tmuna šel gehenom 'aley ʔadamot*  
 but actually this picture of hell upon earth

‘The place is, on the face of it, a romantic colony during the British Mandate, but actually this is a picture of hell on earth.’

(Livnat 1994, p. 102)

The conjoined clause puts in opposition the contrasting value for the described situation; here is an additional example with a verbal predicate.

(7) *lix'ora hifsade-ti la-xen, lema'ase nišx-ti*  
 seemingly lost-1SG to-you, actually won-1SG



speaker wants to convey uncertainty, clearly show that this description of the adverb *lix'ora* should either be enlarged to include the evidential use exemplified above, or altered.

## References

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