

Nurit Dekel

A matter of time

tense, mood and aspect in
Spontaneous Spoken Israeli Hebrew

This study presents a new analysis of tense, mood and aspect (TMA) categories in the verb system of Spoken Israeli Hebrew (SIH).

The Israeli Hebrew verb system is generally perceived as a tense-based system, and is so presented in most of the traditional literature, as well as in a majority of textbooks. This analysis has been commonly accepted and has seldomly been criticized.

The research underlying this thesis was motivated by the fact that the traditional analysis of the verb system of Hebrew has to specify a large number of exceptions, and by the fact that many of the analyzed forms are inexplicable in terms of the tense-based analysis to Israeli Hebrew native speakers. It was therefore suspected that the verb system of SIH is not tense-based, but is rather based on other grammatical properties.

The study is based on a corpus of ongoing spontaneous conversations in Spoken Israeli Hebrew that were recorded in real-time. It contains authentic Israeli Hebrew speech as used by native speakers in everyday conversations.

Based on these conversations, an alternative analysis of the SIH verb system as aspect-based is proposed in this study. This alternative covers all the exceptions that cannot be explained within the traditional approach. Further, several additional points are observed in this study regarding the verb system of SIH: the absence of passive forms from the verb system, the derivation of imperative forms, the distribution of verbal patterns, and the presence of many concatenated verb constructions.

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