

Functional Grammar Series 18

Discourse and Pragmatics in Functional Grammar

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Infinitivals initially: Theme/Topic/Focus¹

Yael Ziv

10.1. Introduction

Modern Hebrew displays an unmarked SVO pattern with predictable, pragmatically motivated word order deviations. Studies of the variety of word order options mostly involve constructions with NP, adverbials or PP initially. Sentences introduced by verbal entities have been observed to appear in restricted types of contexts such as happenings, occurrences and appearances on the scene. In these contexts a finite verb occurs sentence initially.² The current study examines special construction types introduced by infinitivals. Two such constructions will be distinguished in the present context and the characteristics of each specified. We will focus particularly on one of these, the relevant properties of which appear to be puzzling in view of certain tenets of FG. It will be shown to display conflicting features with respect to the assignment of such functional categories as Focus, Topic and Theme. The proposed solution of the apparent dilemma appears to lie in a diachronic perception of the properties evident in the construction under investigation.

10.2. Background: the two constructions

The following sentences constitute instances of the constructions in question:

- (1) likro hi lo roca
to read she not want
'She does not want to read.'
- (2) likro hi lo koret bixlal
to read she not read (F.sg) at all
'She does not read at all.'

For ease of analysis we will divide the sentences into 2 parts in the following manner: the infinitival will be referred to as part I and the rest as part II. The two constructions are identical with respect to part I, but differ crucially with respect to the structure of part II. In (1), which displays the structure we will refer to as (A), we seem to have a sentence with one of the elements "fronted".³ Part II in (A) does not stand for a full sentence, it requires the infinitival to count as a full sentence. The structure evident in (2), which we will refer to as (B), displays a full sentence in part II. Part I seems to be super-added on to an already grammatically well-formed, complete sentence.⁴

In what follows I will concentrate on the characteristic features of (B) in terms of the predictions of FG with respect to the functional categories Theme, Focus and Topic.

10.3. Theme, Focus, Topic

10.3.1. FG characterization

Following the tenets of FG (Dik 1981, 1989), clause structure may be realized by the following pattern:

ECC + CLAUSE

The ECC (extra-clausal constituent) may fulfil the function of Theme, and the clause proper may contain Topic and Focus.⁵ The discourse properties of Theme and Topic can roughly be said to be defined in terms of ABOUTNESS features⁶ whereas Focus seems to be associated with SALIENCE. This can be summarized as in the following representation:

ECC	—	THEME	>	ABOUTNESS
CLAUSE	<	TOPIC	—	SALIENCE

The FG characterization of these functional categories states, minimally, that Theme and Topic must necessarily be terms but Focus can be realized by any constituent.⁷ Likewise, it seems that Theme and Topic as well as Theme and Focus must be mutually exclusive. The first set due to the clausal versus extra-clausal characteristics and the second both due to the distinct clausal status, and due to the apparent incompatibility in terms of discourse functions. The question with regard to a potential overlap between Topic and Focus is answered in the positive in Dik (1989: 266), where the following graphic representation is displayed:

Topicality

Focality

It is evident from this representation that for Dik certain Topics may simultaneously be focal to the information in terms of what he refers to as "further development of the discourse" (Dik 1989: 266). Dik suggests that New Topics constitute such cases, where a non-given topical entity which is also salient in the discourse is introduced (1989: 269).⁸ An alternative approach which would preserve the integrity of the relevant functional categories, might call for a finer Focus sub-

classification. Given the sub-categories of Contrastive or Parallel Focus which take into account the previous and current discourse segments along with the situational context, the concept of topicality need not be resorted to in such cases. At this point it becomes evident that the question of the proper characterization of these functional categories in FG is essential. The use of these functional categories in the current context could count as a contribution towards a more refined characterization.⁹

Attempting to apply the current framework to Modern Hebrew (MH), Theme, Topic and Focus are clearly relevant functional categories. All three may occur in sentence-initial position. Their co-occurrences are constrained, however, by certain linearity restrictions. Thus, if Theme occurs in a given construction it necessarily appears initially, potentially followed by Topic and Focus in that order, in cases where they are "fronted". No sentence in MH is well-formed with the initial Focus preceding the Topic.¹⁰ When interrogatives introduce the sentence, they can be preceded by Themes. The characterization of interrogatives in terms of Focus makes the correct distributional predictions with respect to the well-formedness of Top Foc and ill-formedness of *Foc Top in MH.¹¹ What follows is a discussion of the structure under investigation.

10.3.2. The construction in question

The construction in B seems to offer interesting challenges to the theory of FG. On the face of it, it seems to raise questions with respect to some of the basic functional category generalizations. Thus, it appears to be the case that the initial infinitival displays properties characteristically associated with Themes, Topics and Foci. This state-of-affairs appears to be inconceivable within the existing conception of FG. It will be mostly around this issue that the rest of the investigation will revolve. Following is the evidence pointing to the three way functional characterization of the initial infinitival in B.

10.3.2.1. The infinitival as Theme

Under the assumption that the structure in B involves an ECC, and in conformity with the range of recognized potential pragmatic discourse functions fulfilled by the ECC (cf. footnote 5), the most likely function with which the infinitival in B can be identified is Theme. The characterization of Theme in Dik (1981) specifies that the pertinent properties in discourse pragmatic terms are that it "presents a domain or universe of discourse with respect to which it is relevant to pronounce the following predication" (1981: 130).¹² Trivially, this is true with respect to the initial infinitival in B. So, in (2) (repeated here),

- (2)

likro	hi	lo	koret	bixlal
to read	she	not read (F.sg)	at all	

 'She does not read at all.'

likro (to read) constitutes the domain with respect to which the predication in the following clause is relevant. The formal properties which may be associated with Theme could serve as better indicators of the Theme characteristics of the initial infinitival in B. Thus, Dik states that "the Theme cannot be regarded as being part of a predication" (1981: 132). Examining the clause following the initial infinitival in (B) clearly shows that the sentence is formally complete, requiring no complementation of any type. The strict optionality of the initial infinitival gives it an ECC status and conforms with the characteristic of not constituting part of the predication. The rejection of the so-called "extraction hypothesis" with respect to Themes, evident in Dik (1981), is equally applicable to the construction in B. The initial infinitival could not have originated from any position internal to the clause immediately following it. The immediately following clause is complete, and need not even contain any available position for an infinitival (such seems to be the case in (2)).

The relevant construction with which we may compare B is an instance of Left Dislocation (LD) as portrayed in Dik (1981). In the latter construction, the ECC, fulfilling Theme function, displays unmarked case, rather than a specific case associated with clause internal terms. By analogy, the infinitival in question does not display any formal verbal features associated with finiteness. The nominal caselessness in the LD constructions can thus be likened to the verbal nonfiniteness in the construction at hand. And again, by analogy, the example of Theme provided by Dik being the caseless NP in the LD construction, the infinitival in the construction at hand — B — ought to serve the same function.¹³

An additional argument for the Theme status of the infinitival in question is evident from the following distributional pattern, where the infinitival precedes the Wh-element:

- (3) *ve-laSir matay hu Sar*
and to sing when he sing
'And when does he sing?'¹⁴

Assuming, as seems to be the case, that the Wh-interrogatives occupy P1 position in MH, the precedence of the infinitival in constructions like (3) over the Wh-element suggests that the infinitival is an ECC. Such a conclusion would be consistent with our generalizations about Wh in MH, on the one hand, and ECC on the other. Dik (1981) mentions the occurrence of the Theme entity outside the scope of the illocutionary (which he dubs "performative") modality, as an argument for its special ECC status. The instances of Theme which he quotes occur external to the imperative, interrogative or declarative sentences. The sentences in (2) and (3) (above), as well as the following sentence in (4), suggest that this is true with respect to the infinitival at hand.

- (4) *liStok, al tiStok, aval...*
to shut up not will shut (2-sg) up but
'Do not shut up, but...'

The surprising fact, however, is that in addition to the Theme characteristics which the infinitival in question shows, it also displays certain properties associated with Topics and with Foci. These are discussed below.¹⁵

10.3.2.2. The infinitival as Focus

Foci in MH may either occur sentence-initially with a prominent intonation contour or else they may co-occur with so-called focusing adjuncts like "only" (*rak*) and "even" (*afilu*). The co-occurrence of the infinitival in B with the appropriate focus markers as in the following thus serves as evidence for its focus properties.

- (5) *afilu likro hi lo koret maspik*
even to read she not read enough
'She doesn't even read enough.'
- (6) *rak likro hi af paam lo koret maspik*
only to read she even once not read enough
(= never)
'Only reading, she doesn't even do enough.' (approximate)

The context in which the structure in B occurs may provide additional evidence for the Focus status of the infinitival in question. Consider:

- (7) What do you want to do now ?
- (8) *likro ani ekra axar kax,*
to read I will read later
'As for reading, I will read later,'
- aval lepatpet ani muxan axSav*
but to chat I ready now
'but I am ready to chat now.'

Both the salience of the information in the infinitival in the context of a question like (7) and the contrastive nature with the parallel structure evident in (8) support the Focus assignment analysis.¹⁶

10.3.2.3. The infinitival as Topic

The following distributional properties evident with respect to the initial infinitival in B point to its Topic characteristics. The context where Topic is associated with givenness is evident in the following interchange:

- (9) Do you want to read ?

- (10) likro, ani lo ekra, aval lesaxek ani muxan.
to read I not read, but to play I ready
'As for reading, I won't read, but I am ready to play.'

Givenness being associated with Topicality, via the subclassifications of Topics into: New, Given, Resumed, and Sub-Topics (Dik 1989), the contextual features evident in (9-10) may serve as evidence for the topic status of the infinitival in question (cf. footnote 7).

The second topic characteristic that the infinitival at hand displays pertains to the co-occurrence constraint on Topic and Focus in MH whereby the two must necessarily be ordered such that the Topic would precede the Focus, with the order Focus--Topic being ill-formed. This constraint lies behind the distinction in well-formedness in the following instances where Foci and Topics are realized by nominal entities.

- (11) sratim rak/afilu im ruti ani muxan lirot
movies (Top) only/even with Ruth(Foc) I ready to see
'I am ready to watch movies only/even with Ruth.'

- (12) *rak/afilu im ruti sratim ani muxan lirot
only/even with Ruth(Foc) movies(Top) I ready to see

The infinitival in structure B displays the same distributional pattern, as is evident from:

- (13) laSir rak/afilu layladim ani Sara
to sing only/even to the kids I sing
'I sing only/even to the kids.'

- (14) *rak /afilu layladim laSir ani Sara
only/even to the kids to sing I sing

It follows then that in (13) the infinitival shows Topic properties and hence can precede the Focus. Likewise the ill-formedness of (14) is accounted for by the violation of the Topic Focus constraint, (14) displays the ill-formed Focus Topic pattern.¹⁷

An additional argument for the analysis of the infinitival as Topic consists of examining its potential co-occurrence with Themes. Dik (1981) uses initial "as for X" phrases as prototypical instances of Theme. To test the co-occurrence of the infinitival in question with Theme, we will utilize the same type of "as for" construction. The co-occurrence at hand may be construed as an argument for the Topic status of the infinitival in question, under the assumption that there may be only one ECC of the Theme type per sentence. If this is indeed the case, then the co-occurrence of the structure in B with the prototypical ECC Theme "as for X" would indicate that the infinitival in question cannot be the Theme, but ought to be either Focus or Topic. If, additionally, we introduce a potential non-infinitival Fo-

cus in the sentence (as in (15")) then the infinitival at hand will be shown to constitute the Topic. The following pattern emerges:

- (15') benogea leruti, laSir hi lo taSir
concerning/as for Ruthie to sing she not will sing
'As for Ruthie, to sing, she won't sing.' (approximate)

- (15") benogea leruti, laSir, rak iti hi taSir
as for Ruthie to sing only with me she will sing
'As for Ruthie, she will only sing with me.'

- (16) *laSir benogea leruti hi lo taSir
to sing as for Ruthie she not will sing

It must be noticed in this context that the Theme can be preceded by a true parenthetical (ECC or a third or fourth order satellite) as in:

- (17) lecaari harav, benogea leruti, laSir hi lo taSir
to my sorrow much as for Ruthie to sing she not will sing
'To my great sorrow, as far as Ruthie goes, she won't sing.'

The ill-formedness of (16), thus, cannot be attributed to the non-occurrence of any constituent prior to the Theme; rather the unacceptability of (16) indicates that it is the sentential Topic realized by the infinitival that cannot precede the Theme. We have thus argued that the infinitival in structure B manifests Topic properties.

The evidence gathered so far indicates that there are arguments pointing out the Thematic nature of the infinitival in question alongside arguments suggesting that it may be Focus or even Topic.¹⁸

10.4. Sentential versus extra-sentential status: partial resolution

The evidence considered in this paper has largely concentrated on the status of the infinitival in constructions like B. Data were quoted which pointed to its Thematic, hence extra-clausal status, in addition to evidence which indicated that it has Topic and Focus properties, and hence is to be regarded as a sentence-internal constituent. The co-existence of sentential and non-sentential properties with respect to the same constituent, albeit not simultaneously, seems most problematic and the current section will be devoted to an attempt to resolve the apparent conflict in the sentential status of the infinitival in question.

It has been suggested to me (L. Goossens and L. Mackenzie, personal communication) that what we are witnessing in the case under investigation is an instance of grammaticalization, whereby an entity that is originally associated with an ECC, and hence by definition does not partake in any sentential processes (cf. Ziv 1985), becomes more closely integrated within clause structure and shows several sentential properties. This diachronic shift from a pragmatically, discourse-functionally

conditioned entity to a syntactically and even morphologically evident reality is a characteristic evident in natural languages generally.¹⁹ To quote a relevant example, let us consider Left Dislocation. The initial constituent in LD has been analyzed as the prototypical ECC Theme by Dik (1981). However, in certain dialects of languages like German and Italian the initial NP that is conceived of as an ECC may show case marking, alongside instances where it does not. This is evident in the following (cf. Ziv 1994):²⁰

(18') Der Professor, sie lobten ihn
The professor (NOM) they praised him (ACC)

(18'') Den Professor, sie lobten ihn
The professor (ACC) they praised him (ACC)

The existence of such instances in the relevant dialects seems to be indicative of the process of integration of the initial NP in LD into the clause structure.²¹

The naturalness of such diachronic processes in general, as well as the particular instance of LD integration, seem to argue for a diachronic interpretation of the data in the construction under investigation. The initial infinitival which constitutes an instance of a proper ECC in certain cases, has, in other cases, apparently, acquired the conceptual status associated with a regular sentential constituent and has been perceived as integrated within sentence structure. The Topic and Focus properties with which it appears to be associated in these latter instances may be due to this integration or reinterpretation of its sentential status.²²

Notes

1. I should like to thank Lachlan Mackenzie and Louis Goossens whose comments on an oral version of this paper were instrumental in my rethinking it.
2. But cf. Ziv (1995) for a study of certain Modern Hebrew VS constructions which are not similarly restricted.
3. Note that this terminological choice does not reflect any analytical cline in the present context. It is merely intended to stress the syntactic property of discontinuity evident in this structural pattern.
4. The two constructions display additional differences which require explanation. In the current context I will only mention one such distinction: A, but not B, may be introduced by a negative infinitival. Part II in A may occur with either polarity irrespective of the polarity of part I. The following distributional pattern seems to be evident:

(i) lo likro hi lo roca
not to read she not want
'She does not want not to read.'

(ii) lo likro hi davka dey roca
not to read she despite quite want
'Not to read she is (davka = counter to expectations) quite willing.'

(iii) *lo likro hi lo koret bixlal
not to read she not read at all

(iv) *lo likro hi davka koret
not to read she despite read

This can be represented as in:

Structure A: (neg) Infinitival — (neg) rest of sentence

Structure B: (*neg) Infinitival — (neg) full sentence

5. There are a variety of additional pragmatic functions which ECCs may fulfil; they can serve as initiators, parentheticals, address forms, tags, tails and clarifiers. Theme seems to be the relevant function in the case at hand. Cf. Reinhart (1981) for a discussion of aboutness and the attempt to define Topic in terms of this notion.
6. Dik (1989) distinguishes further types of Foci and Topics mostly in conformity with their communicative content characteristics. The Foci are subclassified into:

Focus <	New (Completive)		Replacing
	Parallel		Expanding
Contrast <	Counter-presuppositional	<	Restricting
			Selecting

and the Topics into:

Topics <	New	
	Given	
	Resumed	
	Sub-Topic	

8. Such a view seems to be consistent with the prototypicality approach to categories evident in Lakoff (1987). Accordingly, the New Topics in question would show some, but not all, of the characteristic properties of Topicality and Focality.
9. Naturally, a variety of additional studies within FG point to the need for

10. such a refinement. For a recent study cf. Buth (1994). Cf. Ben Horin (1976) for interesting data. Examples will be quoted in section 10.3.2.3, following.

11. In fact, the generalization with respect to the occurrence of Top — Wh, on analogy with the well-formedness of the Top — Foc order elsewhere, requires some modification. The occurrence of Top — Wh seems to be constrained such that we have to add the conjunction “and” (*ve*) or “but” (*ava!*) as an indication of discourse continuation, as in:

- (i) *ve im Ruti matay at medaberet*
and with Ruthie when you (F) speaking
'And when are you speaking with Ruthie?'

The absence of the conjunction renders the sequence unacceptable (cf. Ziv (forthcoming) for the discourse structural considerations relevant in this context).

An additional comment would pertain to the exceptional nature of “why” interrogatives, which appear to allow the otherwise inadmissible Wh — Top sequence. Further research is required to assess the system that “why” satellites abide by.

12. This discourse functional definition is evidently very vague and is confusingly similar to the one used with respect to Topic. To come up with a more accurate and non-vague functional definition it might be important to investigate the usefulness of the Sperber and Wilson conception of Relevance (1986), since this term is utilized in the definition of Theme. Alternatively, the functional definition alone should not be used to distinguish these two functional categories, and formal characteristics will have to be utilized in drawing the distinction between the two.

13. Cf. Ziv (1994) for arguments for the extra-sentential status of the initial NP in Left Dislocations. Specifically, the relevant Left Dislocations would show a verb 3rd position in German, in contradiction with the overall verb 2nd position generalization, unless the initial NP is analysed as external to the sentence.

14. But cf. Ziv (forthcoming) for a discussion of the discourse requirement on the occurrence of the coordinating conjunction in such cases. Cf. also footnote 11.

15. The evidence pointing to the Topic nature of the infinitival in part presupposes the interaction of Topics with Foci. It is for this reason that I have chosen to present the evidence for the Focus status of the infinitival in B before its Topic status.

16. The occurrence of the infinitival “to read” in this context seems to be counter-presuppositional. The rejection or postponement of the reading choice at the current moment amount to an understanding that this is an available option. Since no such option is mentioned explicitly in the pre-

ceding context, it is presumably supplied on the basis of previous context, or knowledge of the state-of-affairs, i.e. the relevant options available.

17. The same co-occurrence constraint can be used to argue for the Focus status of the infinitival in question in the appropriate context as in:

- (i) *im rut afilu ilimod ani lo lomed maspik*
with Ruth(Top) even to study(Foc) I not study enough
'With Ruth I do not even study enough.'

18. The option that I have adopted and made explicit with respect to the analysis of structure B likens it to its nominal construction counterpart — Left Dislocation. The alternative is to regard the structure in B as the Hebrew counterpart of VP preposing in English. VP Preposing is evident in the following (Ward 1990: 746-7):

- (i) Of all Maria's children, only John joined the Nazi Party, *but join it he did.*

- (ii) Sharon doesn't visit her father often, *but visit him she does.*

This is substantiated if we remember that the Hebrew counterparts of so-called VP ellipsis are realized by the repetition of the verbal form, as in:

- (iii) a. John doesn't drink beer, but Jack does.
b. Ron lo Sote bira, aval Jacky Sote.
Ron not drink beer but Jacky drinks.

It would be interesting to investigate the consequences of this assumption for FG. This I leave for future research.

19. Cf. in this context Givón's (1984, 1990) generalization, stated informally, that “yesterday's discourse function is today's syntax and tomorrow's morphology” and Keenan's (1976) specific application of such a principle to the study of subjecthood, where behavioural properties are shown to be evident before structural and morphological (coding) properties are.

20. Dik (1989: 265) considers the co-occurrence of case on an ECC and on an internal element within clause structure to be a property which may be associated with ECC. I believe that this is to be accounted for diachronically, as a sign of initial integration of the ECC within clause structure.

21. The parallel RD construction shows a fair amount of integration in several languages. Thus, MH may provide evidence for its advanced integration in terms of case assignment, as in:

- (i) natati la et hasefer, ledorit.
gave(1-sg) to her(DAT) ACC the book, to Dorit
'I gave her the book, Dorit.'

or:

- (ii) natati oto ledorit, et hasefer.
gave(1-sg) it(ACC) to Dorit ACC the book
'I gave it to Dorit, the book.'

Additional evidence for its sentential integration may come from its interaction with such grammatical constraints as subadjacency (Ziv 1994; Ziv—Grosz 1994).

22. When a diachronic process is in the making, it is hard to predict where it will end. But the following marginally acceptable sequence which I occasionally witness in oral conversations as an echo, may be suggestive of the upcoming stage:

- A: Ruti roca lavo itanu?
Ruthie want to come with us
'Does Ruthie want to come with us?'

- B: roca, hi lo bediyuk roca, aval hi tavo.
want she not exactly want but she will come
'She does not exactly want to, but she will come.'

Note that in B's reply the initial verb is finite, in agreement with the clause internal verb and subject.

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