Grammaticization paths of Hebrew discourse markers within Rectification Constructions

Ruti Bardenstein and Mira Ariel

The Modern Hebrew adverbial bixlal (at all/any/actually/even/in general/generally/), among many other similarly functioning sentential adverbs, seems puzzling from a synchronic point of view since it functions both as a NPI lo..bixlal /bixlal lo 'any', 'at all' (not…any/at all) and as a Discourse Marker (DM) in positive environments, being interpreted either as an 'in general' DM when focused (stressed) or as an 'actually' DM when unfocused (unstressed). As a result, it has been the focus of various papers examining both its semantics and discursive use (Migron 2003, Ziv 2012, Greenberg and Khrizman 2012, Kadmon and Sevi, 2014, Greenberg (2014) as well as its possible grammaticization path (Avigail Tsirkin-Sadan 2015). Our research examines the grammaticization path of various Hebrew discourse markers (DMs) within rectification constructions, such as bixlal in: 'bixlal lo p, ela q' (not at all p, but q) as in (1) and rak (only/just) in: 'lo p ela rak q' (not p, but only/just q) as in (3). Our claim is that a frequent occurrence of specific markers within rectification constructions created a strong association between these markers and the function of rectification, which paved the way for a dramatic semantic change of such DMs, turning them into rectification markers. Once reinterpreted as rectification markers they can be used to indicate rectification even in the absence of the complete construction. That is how we interpret (2) and (4): While bixlal (2) and rak (4) explicitly modify the nucleus of the rectification construction (bixlal/rak q'), the rejection of the satellite 'lo p' (not p') along with the rectification connector ela (but), is now left for inference. The examples we use are taken from Israeli newspapers (mainly Ha'arets), the radio, T.V shows and news broadcasts, the internet and the Ma'amad (The spoken corpus of the Tel-Aviv University).

We distinguish between two types of rectification markers:

A. 'Satellite markers', marking the rectified assumption (bixlal, kvar (already), davka (actually), adayin (still/yet), od (more/still/yet)).

B. 'Nucleus markers', marking the rectifying assumption (rak (only/just), stam (just), pashut (simple), besax-hakol (just)). For example, rak (only/just) has developed within the Rectification Construction: 'lo p ela rak q' (not p, but only q) as in (3).

It is our claim that the grammaticization path of rectificational DMs involves:

a. Shifting the focus (stress) to the rectified/rectifying material
b. The satellite of the construction ('lo p') along with ela (but) as a connector (between the satellite and the nucleus), becoming only optional.

As a result, the rectification constructions: 'bixlal lo p ela q' (as in 1) and 'lo p, ela rak q' (as in 3) turned into what I call a compact rectification construction: 'bixlal q' (as in 2) and 'rak q' (as in 4) respectively. It is our claim, therefore, that the Hebrew DMs bixlal and rak (among many other DMs), when unstressed/unfocused, before a rectifying stressed/focal predicate, scope over an argumentative discourse construction of rectification.
Examples

1. China Town bixlal lo hitxila be-sin, ela ba- filipinim
   China Town at all NEG start in- China, but in-the-Philippines
   'China Town didn’t at all start in China, but in the Philippines' [Xnet12.05.13 ]

2. Harofi'm nidhamu! Hagidul hasartani hu bixlal ka'akua
   The doctors were astounded! The tumor is at all a tattoo!
   'The doctors were astounded! The tumor is actually a tattoo!' [Walla health, 22.5.15]

Our claim is that the explicature (Sperber & Wilson 1986) of (2) is the following:

2a. Harofi’m nidhamu! Hagidul hasartani hu bixlal [lo gidul sartani ela] ka’akua
   The doctors were astounded! The tumor is actually [not a tumor, but] a tattoo

3. Ani lo tsarix einayim, ela rak zug yadayim
   I NEG need eyes but only a pair (of) hands [4.2.16 local]
   'I don't need eyes, just/only a pair of hands'

4. Yalda shebikra shilshom (rishon) bemuzeon yisrael, shavra kli zxuxit hashayax
   le'exad meosafey ha'arxiologia haxashuvim ba'olam.
   Bamuzeon mavtixim ki matsavo shel hakli rak yishtaper
   its condition of the dish only will improve
   ketotsa'a me hashikum she ya'avor. (Ha'arets, Nir Xason, 25.8.15)
   as a result of the reconstruction that it will go through

   'A girl who visited two days ago (Sunday) the Museum of Israel, has broken a
   glass vessel which belongs to one of the most important archeological collections
   in the world. The museum representatives guarantee that the vessel's condition will
   only improve as a result of its reconstruction'. [Ha'arets, Nir Xason, 25.8.15]

It is our claim that the explicature of (4) is:

[...] matsavo shel hakli [lo yaxmir ela] rak yishtaper!
[...] its condition of the dish [will not worsen but] only will improve!