THE SYNTAX OF PRESENTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS: THE VIEW FROM COLLOQUIAL ISRAELI HEBREW

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1. Introduction

Israeli Hebrew (henceforth: IH) has a dedicated particle with a presentative function, viz. *hine*, used primarily as a verbal pointer to a concrete referent in the immediate (or nearly immediate) environment (ex.1). It is also used to point at referential expressions of locations (ex. 2), time (ex. 3), states and events (ex. 4; for types of reference see Kibrik 2011: §2.1, §16.2.1).[1]

(1) P311_2_sp1_136
   ˈ*hine* ˈ**natan** ||
   Pres   Nathan
   'Here is Nathan.'

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[1] The research is based mainly on data from *The Corpus of Spoken Israeli Hebrew (CoSIH)*, consisting mostly of everyday conversations between family and friends, analyzed by ELAN and by Praat. References follow the system used in *CoSIH*; speakers are referred to as sp1, sp2, etc.

Transcription is usually broad phonetic, with some attention to the phonological system. Phonological input is added mainly in the representation of /*h*/, usually elided in contemporary spoken Hebrew, and in the representation of some occurrences of /*j*/, which may also elide in certain environments. Epenthetic vowels (usually *e* [ɛ]) following prepositions are transcribed when actually heard. For typographic and reading convenience, the rhotic phoneme, which is uvular in standard IH, is represented as *r*; the mid vowels are represented as *e* and *o*, although their prototypical respective pronunciations are lower. Two successive vowels are separated by a syllabic boundary, e.g. *taaˈne* 'she will answer' is to be read *ta.aˈne*.

Prosodic notation: | minor boundary; || major boundary; / major boundary with "appeal" tone (for this term see Du Bois *et al.* 1993: §3.3); accented words are indicated by boldface characters.

( ) indicate uncertain transcription (identification).

Glossing follows, mutatis mutandis, the Leipzig Glossing Rules. Additional glossing: Pres presentative; Ext existential.

(2) OCD_3_sp1_045-047
     ˈhine **po** | siˈgali | po ˈ**pepo** gar ||
     Pres here Sigali here Pepo live
     'Look here, Sigali, here lives Pepo.'

(3) *Ahava Avuda* 'Lost Love'; lyrics by Suzy Akmen Rogovin
     ˈhine ˈboker ||
     Pres   morning
     'Behold, (it's) morning .'

(4) P311_2_sp5_033
     ⟨A phone rings⟩
     ˈhine **hamazkiˈra** taaˈne ||
     Pres   the.secretary   she.will.answer
     'Here, the secretary will answer.'

In many cases, constructions consisting of *hine* introduce a referential expression into the discourse, as is the case in all four examples above.

The functions and uses of the IH particle *hine* are similar to those of French *voici/voilà*, Russian *vot/von*, Latin *ecce*, Italian *ecco*, Yiddish *ot*, some particles in Baltic languages, and others (Petit 2010; Porhiel 2012; Talmy 2017: §13.5; Killian 2022). As pointed out by Petit, presentative particles are "special forms the function of which is to draw attention to a given reality with a strong deictic focalization"; they usually occupy sentence-initial position; and they are not negatable. They can further "fulfill a predicative function by themselves" (Petit 2010: 151).

As noted by some authors, presentative particles like French *voilà*, often occupy a prosodic unit in themselves, thus forming independent sentences on their own (e.g., Killian 2022: 17).

In this study, I will analyze the formal manifestations of IH *hine* and its syntactic functions.[2] The theoretical framework for this analysis is discussed briefly in §2.

2. Theoretical framework

The syntactic approach used herein builds on the premise that syntax, information structure and prosody integrate in spoken language structure, forming a coherent unity. According to this approach and a close observation of colloquial IH,[2] the predicate (domain) is the only necessary constituent — and a sufficient one — to constitute a sentence.[3] A sentence consisting of only a predicate domain has been accordingly termed *unipartite sentence*. The *predicate* (or the *predicate do-*

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[2] For a functional study of *hine* in IH see Shor, Inbar & Izre'el, forthcoming.

[3] *Sentence* is taken here to be the reference unit of syntax, standing also for *clause*.

main) is viewed as the constituent carrying an individual piece of information within the discourse context, which by default will include a newly introduced element. As such, the predicate (domain) may be seen as the default representation of the *comment*. By default, the focus of the sentence will be found within the predicate domain. The predicate domain carries the modality of the sentence, where modality is seen as an essential component of the sentence, the one that transforms a proposition to a sentence (Izre'el 2018b: §5 with previous references).

Attention should be drawn to the fact, that in Hebrew, any part of speech (save bare prepositions and conjunctions, except for some special cases) can form either a predicate or a subject: nominal, pronominal, adverbial phrases; particles (including modal particles; see Izre'el 2022b, §3); as well as larger phrases, sentences and other syntactic complexes (Izre'el 2012: §3; 2018b: §3). The syntactic function of the respective constituents in any individual sentence, whether subject or predicate, will be determined according to their respective part-of-speech, according to relative definiteness, according to prosodic features interacting with constituent order, and according to contextual grounds, all of which may be interdependent. It should further be noted, that the Hebrew verb is not a predicate per se, but constitutes a full bipartite sentence, consisting of both a bound person marker, by default constituting its subject,[4] and a verbal stem, constituting by default its predicate. This is demonstrated by Ex. 5.

(5) P311_2_sp5_033; cf. ex. 4 above
     t-aane
     3SgF-will.answer
     'She will answer.'

For further details see Izre'el 2012; 2018a; 2018b; 2022a: §2.

3. *hine* in colloquial IH: structural analyses

3.1. *hine* + NP

In accordance with the definition of *predicate* above (§2), and in contrast to the common view, the predicate in sentences like ex. 1 (*hine **natan***) is not the presentative particle, but the NP which follows. The referent 'Nathan' has not yet been mentioned in the discourse, thus it is the constituent carrying a new individual piece of information; it is marked for focus by prosodic accent; and — being part of the predicative domain — also carries the modality of the sentence, indicated

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[4] For this view — as against the common one that takes the person markers in the Hebrew verb to be agreement markers — see Izre'el 2012; Shor 2022; for related views see Mithun 2003; Kibrik 2011: §3.3.2; Kibrik 2019.

here by its prosodic contour. Obviously, *hine* cannot be regarded as the subject of this sentence. As I have shown in Izre'el 2022a (§3.1.2), presentative *hine* has the force of evidential modality (see also Shor, Inbar & Izre'el, forthcoming). This can be shown by its paradigmatic relationship with the presentative-existential particle *jeʃ* and other modal particles, like *tsariχ* 'need, necessary' or *efʃar* 'possible' (Table 1). As we shall see below (§3.3.2, ex. 9), *hine* can also function for the indication of epistemic modality.

Table 1. hine in paradigmatic relations with other modal particles

ˈhine	kaˈfe ‖	
Pres	coffee	'Here is (some) coffee.'
jeʃ	kaˈfe ‖	
Ext	coffee	'There is coffee.'
tsaˈriχ	kaˈfe ‖	
need[SgM]	coffee	'There is need for coffee.'
efˈʃar	kaˈfe /	
possible	coffee	'Can (I/we) get (some) coffee?'

All these sentences are unipartite sentences, consisting of only a predicate domain, formed by a modal particle and a NP, constituting the predicative nucleus.

3.2. *hine* + sentence

The pivot of a presentative sentence can consist of a complete sentence. We have already encountered one such case (ex. 4). One other case is ex. 6:

(6) ˈhine hu **meaχoˈrenu** ‖
      Pres   he   behind.us
      'Here he is behind us.'

See further the second prosodic unit in ex. 10, where an existential-presentative sentence follows the presentative particle.

3.3. *hine* as predicate

3.3.1. In a bipartite sentence

There are cases, where the NP will be regarded as subject and the presentative particle as predicate, notably when the NP has been mentioned in the discourse before (ex. 7):

(7) P311_2_sp2_013-014
   *ˈefo hi / **ˈhine** hi ||*
   where she Pres she
   'Where is she? Here she is.'

The predicative function of the particle is indicated not only by the 3SgF being old information, duly represented by a pronoun, but especially since the focus, marked by prosodic accent, indicates that the particle is the predicative nucleus of this construction.

3.3.2. Sentential *hine*

As defined above (§2), a predicate is the necessary and sufficient constituent of a sentence, thus being able to constitute a sentence in itself. This framework makes a good basis for the observation brought above (§1), that a presentative particle often occupies a prosodic unit in itself, thus forming an independent sentence on its own (for the interface between prosodic and syntactic units see Izreʾel 2020). The following two examples illustrate such cases, exhibiting either anaphoric (ex. 8) or cataphoric (ex. 9) sentential *hine* particles. It will be noticed, that cataphoric use of the particle is much more widespread than anaphoric one.

(8) OCh_sp1_029; for the larger context see ex. 12 below.
   ˈefo juˈnan | ˈhine |
   where Yunnan Pres
   'Where's Yunnan? Here (it is).'

(9) C711_2_sp2_005-008; sp1_002
   sp2: 'If it were possible to convert everything directly to disc; the program, or as is?'
   sp1: *ˈhine || bemini efˈʃar ||*
         Pres in.mini possible
         'Here. It is possible by a mini (disc).'

It will be noticed, that in ex. 9, *hine* functions as an epistemic modal marker rather than marking direct evidential, as against the case in ex. 8 and the majority of its occurrences. For the relationship between epistemic modality and evidentiality see, inter alia, Wiemer 2018.

3.4. Repetition of *hine*

There are cases where speakers repeat the particle. When not interrupted by a prosodic boundary, the repetition seems to indicate expressive overtones, either in a separate prosodic unit (ex. 10) or preceding a NP in the same unit (ex. 11).

In ex. 10, the speaker suddenly spots the lights of an approaching police-car:

(10) P311_2_sp3_003-004
    ˈhine ˈhine | ˈhine (ˈjeʃ=χa   kan **oˈrot**) ||
    Pres   Pres   Pres   Ext=2SgM here lights
    'Look look, here you've got some lights.'

The speaker in ex. 11 is looking at an atlas and suddenly discovers the place where Bin Laden was suspected to have been located after the 9/11 terror attacks.

(11) OCH_sp2_004
    ˈhine ˈhine bin **ˈladen** ||
    Pres   Pres   Bin Laden
    'Look look, Bin Laden.'

4. Conclusion

In guise of a conclusion, let me cite one last example, where the predicativity of *hine* is overt in its two occurrences in this sample. The speaker in ex. 12, looking at an atlas, is trying to locate sites he has visited:

(12) OCh_sp1_027-030
    ˈhine seʧuˈan | juˈnan | ˈefo   juˈnan | ˈhine | guanʃi | eze
    Pres   Sichuan   Yunnan   where Yunnan   Pres   Guanshi   which
    joʃi || χatgal ||
    beauty   Hatgal
    'Here (is) Sichuan; Yunnan; where's Yunnan? Here (it is); Guanshi. How nice! Hatgal!'

The presentative particle *hine* indicates that the speaker has discovered on the map a site he knows, as well as introducing into the discourse the name of this site, whose addressee is not yet aware of and therefore it is not in his (immediate) consciousness. This is the case with the first occurrence of the particle *hine*. The last utterance, *χatgal* || 'Hatgal!', is not preceded by *hine*, yet its function is the same as the first unit, *hine seʧuan* 'Here is Sichuan'. These two place names constitute the predicate ('Hatgal') and the predicative nucleus ('Sichuan') of their respective sentences, thus being capable of constituting a complete sentence on their own. Only in the first prosodic unit, however, it is preceded by the presentative particle *hine*, functioning there as a direct, sensory (visual) evidential marker. When *hine* comes in a separate information unit, after the question 'where's Yunnan?', it should be analyzed itself as predicate, the function of which is to assert the discovery of Yunnan on the map. This unit thus forms a unipartite sentence, anchored to the previous interrogative sentence (cf. Izre'el 2018a: 244–245, §4).

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