Contrast-Evidence from Adverb Distribution in Modern Hebrew

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The purpose of my talk is to formulate a theory of Contrast and use it to explain the distribution of adverbs in Hebrew contrastive constructions. Cinque 1999 notes that sentential adverbs may appear in the VP, provided that they are followed by an accented argument (focus).

(1) bagaleria hazot macigim tamid et **otan** tmunot
      In this gallery, they present always acc **the same** pictures

Cinque analyzes this on a par with focus particles like *only*, as heads of focus phrases (e.g. [always [the same pictures]$_F$]$_{Focus Phrase}$). However, there are restrictions that this analysis fails to capture.

(2) #Dan oxel tamid **tapuxim** (Dan eats always apples)

The FocP does not account for the (1) vs. (2) contrast, and it fails to account for a contrastive inference accompanying the construction (e.g., in (1) the inference is that the gallery never presents other pictures).

Theories of Contrast: Many scholars claim that contrast is one manifestation of focus (Rooth 1992, Roberts 1996, Erteschik-Shir 1997, Beaver and Clark 2008). A common assumption of these theories is that focus as an answer to a question is a choice among alternatives obtained by replacing the focus with a variable and assigning the variable values of the appropriate semantic type. The idea is that contrast is another manifestation of such choice (with or without a Question). Beaver and Clark 2008 draw a distinction between *only* and *always* claiming that *only* is designed to comment on other alternatives, but *always* is not. Since there is no requirement in focus theories for the value of other alternatives, this distinction does not help the focus theories to account for (1) vs. (2). Vallduví and Vilkuna 1997 present evidence that contrast is a distinct phenomenon, which does not always coincide with informational focus. They claim that contrast is a choice from a contextually and ontologically restricted alternative set. This theory defines the alternatives as more concrete, so it has a better chance of accounting for the contrastive inference, but the domain for answer to a question is restricted in the same way, (if I tell you who came to my party, you do not expect me to state that Obama didn't), and the theory still also fails to account for (1) vs. (2).

Another theory of Contrast:

(a) A contrastive proposition presupposes a comparable proposition to be under discussion (henceforth PUD).

   Comparable: Contextually determined (e.g., I yelled at her but she wouldn't stop crying; the tea is best HOT and not cold…)

(b) A contrastive proposition, including its entailments and implicatures, provides a value for all the comparable PUDs.

The focus particle *rak* 'only' In Hebrew, *only*, is most natural in contrastive constructions, because it is designed to provide value for the stronger proposition (Beaver & Clark 2008). However, I show that it applies to PUDs, and not to salient members in the set.

(3) (Jewish) Mother: misken sheli, hu axal rak tapuax (poor thing, he ate only an apple)

   Concerned friend: ken ve hu axal gam Ste sakiyot bamba ve kcat marshmallow
                     Yes, and he ate also to packages of snack an some marshmallow

Speakers do not perceive this as contradictory, showing that alternatives of eating a snack, are not excluded by *only*, because they are not under discussion.

Accommodation of PUD out of context would be to a proposition with some salient element exchanged for something **from the same semantic domain**, which the sentence makes salient.

(4) Dan axal rak tapuax (Dan ate only an apple)

The contrastive inference is: There is a specific kind of fruit (e.g., a pair) that he was expected to eat but didn't.

Analysis of *tamid* 'always' in contrastive constructions: *Always* does not comment on other PUDs (Beaver and Clark 2998), so it would fail to assign a value to all PUDs, and it is predicted to be infelicitous, unless the context provides the value of PUDs.

(5) #Dan oxel tamid tapuxim (Dan eats always apples)

PUD is accommodated as in (4), but the sentence does not provide a value for PUD, and is correctly predicted to be infelicitous.

(6) bagaleria hazot macigim tamid et **otan** tmunot (Google search)
     In this gallery, (they) present always **the same** pictures

The gallery context gives rise to PUD involving different pictures (default assumption), and since the two propositions are mutually exclusive, the sentence is correctly predicted to be felicitous.

I thus show that Contrast is not equal to focus and propose a theory of contrast which accounts for the distribution of *always* and *only* in these constructions based on the semantics of Beaver & Clark 2008. As a side effect, I claim that rak '*only*' is contrastive, operating on PUDs, and not on an alternative set.

References

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