Stative (iii) Modern Hebrew

Edit Doron (to appear in the Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics, Brill)

The stative-dynamic contrast is one of the aspectual distinctions among verbs. Stative verbs denote situations which involve neither agentivity nor change over time (Vendler 1957, Dowty 1979). Distinguishing stative from dynamic verbs is complicated by the fact that some stative verbs can also be interpreted as inchoative or agentive, i.e., as non-stative. Examples are כעס *kaʿas* 'be angry' (also inchoative 'get angry'), הפריע *hifriaʿ* 'disturb' (also agentive), רכב *raxav* 'ride' (also agentive); the stative "be in a riding position" interpretation of the latter is illustrated in the sentence הבניין החדש רוכב על בסיס הישן *ha-binyan ha-xadaš roxev ʿal bsis ha-yašan* 'the new building rides on top of the old one'.

Stative verbs are derived in all *binyanim*. Listed below are some classes of Modern Hebrew stative verbs, starting with mental verbs and spatial verbs, which denote parallel relations in two different domains, and continuing with various other classes of verbs.

(1)   Mental verbs

   a   Mental position

אהב *ʾahav* 'love', קינא *qine* 'be jealous', כיבד *kibed* 'respect', ידע *yadaʿ* 'know', חשב *xašav* 'think', האמין *heʾemin* 'believe', פחד *paxad* 'fear', בטח *baṭax* 'be secure', כאב *kaʾav* 'ache', נכסף *nixsaf* 'yearn'

   b   Mental effect

משך *mašax* 'attract', דחה *daxa* 'repel', ריתק *riteq* 'fascinate', העיק *heʿiq* 'burden', הכביד *hixbid* 'weigh', קשה *qaša* 'be difficutl', נעם *naʿam* 'please', שעמם *šiʿamem* 'bore'

(2)   Spatial verbs

   a   Spatial position

ישב *yašav* 'sit', עמד *ʿamad* 'stand', שכב *šaxav* 'lie', תלה *tala* 'hang', שכן *šaxan* 'dwell', שרר *sarar* 'prevail', השתרע *histareaʿ* 'extend', התנוסס *hitnoses* 'be on display', התנשא *hitnase* 'rise', בלט *balaṭ* 'be prominent', חי *xay* 'live', נכח *naxax* 'be present', שהה *šaha* 'spend time'

   b   Spatial effect

חסם *xasam* 'block', חיבר *xiber* 'connect', חצה *xaṣa* 'cross', השלים *hišlim* 'complete', הקיף *hiqif* 'surround', עטף *ʿataf* 'wrap', מילא *mile* 'fill', גדש *gadaš* 'stuff', כלל *kalal* 'include', גבל *gaval* 'border', חלש *xalaš* 'control', תמך *tamax* 'support'

(3)   Comparison verbs

עלה על *ʿala ʿal* 'surpass', נפל מ- *nafal me-* 'be inferior to', קדם *qadam* 'precede', דמה *dama* 'resemble', נבדל *nivdal* 'differ', השתווה *hištava* 'equal'

(4)   Measure verbs

עלה *ʿala* 'cost', שקל *šaqal* 'weigh', ארך *ʾarax* 'last'

(5)   Constitutive verbs

מלך *malax* 'rule', שלט *šalaṭ* 'govern', כיכב *kixev* 'star', שימש *šimeš* 'serve', פאר *peʾer* 'glorify', קישט *qišeṭ* 'adorn', הגן *hegen* 'protect', סיכן *siken* 'endanger', אפיין *ʾifyen* 'characterize', היווה *hiva* 'constitute'

(6)   Aspectual/modal verbs

היה *haya* 'be', המשיך *himšix* 'continue', יכול *yaxol* 'can', הצטרך *hiṣṭarex* 'had to'

(7)   Emission verbs

זהר *zahar* 'glow', הבריק *hivriq* 'shine', הבהיק *hivhiq* 'sparkle', נצץ *naṣaṣ* 'glitter', קרן *qaran* 'radiate', האיר *heʾir* 'illuminate', הסריח *hisriax/* הבאיש *hivʾiš/* הצחין *hiṣxin* 'stink', רעש *raʿaš* 'be noisy', פרח *parax* 'blossom'

In some languages, the stative/ dynamic distinction is morphologically expressed. In Biblical Hebrew, many stative verbs lack ordinary participles, maybe for the same reason that English lacks such participles: *be knowing, *be fearing, *be wanting (Hatav 1997); the participles of these stative verbs are derived in many cases in an adjectival pattern, e.g., , יָרֵא *yāre* 'be afraid', חָפֵץ *xāfeṣ* 'want'. In Modern Hebrew, there is no morphological characterization of stative verbs. The replacement of present participles by adjectives, which characterizes Biblical Hebrew stative verbs, is found in Modern Hebrew for some stative verbs, but equally for dynamic verbs as well and thus cannot serve to morphologically distinguish stative from dynamic verbs. The stative verbs   רעב *raʿav* 'hungered',   חסר *xasar* 'was missing', שמח *samax*

'rejoiced', נעם *naʿam* 'pleased', קשה *qaša* 'was difficult' indeed have no ordinary participles, only corresponding adjectives: רעב *raʿev* 'hungry', חסר *xaser* 'missing', שמח *sameax* 'glad', נעים *naʿim* 'pleasant', קשה *qaše* 'difficult'. But the same is true for the dynamic verbs רפה *rafa* 'loosened', שמן *šaman* 'fattened', עבה *ʿava* 'thickened', יפה *yafa* 'became beautiful', יבש *yavaš* 'dried', מלא *mala* 'filled', which have no active participles either, only the corresponding adjectives רפה *rafe* 'loose', שמן *šamen* 'fat', עבה *ʿave* 'thick', יפה *yafe* 'beautiful', יבש *yaveš* 'dry', מלא *male* 'full'. Similarly, the *i-a* vowel pattern which characterizes imperfective stative verbs in Biblical Hebrew is found in Modern Hebrew with some stative verbs (ישכב *yiškav* 'will lie', ירכב *yirkav* 'will ride'), but is also found with dynamic verbs (יקטן *yiqṭan* 'will shrink', ילמד *yilmad* 'will study', יגבר *yigbar* 'will vanquish'). The disappearance of the morphological distinctions is due to the diachronic reinterpretation of many stative verbs as dynamic change of state verbs.

Nevertheless, stative verbs are definitely distinguished from dynamic verbs within the grammar of Modern Hebrew. Temporal adverbials of various sorts are interpreted differently in the environment of stative and dynamic verbs. These differences follow from the semantic differences between the verbs. Stative verbs denote situations which do not involve change in time. As such, any instant at which the state holds must be preceded and followed by other instants where the state holds as well. Accordingly, states do not have initial or terminal points (Smith 1997). In A and B below, the implications are discussed for the interpretation of punctual adverbials. Moreover, stative verbs can always be interpreted imperfectively; the implications for the interpretation of frame adverbials is discussed in C.

A.   States do not have initial points

All dynamic verbs allow punctual adverbials (at midnight, at 2:00, punctual *when-*clauses) to be interpreted as the initial time of the event; verbs disallowing such interpretation are all stative (Boneh and Doron 2008). The following examples show that the dynamic verb חייך *xiyex* 'smile' can be understood with the punctual adverbial 'when Dani entered' coinciding with the initial point of the smiling event. The stative verb שרר *sarar* prevail' cannot be interpreted with the adverbial as point-initial, and is only interpreted with the adverbial denoting a point of time internal to the state. This interpretation is also available for the progressive reading of the dynamic verb.

(8) a   dynamic verb 'smile'

כשדני נכנס, רותי חייכה.

kše-   dani nixnas,   dina xiyxa
when-Dani enter-PAST Dina smile-PAST

Initial point:

'When dani entered, Dina smiled'.

Internal point:

'When dani entered, Dina was smiling'.

   b   stative verb 'prevail'

כשדני נכנס, שרר שקט.

kše- dani nixnas,   sarar   šeqeṭ
when-Dani enter-PAST prevail-PAST silence

No "initial-point" reading:

*'When Dani entered, silence prevailed'.

Internal point:

'When Dani entered, silence was prevailing'.

B.   States do not have terminal points

This test is based on the adverb כבר *kvar* 'already', which denotes a perspective time on the described event (Sevi 2008). Dynamic past-tense verbs require the termination of the event before the perspective time, and can be inflected in the past tense even in case the perspective overlaps speech time. Stative verbs do not have a termination point, and thus must internally include the perspective time. For the tense to be past, the perspective time cannot be interpreted as overlapping speech time, but as a (contextualy given) earlier time.

The following example shows the dynamic verb דיבר *diber* 'speak', though unbounded in nature (atelic), must be interpreted as terminated when modified by the adverb כבר *kvar*, whereas the stative verb חצה *xaṣaʿ* 'cross' in (1b) forces the interpretation of כבר *kvar* not as speech-time but as a (contextually given) prior time.

(9) a   dynamic verb 'speak'

דני כבר דיבר

dani kvar diber
Dani already speak-PAST

termination: (*kvar* interpreted at speech-time)

'Dani has already spoken'.

b   stative verb 'cross'

נהר הסן כבר חצה את פריס

nehar ha-Seine kvar xaṣa ʾet Paris
river   the-Seine already cross-PAST   ACC Paris

no termination: (*kvar* interpreted prior to speech-time)

'(At that contextually given point in time) The Seine already crossed Paris'.

C.   States can always be viewed imperfectively

All stative verbs can be interpreted imperfectively, i.e., they allow frame adverbials (last month, in 1980) to be properly included within the described situation. All verbs which require a perfective reading, where the described situation is properly included in the frame adverbial, are dynamic (Boneh and Doron 2009).

In the following example, the dynamic verb can only describe an event which is temporally included with the frame adverbial 'in the nineties'. The stative verb describes a state which can stand in any type of overlap relation with the frame adverbial (Kamp and Reyle 1993), and in particular can properly include it.

(10) a   dynamic verb 'build'

מוזיאון גוגנהיים בבילבאו נבנה בשנות התשעים.

muzeʾon Guggenheim be-Bilbao nivna   bi-šnot-ha-tišʿim
museum Guggenheim in-Bilbao be-built-PAST in-years-the-nineties

Perfective reading required:

'The Guggenhem museum in Bilbao was built within the nineties'.

b   stative verb 'enjoy'

בילבאו נהנתה מפיתוח מואץ בשנות התשעים.

Bilbao nehenta   mi-pituax   muʾaṣ   bi-šnot-ha-tišʿim
Bilbao   enjoy-PAST from-development accelerated in-years-the-nineties

Imperfective reading allowed:

'Bilbao enjoyed accelerated development all through the nineties'.

In sum, stative and dynamic verbs induce different interpretations of temporal adverbials. These differences can serve to distinguish pairs of stative/ dynamic verbs of similar meanings, e.g., נצץ *naṣaṣ* 'glitter' (stative)/ נצנץ *niṣneṣ* 'flicker' (dynamic).

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