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**Lower Transitivity Constructions in Hebrew:
The Case of Motion Verbs**

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Abstract

This study focuses on a set of Hebrew motion verbs (*yoce* ‘exit’, ‘go-out’, *holex* ‘go’, ‘walk’, *ba* ‘come’) which seem to participate in several related constructions that serve specific grammaticized functions, in the sense of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, inter alia). These motion verbs show no spatial meaning in these construction, to the extent that no motion event is being denoted.

The present analysis considers grammatical functions that are attributed to whole constructions rather than merely to the verbs, although the relevant characteristics of these verbs are taken into account along the lines of previous work on spatial semantics and frame semantics (e.g. Fillmore 1997; Johnson et al. 2001). It is argued that the construction cannot be accounted for in terms of compositionality, and that the construction imposes a special meaning on a set of motion verbs.

The form [V_{Motion (3sg)} *le*-N (XP)] is termed the ‘Lower Transitivity Construction’ (LTC). It is argued to be a grammaticized means for decreasing the utterance’s level of Transitivity (Hopper and Thompson 1980) by marking the initiator of an event as an Affectee (Berman 1982), construing the event as Agentless, and describing the event as stative rather than dynamic. This lowered Transitivity evokes inferences of ‘happence’ and ‘no responsibility on the part of the initiator of the event’.

The LTC is claimed to be a special case of a more general dative construction (that shares with it structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects) which is adjectival and stative in nature. The originally stative construction functions as a filter, bleaching out the spatial meanings of the motion verbs under discussion. When inserted into the dative

construction, each of the motion verbs profiles a certain state in an event (parallel to its original spatial profiling in the motion frame). Common to all three verbs is the profiling of a non-initial state in an event. This denotation contributes to the happenstance interpretation, and as a consequence – to the ‘no responsibility’ inference.

I discuss the cognitive representation of the construction in terms of a prototype based category, and propose a possible diachronic process that may have led to the creation of the construction, relating the construction to other dative constructions in Hebrew on the one hand, and other uses of the relevant motion verbs on the other.

Chapter 1

Preliminaries

1.1 Motionless motion verbs

Motion verbs and motion events have been a matter of theoretical discussion in many areas and fields: Lexical semantics (e.g. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1992), spatial cognition (for example, Landau and Jackendoff 1993), metaphor theory (for example, Lakoff 1993), typology (for example, in the works of Talmy (1985, 2000) and Slobin (1999, 2004)), and the organization of language as a whole, under the ‘Localist hypothesis’ (Gruber 1965; Anderson 1971; Jackendoff 1983). Needless to say, the most salient and inherent property of motion verbs is their spatial sense. In the present study, however, I discuss a special use of motion verbs that shows no spatial meaning to the extent that no motion event is denoted. This use is exemplified in the following sentences, with the verbs *lalex* ‘to go’, *lavo* ‘to come’ and *lacet* ‘to exit’:¹

- (1) (a) **ba-zman** **ha-axaron** **lo** **holex** **l-i** **im** **banot**
at-the-time the-last NEG go.PART to-me with girls
‘Lately it hasn’t been going great for me with women’
(http://forums.nana10.co.il/Forum_2248/2/4/5296742.html)

¹The data for this study is taken from three sources: (1) The protocols of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) committees in the years 2006–2007 (which form a transcribed database of colloquial language of several registers). (2) A web-based corpus, based on the Israeli blogs server *Israblog* (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/>), that contains blogs from a wide range of ages and registers), from which I extracted 1,000 tokens of each of the relevant constructions and randomized for statistic purposes, together with sporadic instances of the different verbs in an oriented search for specific usage examples. And (3), my own interactions and attested examples.

- (b) **ba** **l-i** linsoa raxok ve-lehishtaxrer mi-kol
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to travel far and-to be released from-all
 ha-laxac she-misaviv
 the-pressure that-around
 ‘I feel like going far away and getting rid of all the pressure around me’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=250267>)
- (c) shilshom haya le-X yom huledet, aval lo **yaca**
 the day before yesterday was to-X birthday, but NEG exit.PRES.3SG
l-i laasot la braxa, lo liknot matana
 to-me to do her greeting, NEG to buy present
 ‘X had her birthday the day before yesterday, but I didn’t get to writing her a
 greeting card or get (her) a present’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=90381>)

One important aspect of the special use of these three motion verbs is that, prototypically, this use is allowed only in the specific environment exemplified in (1); in other words, the senses these motion verbs ‘have’ in (1) is structurally restricted to the form [V *le-X*]. In the present study I propose to account for this special use of motion verbs as a construction, in the sense that constructions are (in Construction Grammar terms): “pairings of syntax and semantics that can impose particular interpretations on expressions containing verbs which do not themselves lexically entail the given interpretations” (Goldberg 1995:220).

In the following section I describe the theoretical framework and background for the analysis I propose. In chapters 2 and 3 I analyze the construction itself – its several variants and its common constructional meaning, and propose a possible grammaticization cline that might have led to the creation of the construction.

1.2 Theoretical background

The analysis I propose for the special use of motion verbs presented above is made within a usage-based approach to language. In recent years, usage-based approaches to language have developed in many directions, especially within the cognitive linguistics framework. A usage-based model of language assumes an “intimate relation between linguistic structures and instances of use of language”, it is a model “in which the speaker’s linguistic system is fundamentally grounded in ‘usage events’: instances of a speaker’s producing

and understanding language” (Kemmer and Barlow 2000:viii). Kemmer and Barlow note that a usage-based model emphasizes the role of frequency of instances and treats comprehension and production as integral to the linguistic system. In a usage-based theory linguistic representations are not fixed entities but rather emergent.

Another important aspect of a usage-based model mentioned in Kemmer and Barlow (2000) is the intimate relation between usage, synchronic variation, and diachronic change (p. xviii). Frequency of use, together with certain discourse based conditions, may cause a change in the language structure. As noted in Kemmer and Barlow (2000), “a dynamic, usage-based conception of the internal linguistic system provides a natural framework for understanding why variation and change exist in the first place, as well as for understanding the mechanisms that produce and propagate patterns of variation and change” (pp. xix–xx).

Bybee (2006) proposes that in a usage-based theory “grammar is the cognitive organization of *one’s experience with* language” , rather than organization of language (p. 711, emphasis added). It is through usage events that the representation of language is built. Bybee (2006) argues for an exemplar representation of language experience in order to describe the type of cognitive representation of language, and notes that “constructions provide an appropriate vehicle for this type of representation” (p. 712). In section 3.1, discussing the cognitive representation of the construction I propose, I adopt some of these notions.

Another aspect of usage-based grammar is presented by Ariel (2008). Ariel (2008, chapter 5) argues for a discourse-oriented grammar, and especially for a salient discourse pattern that is the channel through which all external influences on language must go in order for a change to take place: “[i]t is ad hoc discourse-related considerations which prompt speakers to opt for one solution over another” (Ariel 2008:178). A particular cognitive distinction would become useful or not based on its discourse function. Ariel indicates that a novel meaning can evolve into a linguistic meaning only through “a motivated, transparent association between form and function, made available by heavy

reliance on a supportive context” (Ariel 2008:182). These ‘intimate relations’ between language and use will guide me throughout the study.

1.2.1 Construction Grammar

The framework in which I will analyze the data in this study is Construction Grammar, as described and developed in the works of Fillmore and Kay (for example, Fillmore et al. 1988; Kay 1997; Kay and Fillmore 1999), Goldberg (e.g. Goldberg 1995, 2003, 2005, 2006; Goldberg and Jackendoff 2004), Croft (2001) and Bybee (Bybee and Eddington, 2006; Bybee, 2006) among many others. Kay (1997) defines Construction Grammar as a non modular, generative,² non-derivational, monostratal grammatical approach, which aims at full coverage of the facts of any language under study without loss of linguistic generalizations, within and across languages (p. 123). One of the implications of such an approach is that the core-periphery distinction is abandoned. In a Construction Grammar theory, constructions are learned form-meaning correspondences, which are “posited whenever there is evidence that speakers cannot predict some aspect of their form, function, or use from other knowledge of language (i.e. from other constructions already posited to exist)” (Goldberg 2005:215).

A Construction Grammar theory rejects the dichotomy between syntax and the lexicon, and assumes a syntax–lexicon continuum (Croft 2001:17). Thus, constructions are morphemes,³ words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general linguistic patterns (Goldberg 2003:219). Table 1.1 is taken from Croft 2001, and summarizes the syntax–lexicon continuum.

In this spirit, Construction Grammar allows one to account for novel uses of verbs with the same tools and methods used to account for their common uses. As a result, one of the advantages of Construction Grammar is that implausible verb senses are avoided.

²Goldberg (1995) notes that “Construction Grammar is generative in the sense that it tries to account for the infinite number of expressions that are allowed by the grammar while attempting to account for the fact that an infinite number of other expressions are ruled out or disallowed” (p. 7).

³For some of the scholars in the field; it is a matter of debate (see Bybee 2006).

Construction type	Traditional name	Examples
Complex and (mostly) schematic	syntax	[SBJ <i>be</i> -TNS VERB- <i>en by</i> OBL]
Complex and (mostly) specific	idiom	[<i>pull</i> -TNS NP-' <i>s leg</i>]
Complex but bound	morphology	[NOUN- <i>s</i>], [VERB-TNS]
Atomic and schematic	syntactic category	[ADJ]
Atomic and specific	word/lexicon	[<i>this</i>], [<i>green</i>]

Table 1.1: The syntax–lexicon continuum (Croft 2001:17)

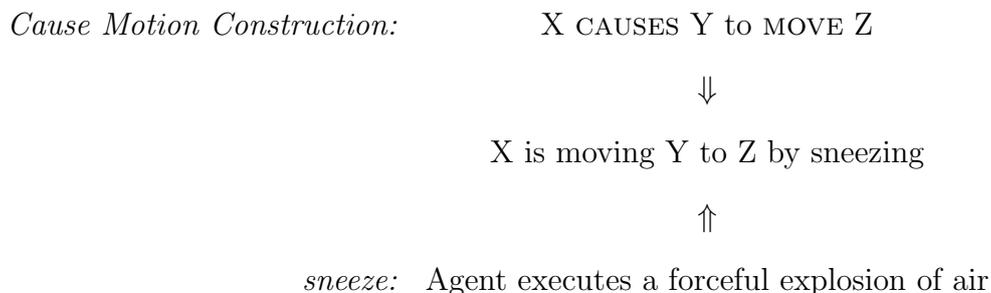
The Goldbergian ‘sneeze’ is an example for such cases (Goldberg 1995):

- (2) Frank sneezed the tissue off the table.

Assuming that *sneeze* is an intransitive verb with an ‘X ACTS’ lexical semantics would fail to explain how can it convey ‘moving the napkin off the table by sneezing’. However, a Construction Grammar account for such a use of the verb assumes that the structural environment [SUBJ [V OBJ OBL]] (in which V is a nonstative verb and OBL is a directional phrase) is a form that pairs with the meaning ‘X CAUSES Y to MOVE Z’ as its central meaning (Goldberg 1995:152–179). Thus we need not attribute to *sneeze* an additional meaning of a ‘cause motion verb’.

Construction Grammar distinguishes verbal semantics from constructional semantics. Thus it assumes both a top-down and a bottom-up system at the same time (Goldberg 1995, 2005), which means that constructional meaning and verbal meaning converge to create the overall meaning of the sentence. The interaction between verbs and constructions is one of the basic notions for understanding the machinery of Construction Grammar and one of its appealing advantages. Verbal semantics in construction grammar is accounted for in terms of Frame Semantics (e.g. Fillmore 1975, 1976). In frame Semantics definitions a verb meaning is expanded and includes its background frame, world and cultural knowledge (Goldberg 1995). Hence, schematic representation such as ‘X ACTS’ are treated as the *constructional* meaning; the mapping between semantics and syntax is done through constructions rather than through verbs. The distinction be-

tween constructional and verbal semantics enables to account for novel uses such as (2), imposing the constructional meaning onto the verbal meaning. The following simplified schematization captures these bidirectional relations:



The upper row, the constructional meaning, includes the argument roles; the Agent, Theme, etc. The bottom row, the verbal meaning, indicates frame-specific participant roles and the relevant parts of the frame to which the verb is related. The intermediate row is the overall meaning of (2), combining the constructional and verbal meanings together.

An important advantage of the theory is that *constructional polysemy* is allowed (Goldberg 1995; Goldberg and Jackendoff 2004). A constructional polysemy is a case in which different but related meanings are paired with the same form (Goldberg 1995:33). Such a polysemy captures a generalization among what may otherwise seem arbitrarily related forms. The semantics of such systematically related senses can be represented as a category of related meanings. Within the category, the meanings are related to a central meaning, which is the central sense of the construction. For instance, Goldberg (1995) presents the English caused–motion construction as a case of constructional polysemy; its central sense is schematized as ‘X CAUSES Y to MOVE Z’ (Goldberg 1995:161–162). The other, related senses are:

- i. The conditions of satisfaction associated with the act denoted by the predicate entail: ‘X causes Y to move Z’ (for example: *Sam ordered him out of the house*).

- ii. ‘X ENABLES Y to MOVE Z’ (for example: *Sam let Bill out of the room*).
- iii. ‘X PREVENTS Y from MOVING Comp(Z)’⁴ (for example: *Harry locked Joe into the bathroom*).
- iv. ‘X HELPS Y to MOVE Z’ (for example: *Sam helped him into the car*).

These senses are all related to the central sense which involves “manipulative causation and actual movement” (Goldberg 1995:162). The other senses can be described as extensions of the central sense. Goldberg (1995:164) notes a similarity between several cases of constructional polysemy, which indicates that the patterns of extensions of a construction are rather systematic. Goldberg suggests that patterns of polysemy recur, but are not absolutely predictable.

As mentioned earlier, the relevant semantic framework is Frame Semantics. Frame Semantics emphasizes the continuity between language and experience. Certain schemata or frameworks of concepts are linked together, and impose structure on aspects of human experience (Fillmore 1975). Scenes are associated with linguistic frames; frames and scenes activate each other. “[A]n account of the meaning and function of a lexical item can proceed from the underlying semantic frame to a characterization of the manner in which the item in question, through the linguistic structures that are built up around it, selects and highlights aspects or instances of that frame” (Johnson et al. 2001:11).

It is assumed that frames are associated in memory with other frames through shared linguistic material, and that scenes are related to each other through sameness or similarity of entities, relations or substance within the scene, or context of occurrence.

1.2.2 Motion verbs and motion events

In this section I present the relevant arguments regarding motion verbs from a Frame Semantics point of view (Fillmore 1975; Petrucci 1996; Johnson et al. 2001, *inter alia*).⁵

⁴The argument Comp(Z) codes the complement of the potential motion.

⁵Since the typological perspective on motion verbs is not directly related to my discussion I will not elaborate on this matter. However, I believe that an integration of the account given here into the vast

In a characterization of spatial deixis, Fillmore (1997) discusses the verbs *come* and *go*, and concludes that *come* indicates motion toward the location of either the speaker or the addressee at either coding time or reference time, or toward the location of the home base of either the speaker or the hearer at reference time, or toward the location of the central character (in the discourse) at reference time. With respect to the verb *go*, Fillmore concludes that it indicates motion toward a location which is distinct from the speaker's location at coding time.

Bybee et al. (1994) note that there are at least three ways that one may be associated with an activity: either "one is projected to engage in an activity", or one "is currently engaged in an activity", or one "has completed an activity" (p. 184). This is the event frame. In this spirit, it is assumed that the motion frame inherits the event frame. Thus, the three points noted by Bybee et al. are part of a motion frame as well. It is assumed that each sub-frame within a complex frame profiles a specific part of the whole event structure.

In Frame Semantics terms, the frame of motion includes an entity (Theme) that moves from one point (Source) to another (Goal) covering the space between the two (Path). This general frame can be inherited by several sub-frames that add profiling of each of the frame elements, the parts of the whole event structure. Thus we can find "Goal-profiling (*arrive, reach*), Source profiling (*leave, depart*), or Path-profiling (*traverse, cross*), or aspects of the manner of motion (*run, jog*) or assumptions about the shape-properties, etc., of any of the places involved (*insert, extract*)" (Johnson et al. 2001:76).

Discussing the frame of *arrive*, for instance, Cristobal (2001) notes that "[a]rriving views the scene holistically designating only the final state of the process, and therefore the Goal bears the profile" (p. 18).

Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1992) discuss the lexical semantics of verbs of motion from a different theoretical perspective, and propose a tripartite classification: motion verbs that include a specification of the direction of motion, verbs that include a speci-

discussion of motion verbs and motion events in works such as Talmy (1985, 2000); Slobin and Hoiting (1994); Slobin (1999, 2004) and Pourcel and Kopecka (2006) can be fruitful and interesting.

cation of the manner of motion and of a directed external cause of the motion, and verbs that specify the manner of motion but do not include a directed external cause. The verbs that concern us here are three ‘directed motion’ verbs, in that they do not denote manner of motion. However, manner of motion can be incorporated into the construction in the sense of expanding the prototypical meaning.

1.2.3 Transitivity

The construction which is the focus of this study will be characterized in terms of Transitivity, as presented in Hopper and Thompson (1980). Transitivity is taken to be a semantic continuum, a graded, discourse-determined scale. Table 1.2 is taken from Hopper and Thompson (1980), presenting the components of Transitivity, according to which an utterance is determined to be high or low on the Transitivity scale.

For the purpose of the analysis proposed here, I adopt the following parameters to determine the effect of the construction on the Transitivity level of a clause:

- i. **Volitionality:** The “degree of planned involvement of an A [an Agent–E.D.] in the activity of the verb” (Hopper and Thompson, 1980:265). A volitional Actor is acting purposefully, he is the instigator of an event, and he has a high degree of control over the action and over his own intentions (Hopper and Thompson 1980; Guerrero Medina 2005).
- ii. **Individuation:** “A highly individuated object (i.e. *proper, human, animate, concrete, singular, count, definite/referential*) is more likely to be regarded as totally affected than a non-individuated object” (Guerrero Medina, 2005:351). In this respect, the more individuated the object, the more it’s likely be regarded as totally affected, and thus, the more Transitive the utterance.
- iii. **Aspect and Punctuality:** Telic predicates “which specify an endpoint or a conceptual boundary” (Hopper and Thompson, 1980:285) are higher in Transitivity than atelic predicates. Punctual actions are regarded as more effectively transferred to

their patients than non-punctual or durative actions; “actions which are inherently ongoing” (Hopper and Thompson, 1980:252). That is, the more punctual and telic – the more Transitive, and vice versa.

	HIGH	LOW
PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants, A and O	1 participant
KINESIS	action	non-action
ASPECT	telic	atelic
PUNCTUALITY	punctual	non-punctual
VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
AFFIRMATION	affirmative	negative
MODE	realis	irrealis
AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
INDIVIDUATION OF O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

Table 1.2: Transitivity parameters (Hopper and Thompson 1980:252)

1.2.4 Impersonal sentences and Experiencer Subjects

In the beginning of the present chapter I raised a question about the special use of motion verbs in sentences such as (3), and argued that a Construction Grammar answer would be the appropriate approach to the problem.

- (3) (a) **ba** **l-i** glida
 come.PART to-me icecream
 ‘I feel like having ice cream.’
- (b) **holex** **l-i** tov
 go.PART to-me good
 ‘I’m doing good.’
- (c) lo **yaca** **l-i** likro af sefer shel D.B.S.
 NEG exit.PAST.3sg to-me to read no book of D.B.S.
 ‘I didn’t have a chance to read a D.B.S book.’

Before zooming into the analysis of the data itself, I would like to make a slight regression to a wider context in order to put forward a few theoretical and typological notions.

Sentences such as (3) seem to be very similar to what is regarded in the literature as ‘Impersonal sentences’ or ‘Experiencer Subjects’ such as the Hebrew (4) and the Malayalam (5), cited from Mohanan and Mohanan (1990):

(4) (a) tov l-i
 good to-me
 ‘I’m good’

(b) xam l-i
 hot to-me
 ‘I’m hot’

(5) kuṭṭik’ə taṇuṭṭ
 child.DAT be cold.PAST
 ‘The child was cold’

One of the common properties of such sentences is their tendency to occur with a dative marked nominal, in a very similar way to (3).⁶

‘Impersonal sentences’ are traditionally defined as containing predicates which do not select a nominative argument, such as weather verbs in many languages (Barðdal 2004:108). ‘Experiencer subjects’ are subjects which relate to the Experiencer role rather than the Agent; they show a tendency to occur as what may be defined as a dative Subject (or other non-canonical nominative Subject; see Verma and Mohanan (1990) for an intensive discussion regarding the grammatical status of such dative subjects).

The dative marked Subject is a known typological property of a large group of South Asian languages. Sridhar (1979) explores the notion of Subject with reference to this group of languages in general and to Kannada in particular, noting that the dative Subject construction “enjoys an extremely wide range of distribution, which makes it one of the most frequently used constructions in these languages” (p. 100–101). The set of predicates involved in the dative Subject construction in South Asian languages includes predicates denoting doubt, belief, perception, liking, disliking, need, necessity, obligation, ability, physical and mental attributes and dispositions, transient physical states, inherent and

⁶Following Berman 1982a, I account for the *le-* preposition as dative. Indeed, it seems that it functions much like prototypical dative morphemes in languages that show case marking.

inalienable properties, kinship, possession, and what is most relevant to our discussion – judgment and wanting.

Another recurring attested property of such sentences is their stative nature. Sridhar (1979) notes that while the verbs that occur with the nominative Subject may be ‘stative’ or ‘entering into a state’ as well as active, the verbs that occur in the dative Subject construction are all either ‘stative’ or ‘entering into a state’, but not active, and denote an Experiencer or a Recipient. Such a stative oriented interpretation is found also in Bhojpuri and Magahi (Verma, 1990).

In a discussion about the Subjecthood of the dative-marked element that is related to experience verbs, Abbi (1990) notes that in these South Asian languages the dative nominal can be neither the instigator of the action, nor one that did something. The predicates that are related to dative marked nominals are characterized by Abbi as being “experiential verbs which signify a state. Each verb is accompanied by a typical animate being who is in the state of experiencing” (p. 254). These verbs are termed State Experiential verbs: “[a] state experiential verb specifies that an experiencer is in a certain state or condition with/without respect to a given object. It is accompanied by an experiencer noun which specifies the one who is in the psychological state of sensation, emotion, cognition. It may also be accompanied by a patient noun which specifies the stimulus for or the content of the experiencer” (ibid).

Berman (1982a) considers and characterizes a set of dative marked nominals in Hebrew, generalizing four such uses under the definition of relating to the semantic concept of the Affectee of an event (p. 37). Berman presents sentences such as (4) – repeated here as (6) – arguing that “dative marking of the experiencer is well attested with numerous stative predicates in Hebrew” (p. 40):

- (6) (a) *tov li*
good to-me
‘I’m good’

- (b) xam l-i
hot to-me
'I'm hot'

In a discussion about subjectless constructions in Hebrew, Berman (1980) presents sentences such as (6), defining them as a function of circumstances impinging upon the experiencer and “a way in which Hebrew can highlight the predicate and downgrade the Experiencer” (p. 766). Berman (1982a) suggests that “the widespread use of the predicate–dative versions in preference to the Subject–predicate options can be explained as a means of effectively downgrading the agent, hence taking attention away from any participant as perpetrator of a given action or event” (p. 41). Berman goes on to note that the use of the dative “makes it possible to present an event as agentless, hence marking it more impersonal”, and that several sets of sentences such as (6) can be viewed as a subset of cases where “use of a dative NP serves to weaken the concept of agency while encoding experientially or [...] possession” (p. 43).

Berman concludes that the dative in Hebrew covers uses which denote a set of referents, from the most extraneous onlooker type of NP through the most internal, Subject identical type of reflexive, co-referential dative marked NP. Berman (1982a) reaches the conclusion that this function of the dative “allows reference to someone outside the event [...] allows the language to encode the Experiencer/Affectee rather than the Agent [...] makes it possible to extend the canonic Dative roles of recipient/benefactee to possessors, deprivées, and locatees [...] providing a uniform marking of different case roles all sharing the semantic function of AFFECTEE and allowing for a coherent characterization of the relation of Indirect Object in modern Hebrew” (Berman 1982a:56, emphasis original).

The function of marking some kind of Experiencer or Affectee is not unique to Hebrew, and is attributed to the dative in a variety of languages such as the South Asian languages presented earlier and other languages as well. The Ethical Dative or the Inalienable Possession Dative, for instance, mark such a role. Among these languages one can find Germanic languages (German and Icelandic, and Yiddish which will not be represented here), Romance (French, Spanish), and Slavic (Russian, and Polish which will not be

represented here):

- (7) (a) Mir ist kalt.
me.DAT is cold
'I'm freezing' (German)
- (b) Mir wurde geholfen.
me.DAT was helped
'I was helped' (German)
- (Eythórsson and Barðdal, 2005)
- (8) (a) Mér er kalt.
me.DAT is cold
'I'm freezing' (Icelandic)
- (b) Mér var hjálpad.
me.DAT was helped
'I was helped' (Icelandic)
- (Eythórsson and Barðdal, 2005)
- (9) (a) je me suis déchiré le pantalon
I me.DAT be.PRESENT to tear the pants
'I tore my pants.' (French)
- (Halevy, 2007)
- (b) je te bois dix pastis en trois minutes
I you.DAT drink ten Pastis in three minutes
'I can drink *you* ten Pernods in three minutes' (French)
- (Berman, 1982b, citing Leclère, 1975)
- (10) Me gusta la cerveza.
me.DAT pleases the beer
'I like beer.' (Spanish)
- (Hopper and Thompson, 1980)
- (11) Žizn' vy mne iskalečili
life.ACC 2pl DAT destroy
'You ruined my life' (Russian)
- (Šaríc, 2002)

We can see that the dative can mark an Experiencer (in Spanish (10)), an Affectee or Experiencer of the weather (in German (7 a) and Icelandic (8 a), as well as in Hebrew), and several kinds of Affectees who are not immediate participants in the action (French (9 b), Russian (11)). These data suggest that the dative form is indeed Affectee-oriented cross linguistically.

Barðdal (2004) considers data from three Germanic languages (Icelandic, German and Faroese) in which there exists a phenomenon of dative marking of the (logical) Subject in impersonal sentences. This phenomenon is traditionally explained by referring to the relevant predicates, claiming that they are ‘Experience-based’. Barðdal, however, looks beyond the concept of thematic roles “in order to provide a satisfactory motivation for the non-canonical case marking of the (logical) subject” (p. 107). Barðdal offers a cognitive oriented solution and argues that these are cases of Subjectification, in which “the non-canonical case marking of the (logical) subject has come to be an expression of the attitudes/judgments of the speaker and not an expression of the attitude of the referent denoted by the (logical) subject” (ibid).

Barðdal characterizes the different predicates that occur in the impersonal constructions in Icelandic, German and Faroese. These include emotion verbs, verbs of attitude, cognition verbs, perception verbs, verbs of bodily states and verbs denoting changes in bodily states. Considering the nature of these classes of predicates Barðdal concludes that the dative (together with accusative and genitive) expresses affectedness to a much higher degree than nominative, and that “logical subjects of experience-based predicates share this meaning of affectedness with prototypical objects of transitive predicates, since they typically involve conceptualizations construing individuals as entities being subject to external forces and happenings. Experience-based predicates [...] lack the causal structure associated with the transitive construction of a transmission of force from an initiator to an end point [...] Instead, they activate a construal profiling the affected endpoint itself” (p. 116).

A second set of impersonal predicates that Barðdal surveys is the “happenstance predicates”. Among these predicates – and important to our discussion regarding the Hebrew dative construction – are verbs that denote performance or success and verbs of advancement, both physical and mental (‘wash ashore’, ‘make progress’). Barðdal notes that “verbs of advancement are semantically/metaphorically related to verbs of success” (p. 118). Another relevant set of verbs is termed by Barðdal “Personal properties”. This set includes verbs denoting physical properties such as ‘having a loud voice’, mental properties such as ‘be natural for somebody’ and verbs of resemblance. According to Barðdal, property verbs are inherently stative, and experience-based verbs denote transitory states (p. 117).

Barðdal concludes that the core function of the non-canonical case marking of (logical) subject in these three languages is to signal affectedness. The sets of different verb types are organized together under their shared semantics, related to each other in a semantic map of subconstructions.

In order to account for the constructions presented in the beginning of the chapter, I adopt the notions of dative marking of an Affectee and an Experiencer, and the stative nature of the dative construction. The Hebrew Dative Construction is described in Berman (1982a) as making it possible “to present an event as agentless, hence marking it more impersonal”, a construction in which the “use of a dative NP serves to weaken the concept of agency while encoding experientially” (p. 43). In the following chapter I take this generalization of dative constructions to be a super-construction, having several sub-constructions that share with it structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects. I account for the special use of motion verbs as being a special case of a motion verb headed variant of the Hebrew Dative Construction.

Chapter 2

The Lower Transitivity Construction

Most instances of constructions similar to the ones presented in chapter 1, both in Hebrew and in Germanic, Slavic and South Asian languages, include experience-based predicates or a ‘basic’ dative meaning of Benefactive/Recipient. The construction focused on here seems also to include this cross linguistic known use of an Experiencer or Affectee marking dative.

The argument of the present chapter will be as follows: First, in section 2.1 I argue for the existence of the construction; I show that a compositional account would not suffice to explain these uses of motion verbs, and that a constructionist approach is better suited for describing and analyzing the data. In section 2.2 I discuss the function of the construction, starting with a separate account for each of the three variants of the construction (sections 2.2.1–2.2.3). I generalize over the three variants in chapter 3, presenting the function and pragmatic effect they share. I thus characterize the *constructional meaning* associated with the constant form.

Consider again the sentences presented above in (3), repeated here as (12):

- (12) (a) **ba** **l-i** glida
 come.PART to-me icecream
 ‘I feel like having ice cream.’
- (b) **holex** **l-i** tov
 go.PART to-me good
 ‘I’m doing good.’

- (c) lo **yaca** **l-i** likro af sefer shel D.B.S.
 NEG exit.PAST.3sg to-me to read no book of D.B.S.
 ‘I didn’t have a chance to read a D.B.S book.’

In the following sections I will show that these three sentences can be generalized as a construction with a function of profiling a non-initial state within an event and lowering the Transitivity level of the clause and with a pragmatic function of reducing responsibility on the part of the initiator of an event. I propose to term this construction the Lower Transitivity Construction (henceforth, the LTC).

2.1 Arguing for the existence of the Lower Transitivity Construction

The focus of this chapter is the use of motion verbs in the Lower Transitivity Construction (LTC) as demonstrated in (12) above and (1), repeated here as (13):

- (13) (a) ba-zman ha-axaron lo **holex** **l-i** im banot
 at-the-time the-last NEG go.PART to-me with girls
 ‘Lately it hasn’t been going great for me with women’
 (http://forums.nana10.co.il/Forum_2248/2/4/5296742.html)
- (b) **ba** **l-i** linsoa raxok ve-lehishtaxrer mi-kol
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to travel far and-to be released from-all
 ha-laxac she-misaviv
 the-pressure that-around
 ‘I feel like going far away and getting rid of all the pressure around me’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=250267>)
- (c) shilshom haya le-X yom huledet, aval lo **yaca**
 the day before yesterday was to-X birthday, but NEG exit.PRES.3SG
l-i laasot la braxa, lo liknot matana
 to-me to do her greeting, NEG to buy present
 ‘X had her birthday the day before yesterday, but I didn’t get to writing her a greeting card or get (her) a present’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=90381>)

In the present section I argue for the existence of the motion verb headed construction and show that the non-compositionality of its meaning can be accounted for by positing a construction-level function.

In the three sentences above a motion verb is used without a spatial meaning, and its meaning is restricted to this specific construction. In this sense it is used here as a ‘light verb’ (Grimshaw and Mester 1988; Mohanan and Mohanan 1990; Chafe 1994; Thompson and Hopper 2001): it has an impoverished semantic structure and it seems to assign no theta roles. As can be seen from the English translations of the sentences in (13), no motion event is conveyed. Thus, the question arises, what is the function of the motion verbs under discussion? In the present section I will focus on showing that indeed a constructional approach is needed in order to account for the use of these verbs in these sentences; the three sentences in (13) have meanings that are not predictable from either the syntactic/semantic characteristics of the verbs or their argument structure, and cannot be accounted for compositionally. My claim is that the non-spatial meanings of the verbs and the lowered transitivity function are contributed by the construction.

The existence of the construction can be detected by comparing (13 a), repeated here in (15), with (14) which is the common, spatial use of *holex* ‘go’:

(14) pitom hevanti she-ani lo **holex** **le-hafgana** demokratit
suddenly understand.PAST.1sg that I NEG go.PART to-demonstration democratic
‘Suddenly I understood I wasn’t going to a democratic demonstration’
(07/03/2006: Parliamentary Inquiry Committee, Amona events)

(15) ba-zman ha-axaron lo **holex** **li** im banot
at-the-time the-last NEG go.PART to-me with girls
‘Lately it hasn’t been going great for me with women’
(http://forums.nana10.co.il/Forum_2248/2/4/5296742.html)

In (14), the verb *holex* ‘go’ has a human Subject (*ani* ‘I’) and the complement is a spatial goal (*hafgana* ‘a demonstration’ which takes place somewhere in the real world) which is marked as GOAL by the *le* ‘to’ dative. Thus, the only possible interpretation for the utterance in (14) includes a spatial interpretation for *holex* ‘go’; the Subject referent understood that he is not *going* to a democratic demonstration, but rather to a place in which something else would be happening.

(15), however, is different in several respects. The motion verb *holex* ‘go’ has no syntactic Subject and the constituent that would otherwise be a GOAL indirect Object is

occupied here by a cliticized pronoun, which is ungrammatical in the motion-use of the verb; a [*le* ‘to’ +pronoun] form cannot function as a spatial GOAL marker of a motion verb in Hebrew. In order to indicate a spatial goal, *le* ‘to’ has to be accompanied by a full noun (which is demonstrated in (14)) or an explicit spatial deictic like *sham* ‘there’:

- (16) (a) *ani holex le-becefer*
 I go.PART to-school
 ‘I’m going to school’
- (b) *ani holex le-sham*
 I go.PART to-there
 ‘I’m going there’
- (c) *ani holex le-moshe*
 I go.PART to-Moshe
 ‘I’m going to Moshe’s’
- (d) * *ani holex l-o*
 I go.PART to-him
- (e) *ani holex el-av*
 I go.PART to-him
 ‘I’m going to his place’

(16 a) is perfectly fine, and has an inanimate entity as the GOAL argument of the motion verb. In (16 b) *sham* ‘there’ is used instead of the full NP; it can function as the GOAL argument since it refers to a concrete place. (16 c) however, is grammatical only in a very restricted use, even though it has a full NP as the GOAL argument. Since *Moshe* is a proper noun, one has to assume that *Moshe* is either a particular place, or accepted as such among the interlocutors, or a place which is related to the person *Moshe* (such as his home or office) in order for the utterance to be grammatical.

In (16 d) we can see that [*le* ‘to’ +pronoun] is inappropriate as GOAL when it refers to an animate object. The only way to use a pronoun in order to refer to an animate Object as GOAL is to use an *el* ‘to’ preposition, which is the case in (16 e).⁷ We can see,

⁷However, a [*le* ‘to’ + pronoun] can function as a spatial goal as a complement of *send* type of verbs: *hu shalax li mixtav* ‘he sent me a letter’. That may indicate the Affectee-marker role of this dative, along the lines of Berman (1980, 1982a, 1982b).

then, that *holex* ‘go’ cannot be accompanied by a [*le* ‘to’ + pronoun] Object in its spatial sense. The same observations are true for the other two verbs under discussion: *ba* ‘come’ (17 a), and *yoce* ‘exit’ (18 a); they cannot be accompanied by a [*le* ‘to’ + pronoun] GOAL argument when used to denote a spatial action, and notice the differences in their sense and grammaticality when there is no Subject argument:

(17) (a) * *ani ba l-o*
 I come.PART to-him

(b) *ba l-o*
 come.PART to-him
 ‘he feels like/He felt like’

(18) (a) * *ani yoce l-o*
 I exit.PART to-him

(b) *yoce l-o*
 exit.PART to-him
 ‘He happened to’

A motion interpretation is ruled out in (15) and (17–18). The only possible interpretation for (15) is that the speaker evaluates a situation in which lately he has no success with women. The ‘success’ meaning cannot be attributed directly to *holex* ‘go’, unless we claim that one of its lexical meanings is ‘experiencing success’, which is moreover restricted to occurrence in the specific construction.

Since such an analysis is undesirable, a construction should be posited in order to account for sentences such as (15) and (17 b–18 b). The specific meanings the verbs manifest in the construction will be specified in the following sections.

2.2 The function: Lower Transitivity

When characterizing such a case as a ‘partially specified construction’ (Goldberg 1995; Croft 2001; Bybee 2006), two main questions need to be addressed: First, what is the meaning of the construction; can we define a constant meaning into which the varying

meanings of the verbs will be incorporated? The second question refers to the verbs; what sense is it that *ba* ‘come’, for instance, has in the construction? Is it different from its ‘normal’, lexical sense? A consequent question is *how* these verbs have come to manifest these meanings in the construction.

In the context of these questions, the following sections are organized as follows: Sections 2.2.1– 2.2.3 discuss each of the three motion verbs separately, elaborating on their sense and function in the construction, proposing an answer for the second question, concerning the verbal meaning. After establishing the fine grained characteristics of the construction, in chapter 3 I attempt to answer the first question regarding the construction as a whole, generalizing over the three different verbs with one prototypical constructional meaning. The question of *how* will be addressed in the grammaticization proposal, in section 3.2.

2.2.1 *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’

The first variant of the construction I account for includes the motion verb *holex* ‘go’. In the present section I describe in detail the meaning of the *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ construction; the specific function it serves and the differences between *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and its higher Transitive counterpart.

In a very descriptive and intuitive way, *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ means ‘X succeeds’, ‘X is doing well’, ‘X is making progress’. Consider (19), for example, in which the writer reports on his success at a new job:

- (19) **holex** **l-i** meule im ha-avoda. beemet. ani maamin she-beod xodesh
 go.PART to-me great with the-job. truly. I believe.PART that-in month
 xodshaym ani eheye kvar exad me-ha-ovdim ha-mictaynim
 two-months I be.FUT already one of-the-workers the-exceptional.PL
 ‘I’m doing great at work. Really. I believe I’ll already be one of the employees of the month in a month or two.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=6537>)

The sentence is part of a sequence of such reports on several aspects of the writer’s life. The writer describes an event (or a series of events) of ‘work experience’ in which he (i.e.,

the dative nominal referent) is the Actor, an immediate participant (together with the work being done). However, he construes the event in a certain way which places him as a non-immediate, remote participant. More precisely, the writer presents himself (the dative nominal referent) as a non-Actor, rather than as the Actor of ‘working’. Simply put, in the same way that the speaker conveys his sensations in (20 a) or feelings in (20 b) with respect to a state of affairs (that is, his being an experiencer of some state), (19) above and (20 c) convey the writer’s experience with respect to the progress of an event or series of events:

- (20) (a) *xam* l-i
hot to-me
‘I’m hot’
- (b) *acuv* l-i
sad to-me
‘I’m sad’
- (c) *holex* l-i
go.PART to-me
‘I’m doing well’

As was noted earlier, both (19) and (20 c) can be roughly translated as ‘I succeed’. However, the more appropriate translation of English ‘succeed’ is Hebrew *macliax*. My claim here is that *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *macliax* ‘succeed’ differ with respect to the degree of Transitivity they project on the clause; *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ is the Lower Transitive alternative of [SUBJ *macliax* ‘succeed’]. Two main arguments support this claim, concerning three of the ten Hopper and Thompson’s (1980) Transitivity parameters. The first is Volitionality, the second is Punctuality (together with Aspect).

Starting with Volitionality, consider (19) again, here repeated as (21 a) and a slight variation on it, with *macliax* ‘succeed’ instead of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ (21 b):

- (21) (a) **holex** l-i meule im ha-avoda. beemet. ani maamin she-beod
go.PART to-me great with the-job. truly. I believe.PART that-in
xodesh xodshaym ani eheye kvar exad me-ha-ovdim
month two-months I be.FUT already one of-the-workers
ha-mictaynim
the-exceptional.PL

‘I’m doing great at work. Really. I believe I’ll already be one of the employees of the month in a month or two.’

- (b) ani **macliax** meule b-a-avoda. beemet. ani maamin she-beod
 I succeed.PART great in-the-job. truly. I believe.PART that-in
 xodesh xodshaym ani eheye kvar exad me-ha-ovdim
 month two-months I be.FUT already one of-the-workers
 ha-mictaynim
 the-exceptional.PL
 ‘I’m really becoming successful at work. Really. I believe I’ll already be one of the employees of the month in a month or two.’

In both sentences the writer asserts that he is doing well at the new job. However, unlike in (21 a), in (21 b) it is emphasized that he is responsible for the success he is experiencing. Thus in the following sentence, in which the writer predicts that in a few months he will be an exceptional employee, the progress he will have will be due to his hard work. In (21 a), on the other hand, the fact that the writer is the actual Actor in the ‘work experience’ is downgraded, and the writer places himself as a rather passive participant in the reported event.

An example in which the writer chooses *macliax* ‘succeed’ is given in (22):

- (22) ha-mxaber **macliax** kan, be-ofen acrobati mamash, lenatek kol
 the-author succeed.PART here, in-way acrobatic really, to disconnect all
 maga im ha-meciut
 contact with the-reality
 ‘The author manages here, in a truly acrobatic way, to disconnect (himself) completely from reality.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/tblogread.asp?blog=24829>)

(22) is about the ability of a writer to do something, and his “acrobatic attempts” in achieving success.⁸ Since the Actor is so prominently profiled here, replacing *macliax* ‘succeed’ with a variant of the *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ construction results in inappropriateness:

- (23) # **I-a-mxaber holex** kan, be-ofen acrobati mamash, lenatek kol
 to-the-author go.PART here, in-way acrobatic really, to disconnect all
 maga im ha-meciut
 contact with the-reality

⁸It may be the case that the sentence is meant to be understood ironically. However, both interpretations rely on the high Transitivity nature of *macliax* ‘succeed’.

(23) shows an asymmetry with respect to the author’s Volitionality. On the one hand, a sentence consists of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ is interpreted as conveying an evaluation of a process that the referent of the dative nominal (the author in this case) *has gone through*. Thus it is possible and appropriate to use the construction to say that ‘after many trials, the author seems to deal pretty well with the problem’. On the other hand, (23) emphasizes that the author’s success in accomplishing his mission has been “acrobatic”, and thus (probably) intended. Such an intended action cannot be understood as an action that the author ‘has simply gone through’; it is an action he *initiated*. This is the first difference between the two alternatives, and the first claim regarding the degree of Transitivity of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ is:

- I. Using *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’, the speaker construes an Actor of an event as a relatively passive participant who is ‘going through’ the event; as an experiencer of a stimulus (the stimulus being the progress). The activity is construed as nonvolitional. Thus, *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ lowers the clause’s degree of Transitivity with respect to Volitionality.

The definition of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ as construing an Actor (who causes a progression) as an experiencer of a progress (as a stimulus) can explain the fact that the dative nominal is restricted to [+Animate] objects:

- (24) (a) **ha-oto haze macliax** lixov ba-aliya afile she-hu tarante
 the-car this succeed.PRES.3SG to drag along the slope even that-it jalopy
 ‘This car can drag its way along the slope even though it’s jalopy.’
- (b) ?? **holex** **l-a-oto haze** lixov ba-aliya afile she-hu
 go.PRES.3SG to-the-car this to drag along the slope even that-it
 tarante
 jalopy

(24 b) is inappropriate since the car, as an inanimate object, can be part of a successful progress (as in (24 a)), but cannot be construed as if the progress stimulates it to feel (or experience) ‘success’.

The second Transitivity-related difference has already been mentioned above implicitly. I noted that *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ evaluates a process or a dynamic event that the nominal referent is going through rather than initiating.⁹ The verb *macliax* ‘succeed’ is more punctual; it is related to a rather dichotomous scene in which one either succeed or not. *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’, on the other hand, is much more gradiant; it can relate to a long process and can be modified more easily than *macliax* ‘succeed’:

- (25) (a) **ex holex le-xa?**
 how go.PRES.3SG to-you?
 ‘How is it going for you?’
- (b) **ha-kol holex li garua, mamash lo tov ani mishtagea**
 the-all go.PART to-me very-bad, really NEG good I go-crazy.PART
 kvar.
 already.
 ‘Everything’s going terribly, really bad, I’m losing my mind already.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=513419>)
- (c) **be-ofen klali holex I-i lo ra**
 in-manner general go.PRES.3SG to-me NEG bad
 ‘Generally I’m doing not bad.’

In (25 a) the speaker is asking about the progress of the addressee in his writing. The choice to use *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ rather than *macliax* ‘succeed’ is due to the punctual, restrictive nature of *macliax* ‘succeed’. Asking whether someone is ‘succeeding’ profiles the result, and leaves little room for explanations, hesitations and modifications; it profiles a narrower range of success than *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’. On the other hand, *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ is ‘open-ended’. *holex* ‘go’, as an atelic verb, relates to and evaluates a process that stretches along some interval (or intervals) of time. *macliax* ‘succeed’ (in the use relevant to the present discussion) relates to a point in time (which may follow a process, or precede one), in which the result of some action is being perceived and evaluated. The result of an action can be either ‘good’ or ‘bad’; in other words, it can be what the

⁹This should not be confused with the fact that the verb *holex* in the construction conveys that it is the event or process that ‘goes over’ the nominal reference; in both cases the nominal is a passive participant in the event. It is a matter of whether we consider the participant’s point of view, or the event’s; each point of view accommodates a different sense of ‘go’: the event ‘goes over’ the passive participant that is ‘going through’ what is happening in the event.

Actor of the action expected it to be, or the other way around. A process or a dynamic event, however, consists of many sub-events and sub-results; many intermediate states. An evaluation of an ongoing, dynamic event or process may include doubts or hesitations, together with (and within) the overall ‘tendency’ of the evaluated event. Thus, *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ can be modified by *garua* ‘very bad’ (25 b) or *lo ra* ‘not bad’ (25 c), conveying something close to ‘all in all, everything is going well’, rather than mere success. *macliax* ‘succeed’ cannot be modified in this way, and has to be negated in order to convey such non-success:

(26) (a) * ani **macliax** garua
 I succeed.PRES.1SG very-bad

(b) ani lo **macliax**
 I NEG succeed.PRES.1SG
 ‘I can’t do it.’

macliax ‘succeed’ is restricted to ‘success’; it does not profile a process. The difference between *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *macliax* ‘succeed’ is actually a difference in denotation: While *macliax* ‘succeed’ denotes ‘success’ emanating from the Actor, *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ denotes an experience of a progress. Thus, if an event does not progress, for instance, the initiator of the event (the one responsible for the progress) can be construed as if the absence of progress stimulates him to feel ‘no success’. The ‘progress’, or durative feature of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ is summarized in II:

II. Using *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’, the speaker evaluates the general progression of a process or a dynamic event. No punctual success point is profiled, thus the clause’s degree of Transitivity is relatively low with respect to Aspect and Punctuality.

The following example can lead us to a conclusion of the discussion about *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’:

(27) okey, az lo mamash **holex** I-i be-ze. b-a-ktana,
 OK, so NEG really go.PRES.3SG to-me in-that. in-the-small,
 nishtaper. nitamec **ve-ani betuxa she-nacliax**
 get better.FUT.1PL. try hard.FUT.1PL and-I certain that-succeed.FUT.1PL

‘OK, so I’m not really succeeding in (doing) it. No biggie. We’ll get better at it. We’ll make an effort and I’m sure we’ll succeed.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=120442>)

Comparing the degree of Transitivity in the first and the third clauses of (27), we can see that the *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ clause carries a low degree of Transitivity in terms of Volitionality, Punctuality and Aspect. The third clause in (27) is an example of switching to a construal of a similar event with a higher degree of Transitivity, a switch which is motivated by the claims and arguments made above regarding the relatively low Transitivity of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and the differences between *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *macliax* ‘succeed’.

I will now turn to the other two variants of the construction. The pragmatic effect of lower Transitivity will be discussed in chapter 3.

2.2.2 *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’

The *ba* ‘come’ headed variant of the construction may seem quite harder to account for in terms of ‘pure’ Transitivity parameters. In many cases, it seems that there are no differences in the use of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ and its potential counterpart – *roce* ‘want’. However, in the present section I argue that the difficulty to point at the specific differences is a result of the fact that *roce* ‘want’ covers a wider range of degrees of Transitivity, *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ serving as an alternative only when is restricted to low Transitivity. That is, *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ creates a lower Transitivity interpretation of the clause.

The prototypical uses of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ are exemplified in (28):

- (28) (a) b-a-klali ha-kol tov ve-kaele. **ba** **l-i** mesiba tova.
 in-the-general all good and stuff. come.PRES.3SG to-me party good.
 ba **l-i** linsoa raxok ve-lehishtaxrer mi-kol
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to travel far and-to be released from-all
 ha-laxac she-misaviv
 the-pressure that-around
 ‘Generally speaking, everything is good and so on and so forth. I feel like having a great party. I feel like going far away and getting rid of all the pressure around me’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=250267>)

- (b) hi shalxa l-i hodaa be-svivot shmone b-a-erev im
 she send.PAST.3SG.FM to-me message at-around eight in-the-evening if
ba **l-i** lavo, be-spontaniyut mevorexet she-kazo... az
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to come in-spontaneous blessed that-such... so
 kafacti al otobus (shlosha, le-yeter diyuk) ve-nasati
 jump.PAST.1SG on bus (three, to-more accurate) and-travel.PAST.1SG
 ‘She sent me a message around 8:00 PM, asking if I feel like coming, in this blessed
 spontaneity... So, I jumped on the bus (three to be exact), and went.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=339>)
- (c) **ba** **l-i** lehaki (ve-hapaam me-acmi... lo
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to vomit (and-this time because-of-myself... NEG
 biglalxa)
 because of you)
 ‘I feel sick to my stomach (this from myself, not because of you)’
 (http://reader.feedshow.com/show_items-feed)

The prototypical *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ can be translated as ‘X feels like’. It conveys an impulsive desire which is either (interpretable as) volitional as in (28 a), non-volitional in essence as in (28 c), or just denoting a rather indifferent, neutral desire with respect to the degree of emotional involvement of the dative nominal referent (28 b). I claim that these prototypical uses form a means of lowering the Transitivity of a clause by construing an event in an alternative way with respect to Volitionality and Abstractness vs. Concreteness.

In order to characterize the low Transitivity function, we need to consider the differences between *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ and *roce* ‘want’. These can be detected in the attested written examples in (29), in which the writers switch between the two forms:

- (29) (a) **ba** **l-i** lishtot, aval ani lo **roce** shum davar mi-ma
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to drink, but I NEG want nothing from-what
 she-maciim l-i
 that-offer.PRES.3SG.PL to-me
 ‘I feel like drinking, but I don’t want anything they’re offering.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=86194>)
- (b) **ba** **l-i** lamut, ani **roce** lehitabed
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to die, I want to kill myself
 ‘I feel like dying, I want to kill myself.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=427655>)
- (c) **ba** **l-i** sigaria, ani **roce** leashen
 come.PRES.3SG to-me cigarette, I want to smoke

‘I feel like having a cigarette, I want to smoke.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=427655>)

First, note that *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ is related to (or used in a context of) rather abstract concepts: non-individuated, nonspecific and undifferentiated. (28 a) above, for instance, begins with an ‘introduction’ that the following utterance is a general statement, not a specific one (*baklali hakol tov vekaale*, ‘generally speaking, everything is good and so on and so forth’). Similarly, in (29 a) the writer starts the utterance by asserting a general desire ‘to have a drink’; when relating to the fact that there is nothing *specific* he would like to drink, the writer switches to the more appropriate (and higher in Transitivity) lexical choice, *roce* ‘want’. In both (29 b) and (29 c) the structure is similar and involves a stative–eventive distinction too; the utterance begins with a general desire to be in a certain state (to die) or to have something (a stative predicate too), and goes on to specify the desire: in (29 b) it is the action which needs to be taken in order to be in the desired state, and in (29 c) it is the action to be performed with the desired entity (the cigarette).

Having that in mind, the non-individuated context of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’, compared to *roce* ‘want’, can be best detected by considering sentences in which the verb is embedded in a relative clause. (30 a) is an attested example; (30 b–30 d) are alternative versions of it, using *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ instead of *roce* ‘want’:

(30) (a) maxar ima hivtixa she-hi holexet liknot
 tomorrow mother promise.PAST.3SG.FM that-she go.PRES.3SG.FM to buy
 l-i et ha-ceva ha-shaxor she-ani roca
 to-me ACC the-dye the-black that-I want.PRES.3SG.FM
 ‘Tomorrow mom promised she will go and get me the black dye I want.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=465905>)

(b) # maxar ima hivtixa she-hi holexet liknot
 tomorrow mother promise.PAST.3SG.FM that-she go.PRES.3SG.FM to buy
 l-i et ha-ceva ha-shaxor she-ba l-i
 to-me ACC the-dye the-black that-come.PRES.3SG to-me

(c) # maxar ima hivtixa she-hi holexet liknot
 tomorrow mother promise.PAST.3SG.FM that-she go.PRES.3SG.FM to buy

- (c) # **aval ba** **l-i** lehaʔavir le-nose meat kalil yoter,
 but come.PRES.3SG to-me to switch to-subject little light more,
ve-hu **rexov sumsum**
 and-it(is) Sesame street
 ‘But I feel like changing the subject to a somewhat lighter one, which is Sesame Street.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/tblogread.asp?blog=113473>)

The desire expressed in (31 a) to have a cigarette can easily be conceptualized as spontaneous and impulsive, and as such, it is a good candidate to be expressed by *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’. Conversely, both (31 b) and (31 c) denote a desire which in normal circumstances would be described as calculated, rational and intentional. In other words, a ‘wanter’ of desires of the kind exemplified in (31 b) and (31 c) is in most cases a volitional, controlling initiator. Such a volitional desire is better described using *roce* ‘want’:¹⁰

- (32) (a) **ani roce** lesayem be-nima optimit
 I want.PRES.3SG to finish in-tone optimistic
 ‘I want to / Allow me to end on an optimistic note.’
- (b) **aval ani roce** lehaʔavir le-nose meat kalil yoter, ve-hu
 but I want.PRES.3SG to switch to-subject little light more, and-it(is)
 rexov sumsum
 Sesame street
 ‘But I want to change the subject to a somewhat lighter one, which is Sesame Street.’

In this respect, it is similar to the characterization of *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ made in the previous section, as denoting that the nominal referent is the experiencer of a progress of an event, rather than initiating it. In *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’, the nominal referent (the ‘wanter’) is presented as if he is the experiencer of a desire that ‘came upon him’, while in the relevant use of *roce* ‘want’ he is presented (in the construal of the event) as the initiator of the desire.

Another interesting observation can be made considering sentences in which *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ is stressed. When stressed, *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ denotes a very strong

¹⁰It’s likely that *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ is gradually expanding its uses to contexts previously restricted to *roce* ‘want’. It’s not inconceivable that *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ will eventually become equivalent to *roce* ‘want’.

desire. Still, even in these cases, the ‘wanter’ is profiled as less in control with respect to the desire, in the sense that he is less responsible for the desire he is having, than the ‘wanter’ denoted by *roce* ‘want’. That is, the desire is presented as an unintentional impulse:

- (33) way ex **ba** **l-i** pica axsahv
 wow how come.PRES.3SG to-me pizza now
 ‘God, I could really go for a pizza right now.’

Note that *ba le-X* ‘comes to-*X*’ is an appropriate alternative to *roce* ‘want’ only in the uses of *roce* ‘want’ where a sensation or a desire is reported; other uses of *roce* ‘want’ cannot be replaced with *ba le-X* ‘comes to-*X*’:

- (34) (a) **ani roce** glida
 I want.PRES.3SG ice cream
 ‘I want ice cream.’

- (b) **ba** **l-i** glida
 come.PRES.3SG to-me ice cream
 ‘I feel like having ice cream.’

- (35) (a) **ani roce** latus l-a-xalal
 I want.PRES.3SG to fly to-space
 ‘I want to fly to outer space.’

- (b) **ba** **l-i** latus l-a-xalal
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to fly to-space
 ‘I feel like flying to outer space.’

- (36) (a) **ani roce** et ha-melax bevakasha
 I want.PRES.3SG ACC the-salt please
 ‘I want the salt please.’

- (b) * **ba** **l-i** et ha-melax bevakasha
 come.PRES.3SG to-me ACC the-salt please
 ‘*I feel like the salt please.’

The fact that *roce* ‘want’ can be used as a request while *ba le-X* ‘comes to-*X*’ cannot (36 a–36 b) takes us back to the claim I made at the beginning of the present section, namely, that *roce* ‘want’ has a wider range of Transitivity than *ba le-X* ‘comes to-*X*’. Now we

can define the claim more precisely: *roce* ‘want’ can be used to express a volitional and intentional desire; thus, an extension of its meaning (in the sense that the verb can fit into a wider range of constructions other than ‘pure’ desire, it is less restricted) can choose the feature VOLITIONALITY out of the verb’s various properties and fit into constructions that require (and are restricted to) this specific feature (but are not directly related to desire), such as a request.¹¹ Note that using *roce* ‘want’ for a request does not entail a desire; one can utter (36 a), and upon receiving the salt throw it down on the floor. (36 a) would still be perfectly appropriate. This is not the case with *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’. *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ entails no volitionality (or to a very low degree in some cases), and it cannot express anything but a desire as a sensation. Its meaning cannot be extended to fit into constructions that are restricted to volitionality since it does not entail such a property.

A support for the claim regarding the different senses of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ and *roce* ‘want’ can come from the following pair of sentences:

- (37) (a) **ba** **l-i** uga, aval ani lo roce, ki ze
 come.PRES.3SG to-me cake, but I NEG want.PRES.1SG, because it(is)
 mashmin
 fattening
 ‘I feel like having a cake, but I don’t want to because it’s fattening.’
- (b) ? ani roce uga, aval lo **ba** **l-i**, ki ze
 I want.PRES.1SG cake, but NEG come.PRES.3SG to-me, because it(is)
 mashmin
 fattening

The fact that *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ and *lo roce* ‘NEG want’ do not contradict each other (in (37 a)) suggests that their denotation is indeed different. Moreover, *roce* ‘want’ profiles a more action-oriented desire in that it is more intentional and volitional. Thus, *roce* ‘want’ and *lo ba le-X* ‘NEG comes to-X’ contradict in (37 b) since the desire denoted by *roce* ‘want’ comprises the sensation of desire denoted by *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’. That is, negating *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ negates *roce* ‘want’ too (but not vice versa).

¹¹It is probably this feature of *roce* ‘want’ (but not of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’) that is the basis for the evolution of future markers from verbs of desire, as described in Bybee et al. 1994.

Consider the following pairs of sentences, in which the (a) are attested examples and in the (b) examples I have substituted *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ for *roce* ‘want’:

- (38) (a) kaxa **ani roce** lizkor ota
 in this way I want.PRES.3SG to remember her
 ‘That’s the way I want to remember her.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=251048>)
- (b) # kaxa **ba** **l-i** lizkor ota
 in this way come.PRES.3SG to-me to remember her
 ‘That’s the way I feel like remembering her.’

(38 b) is less appropriate since *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ entails no volition. The desire denoted by *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ is a sensation of a desire, rather than an act of desiring. A *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ desire is more of an external desire that is imposed on and experienced by the dative nominal, than a self-initiated, volitional (and intentional) wish. This generalization explains the next pair of sentences too:

- (39) (a) be-axad ha-yamim tilpena axat mi-xavrot ha-kvuca
 in-one-of the-days call.PAST.3SG.FM one of-the members-of the-group
 ve-amra **she-hi** **roca** lesoxeax imi
 and-say.PAST.3SG.FM that-she want.PRES.3SG.FM to converse with me
 be-diskretiyut, heskamti lehakshiv
 in-discretion, agree.PAST.1SG to listen
 ‘During one of the evenings a member of the group phoned me and said she would like to speak with me discretely. I agreed to listen.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=472649>)
- (b) ? be-axad ha-yamim tilpena axat mi-xavrot ha-kvuca
 in-one-of the-days call.PAST.3SG.FM one of-the members-of the-group
 ve-amra **she-ba** **l-a** lesoxeax imi
 and-say.PAST.3SG.FM that-come.PRES.3SG to-her to converse with me
 be-diskretiyut, heskamti lehakshiv
 in-discretion, agree.PAST.1SG to listen
 ‘During one of the evenings a member of the group phoned me and said she feels like speaking with me discretely. I agreed to listen.’

Contrary to *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’, *roce* ‘want’ denotes an act of desiring. It is a more volitional and intentional wish. Thus, it has an implicature that the initiator is more committed to the wish and would make an effort in order to fulfill it. In other words, *roce* ‘want’ implicates a more willing subject with respect to the fulfillment of the desire.

ba le-X ‘comes to-X’ evokes none of these implicatures. Thus, it cannot be used as a request (36 b), and it cannot be used for expressing a ‘serious’ wish (where the speaker has to stand behind its execution, fully committed) such as in (39 b); it can only denote a sudden sensation of desire that ‘invaded’ (and is experienced by) the speaker.

To sum up the discussion of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’, I claim that the data shows that *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ relates to less specific/well defined and less individuated desires than *roce* ‘want’ and involves a less volitional and intentional Actor, thus creating a lower Transitivity interpretation of the clause. These properties of *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ entail a lower degree of commitment to acting upon the wish. The commitment referred to here can be best described as ‘the amount of effort that the dative nominal referent is willing or committed to invest in order for the desire to come true’; in other words, the commitment to be an Actor of an action that will lead to the fulfillment of the desire (i.e. to initiate such an action). Since using *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ only reports a sensation of a desire rather than an act, no commitment is implicated, beyond a commitment to the fact that this sensation exists. In chapter 3 I return to this issue, when I discuss other pragmatic functions of the LTC.

2.2.3 *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’

The third variant of the LTC is *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’. The *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ construction is slightly different from the constructions discussed above in that it has no higher Transitivity counterpart. *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ is a way for the speaker to downgrade the initiator of an action in several respects, here accounted for in the same way as *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’, i.e., in terms of Transitivity scale parameters.

Consider the following pairs of sentences, in which the (a) versions are attested, and the (b) sentences are variants on them, lacking *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’:

- (40) (a) etmol **yaca** **l-i** ledaber im madrixa shel kvuca she-ani
 yesterday exit.PAST.3SG to-me to talk with (a)guide of group that-I
 zoxeret mi-shana she-avra
 remember.PRES.3SG.FM from-year that-pass

‘Yesterday I happened to speak with a guide of a group I remember from last year.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=16898>)

- (b) etmol **dibarti** im madrixa shel kvuca she-ani
 yesterday talk.PAST.1SG with (a)guide of group that-I
 zoxeret mi-shana she-avra
 remember.PRES.3SG.FM from-year that-pass
 ‘Yesterday I spoke with a guide of a group I remember from last year.’

- (41) (a) **yaca** **l-i** lirot seret dey xadash she-yaca shana
 exit.PAST.3SG to-me to watch movie pretty new that-exit year
 she-avra
 that-pass
 ‘I happened to see a pretty new film that premiered last year.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=200809>)

- (b) **raiti** seret dey xadash she-yaca shana she-avra
 watch.PAST.1SG movie pretty new that-exit year that-pass
 ‘I saw a pretty new film that premiered last year.’

- (42) (a) post she-lo **yaca** **l-i** lefarsem adayn
 post that-NEG exit.PAST.3SG to-me to publish yet
 ‘A post I did not get around to publish yet.’¹²
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=13715>)

- (b) post she-lo **pirsamti** adayn
 post that-NEG publish.PAST.1SG yet
 ‘A post I did not publish yet.’

The characteristics of *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ are revealed when we compare it to the ‘neutral’, unmarked (b) sentences. The truth conditions of (40 a) and (40 b) are the same: the writer has spoken to someone; the event in the world is the same in both sentences. However, as I argued for the other variants of the construction, the construal of the event in the (a) versions is different from the (b) versions in the sense that using *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’, the writer places the dative nominal referent (the Actor in the real-world event) as a non-volitional, unintentional participant in a state of affairs, or a situation, of talking. Notice that the volition and intention referred to here are not of the talking event itself, since one cannot talk un-volitionally or unintentionally. Rather, it is with respect to the coming about of the state of affairs (i.e., the circumstances that

¹²A ‘post’ is a text placed on a web site, and especially web-logs (i.e. blogs).

enabled the talking); as if the nominal referent did not have control over the action. The nominal referent did not *intend* to be engaged in a conversation or to open one.

(41–42) exemplify the same stative-oriented construal of events. In (41 a), the writer does not profile his having *watched* a movie, but rather, his involvement in a ‘movie watching’ state of affairs. His volitionality and intentions in watching the movie are not relevant and are ignored. In (42 a) the event of ‘not publishing a post’ is not construed as ‘an intention not to publish’; instead it is construed as an ‘unintentional un-publishing’. This is in contrast to (42 b), which is compatible with the ‘unintentional’ meaning, but it would have to be modified somehow in order to convey it. The claims made in the previous sections regarding the narrower range of Transitivity associated with *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ are relevant here too: the unmarked versions (the (b) sentences) can accommodate a wide range of Transitivity which is only narrowed down by the context, which assigns a specific Transitivity interpretation to the clause. The LTC sentences, however, (*yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’, the (a) sentences in our case) have a limited range of Transitivity, and using such a construction forces a lower Transitivity interpretation on the clause.

(43) is an attested example which can nicely capture my analysis of *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’. The speaker here switches to using *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ in order to emphasize that it is not the case that he *intentionally* did not go somewhere:

- (43) ani mictaer she-lo **nasati** ha-shavua le-yerushalaym. yoter naxon, ani
 I sorry.PRES.3SG that-NEG go this-week to-Jerusalem. more correct, I
 mictaer she-lo **yaca** **l-i** linsoa
 sorry.PRES.3SG that-NEG exit.PAST.3SG to-me to go
 ‘I regret not going to Jerusalem this week. To be exact, I regret not having the chance to go.’

The relevant context is that the speaker did not go to Jerusalem due to bad weather conditions. Thus, he intentionally decided not to go, but he is not responsible for not going; he is not responsible for the coming about of the state of affairs in which he did not go. That is why *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ is used, in order to convey the fact that while he did not go, it was not because of his own volition.

Thus far I argued that the LTC in general, and *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ specifically, is a means for lowering the Transitivity of a roughly paraphrastic proposition. Or to put it in other words, using the LTC the speaker construes a state of affairs as involving a lower degree of Transitivity. Hence, we would expect to find that the LTC is related to states of affairs that are neither very low in Transitivity – since it would be somehow redundant – nor to states of affairs that are very high in Transitivity – since in these cases it is less common for a speaker to downgrade the initiator of the event. Indeed, an examination of the predicates that are selected for the open slot of the *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ construction (that is, the states of affairs that are construed by using *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’) reveals interesting facts. A close look at 45 tokens of verbal instances (i.e. instances where the open slot element is a verb rather than a noun or an adjective) shows that very few of the instances contain a prototypically low Transitivity predicate (see appendix A for the complete list of predicates).

Low Transitivity	Non-Low Transitivity
15.5% (7/45)	84.4% (38/45)

Table 2.1: Low vs. Non-Low Transitivity in the open slot’s predicates

As can be seen in table 2.1, only 15.5% (7/45) of the tokens contained prototypical intransitive predicates (to take a nap, to sleep, to rest, to become smiley, to wait, to be). The rest of the tokens (84.4%, 38/45) involved non-low Transitivity predicates. However, as can be seen in table 2.2, this group can be further divided: 31.6% (12/38) of the non-low Transitivity predicates in the open slot of the construction were relatively higher Transitivity predicates (for example, ‘to fill up a questionnaire’, ‘to enter somewhere’; see complete list in appendix A). On the other hand, 68.4% (26/38) were predicates that involve Objects which are usually *not* highly affected in Hopper and Thompson’s terms (for example, ‘to know somebody’).

These findings show that the largest class of states of affairs construed with the *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ construction are neither very low nor very high in Transitivity. As noted

Intermediate Transitivity	Relatively high Transitivity
68.4% (26/38)	31.6% (12/38)

Table 2.2: Degree of Transitivity in the Non-Low Transitive open slot's predicates

above, this is expected from such a construction: marking an intransitive action with a construction that forces a low Transitivity interpretation is partly redundant. Thus the low percentage of intransitive verbs is expected. On the other hand, highly Transitive predicates, which denote an act on a highly individuated and highly affected object, usually denote a highly intentional act; pragmatically, this kind of action tends not to be construed in a way that downgrades its initiator. Thus, construal of a state of affairs that reduces responsibility on the part of the initiator by lowering the Transitivity of the clause is less expected with such predicates. In this sense, predicates that have an intermediate degree of Transitivity represent the prototypical events to be construed by the Lower Transitivity Construction.

At this stage of the analysis, an important distributional characteristic of the construction must be noted. Looking at the data, there seems to be a structural difference between *yoce le-X* 'exits to-X' (and *ba le-X* 'comes to-X') on the one hand, and *holax le-X* 'goes to-X' on the other hand: *yoce le-X* 'exits to-X' (and *ba le-X* 'comes to-X') can occur with a non finite verb in the open slot of the construction, while *holax le-X* 'goes to-X' cannot:

- (44) (a) *yaca* *l-i* *tov*
 exit.PAST.3SG to-me good
 'It came out well.'
- (b) *halax* *l-i* *tov*
 go.PAST.3SG to-me good
 'It went well.'
- (45) (a) *yaca* *l-i* *lirot* *oto*
 exit.PAST.3SG to-me to see him
 'I happened to see/meet him.'

(b) *ba* *l-i* *lirot* *oto*
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to see him
 ‘I happened to see/meet him.’

(c) ? *halax* *l-i* *lirot* *oto*
 go.PAST.3SG to-me to see him

I believe that this difference is a result of a difference in the function of the two verbs in the construction. (44 a) predicates on an outcome, a result: ‘a result is good for me’, while (44 b) is about the progress of the event. A speaker can ask *eyx yaca le-xa?* (Lit. ‘how went out for you?’) and it will refer to the nature of the result; i.e., it will ask ‘what is the nature of the *result* of which you are the Affectee?’ (45 a), however, is not about the result of the event itself, but rather it is an evaluative assertion that construes an event (‘to see him’, for instance) as a coincidental result and not as an outcome of an intended and calculated action. In other words, it introduces a new event to the discourse and at the same time assesses the nature of its coming about. Since it is not about the qualitative nature of the result, a speaker cannot ask ‘how’ and refer to the characteristics of the result when a non finite verb is being used:

(46) #*eyx yaca* *le-xa* *lirot* *oto?*
 how exit.PAST.3SG to-you to see him?

The only possible interpretation of (46) is a question about the initiation of the event itself of ‘seeing him’; the question is ‘how did it happen that you saw him?’, and not about the result of ‘seeing him’, or the qualitative nature of the meeting (that is, the answer to the ‘how’ question is already incorporated in the construction: ‘how? –coincidentally’).

As shown in (44–45), *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ does not have this distributional alternation. (44 b) predicates on a process: ‘the process (of Y) was good for X’. Again, a speaker can ask *eyx halax le-xa?* (Lit. ‘how did it go for you?’) and it will refer to the qualitative nature of the process. The fact that (45 c) is ungrammatical (i.e. that *holex* cannot occur with a non finite verb) suggests that *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ denotes an evaluation of an already given event, and cannot refer to, or introduce, a new event, since it does not

concern the departure point of the event. *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ assumes that an event took place, and assesses its nature. The fact that *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ can incorporate a non finite verb suggests that *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ actually has two levels of use: one that refers to a result of an event and evaluates it – and this use is equivalent to *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ that cannot incorporate a non finite verb and evaluates the quality of a progress – and a level of use that refers to the occurrence itself, to the circumstances which the event is the result of, and evaluates it as coincidental – as a happenstance.

Summing up, we can see that in the same way that was argued for *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ above, the *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ construction forces a Lower Transitivity interpretation on the clause, placing an initiator of an action as an undergoer, disregarding the initiator’s intentions and volitionality. In the next chapter I combine together the variants of the construction discussed so far, generalizing to the constructional meaning of the Lower Transitivity Construction.

Chapter 3

Constructional meaning

The constructional meaning of the LTC is the answer to the question I first posed in the beginning of chapter 2, namely, whether there is a constant meaning into which the different verbs enter and ‘gain’ a special meaning. In the present chapter I characterize and formalize this meaning in several steps. In section 3.1 I argue for a Usage Based Construction Grammar cognitive representation of the construction. Section 3.1.1 discusses the encoded meaning of the construction as a whole and section 3.1.2 elaborates on the construction’s pragmatic function. The chapter ends with a proposal for a grammaticization process of the LTC, presented in section 3.2.

3.1 The constructional meaning representation

I here partially adopt the notion of a Usage Based Construction Grammar (Bybee, 2006; Bybee and Eddington, 2006) and analyse constructional meaning as cognitively represented in terms of a prototypical meaning in a category of possible senses and uses. In a usage-based construction grammar it is assumed that “exemplars of words or phrases that are similar on different dimensions are grouped together in cognitive representation” (Bybee 2006:718). This kind of exemplars grouping forms the basis for the emergence of a construction. Regarding partially filled constructions (such as the LTC) Bybee (2006)

notes that “[i]f there are similarities (in particular, semantic similarities) among the items occurring in the open slot, a category for these items would begin to develop” (ibid). I claim that this is the case for the more restricted open slot of the LTC, namely, the V_{Motion} , as well as the more loose open slot of the construction, namely, the adjectival/infinitival/nominal slot. The following schema represents the prototypical features of the LTC; i.e., the motion verb headed experiencer dative construction:

(47)

Form: $[V_{\text{Motion}} \text{ (3sg)} \quad le\text{-N} \quad (Y)]$

Meaning: Profiling a non-initial state within an event

A prototype based model of categorization has no set of necessary and sufficient conditions for defining a category, members of a category may be more central or more marginal, and the boundaries of a category are not discrete. Prototype categories “have a family resemblance structure [...] category members share features (most commonly) with the central member or with some other member, but it is possible that marginal members may not share any features with one another” (Bybee and Eddington 2006:327).

The schema in (47) presents a partially filled construction (Croft 2001, Goldberg 2003, Bybee 2006) in the sense that it has a fixed form, that contains an open slot (the Y element, the ‘stimulus’ of the experience or sensation (cf. Abbi 1990, Onishi 2001)), a more restricted open slot (the verbal element in (47)) and a fully specified element (the dative marked nominal, in the sense that it is dative marked; the nominal referent is not consistent). The fact that the verbal element of the construction is a restricted open slot is responsible for the restriction to certain (non initial) states in an event that can be described and construed by the construction. This constant form, then, is paired with a constant meaning of ‘profiling a non-initial state within an event.’ This meaning is the topic of the next section.

3.1.1 Encoded meaning and inferences

As can be seen in the discussions so far regarding the different variants of the LTC, two main common properties can be pointed out with respect to the construal of events conveyed when a variant of the LTC is chosen: non-volitionality, and stativity. I argue that these two properties can be merged together under the definition in (47) regarding the meaning of the LTC, namely, as profiling a *non-initial state* within an event. This non-initial state is related to the lower Transitivity interpretation that the construction imposes on the clause, thus yielding a clear pragmatic effect – common to all variants discussed above – of reducing responsibility on the part of the Actor of the action. This pragmatic effect is achieved in the following way, with respect to volitionality and stativity:

- i. Presenting the Actor as non-volitional. As mentioned in section 1.2.3, the notion of volitionality is defined here along the lines of Hopper and Thompson (1980) and Guerrero Medina (2005): a volitional Actor is acting purposefully, he is the instigator of an event, and he has a high degree of control over the action and over his own intentions. Reducing, or deleting the volition component of the Actor, presenting him as an undergoer instead of an initiator, results in reduced responsibility on his part.
- ii. The profiled non-initial state too contributes to this reduction: once an event has already begun, who is responsible for its initiation cannot be determined. The LTC denotes a state of affairs with no implication of deliberate action on anyone's part, whereas the high Transitivity counterparts presented above express a volitional act on the part of an Actor.

A crucial property of the constructional meaning presented in the form–meaning schema (47) is its unique status as a stative construction (which is a predictable property of dative constructions, as was shown in section 1.2.4) within an eventive frame. The unique configuration that combines a stative construction with inherently non-stative

verbs such as the motion verbs, leads to a denotation of various states within an event, all but the initial state.

A non-initial state can denote (at least) four different states in an event which are relevant for the different verbs in the Lower Transitivity Construction. The following states or aspects of the event frame will serve us here, each of them related to a verb. First, the departure point of an event – but, at the point when it has already begun – from a perspective that considers the circumstances that brought about the event. Second, a point of view which looks at the *progression* of an event. Third – a *goal*, a desired state of affairs which is the fulfillment of the potential and the completion of progression; the direction towards which the event is moving. The fourth state is the result of the event; its outcome. A crucial point to note here is that these are all non-initial states in the event. Figure 3.1 summarizes these four states. The choice between the different motion verbs under discussion determines the perspective from which the event will be looked at.



Figure 3.1: Non initial states in an event

3.1.1.1 *holex* ‘go’

In Frame Semantics terms, *holex* ‘go’ profiles the motion itself, together with the notion of the advancement of the event. That is, it denotes the progress which takes place at the motion event. Now we can claim that in the LTC, *holex* ‘go’ introduces an event through the perspective which looks at the progression of the event. As already mentioned in section 1.2.4, Barðdal (2004) shows for Icelandic that verbs of advancement – both physical and mental (‘wash ashore’, ‘make progress’) – “are semantically/metaphorically related to verbs of success” (p. 118). It seems that this aspect of the event is suitable for describing a ‘progression towards completion’, which is in turn taken to constitute

success: if an event is in progress, actually happening, it is implied that it is advancing toward the desired goal, i.e., manifesting gradually higher and higher degrees of success.¹³

For example:

- (48) **holex** **li** **lo** **ra** [...] yom shlishi la-diyeta ve-ani ba-sababa
 go.PART to-me NEG bad [...] day third to-the-diet and-I cool
 ‘It’s going pretty good... I’m on the third day of my diet and feeling great.’
 (ruchale.gblogs.co.il)

The writer asserts that an event is in a state of progression without relating to its initiator’s contribution to this progress (the writer in this case). Despite the dative *li* ‘to’, it is not the case that the writer asserts that he is the *goal* of the progression of some event. It is an evaluative assertion that places the initiator of the event (the writer) as a non-immediate participant in the event (as an indirect affectee), thus reducing his responsibility for the progress of the event, only denoting the degree of progression and the fact that he is related to and affected by the progress in some way. The following schema outlines the verb–construction interaction (the verb’s contribution to the construction) and the relevant inferences:

(49)

- Form: [holex le-N Adj/P] (‘goes to N Adj/P’)
 Meaning: profiles the progression of an event
 Pragmatic inference I: process, progression → good chance of goal attainment.
 Pragmatic inference II: less responsibility on the progression.

(And see also Barðdal (2004) for similar constructions in North Germanic languages.)

3.1.1.2 *ba* ‘come’

ba ‘come’ profiles motion towards a goal and reaching it. In this sense it is different from the profiling of *holex* ‘go’ since it comprises the completion of the motion event in its profile:

¹³Notice that this is not a diachronic account for the grammaticization of implications leading to the current state of affairs. Rather, it is a synchronic account for the verb–construction interaction, i.e. the ‘contribution’ of the specific verbs and reasonable contextual inferences to the construction.

- (50) anaxnu baim el-exem maxar
 we come.PART.PL to-you.PL tomorrow
 ‘We’re coming over (to your place) tomorrow.’

In (50) the speakers are portrayed as completing the coming event tomorrow. *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ denotes that an event came upon the dative nominal, but the event is restricted to the stimulus of the desire. Intuitively, it can be described as a sudden sensation that something is approaching the nominal referent, and he is presented as an Affectee of this (motion) event in the sense of Berman (1982a) and Barðdal (2004). The bleaching out of spatial meaning that the verb goes through leaves it with a meaning of ‘it’s here, without the nominal referent’s control’. In such an unintentional state, the nominal referent cannot be attributed with responsibility of the arriving of the object. (33), repeated here as (51), illustrates this kind of unintentional desire, in the sense that it is not an act of desiring but rather being in a state of affairs of desiring; i.e., a desire sensation for which the experiencer bears no responsibility and over which he has no control. The ‘desire’ sense seems to be part of the construction due to a process of analogy and inference strengthening; this question will be answered once we account for the grammaticization process of the construction in section 3.2;

- (51) way ex **ba** **l-i** pica axsahv
 wow how come.PRES.3SG to-me pizza now
 ‘God, I could really go for a pizza right now.’

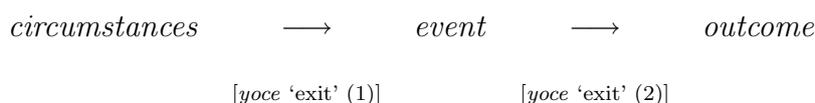
These claims are summarized in the following schema:

- (52)
- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Form: | [<i>ba le-N N/V_{Inf}</i>] (‘comes to N N/V _{Inf} ’) |
| Meaning: | profiles the end point of an event |
| Semantic inference: | arrived → it’s here |
| Pragmatic inference I: | there’s nothing one can do about it → It’s here to stay. |
| Pragmatic inference II: | lack of control → less responsibility. |

(cf. various uses of Hebrew *nafal alai* ‘fell on me’, English *drop/fall into someone’s lap*, Mohanan and Mohanan 1990 for a similar construction in Malayalam, and Barðdal 2004 for Icelandic).

3.1.1.3 *yoce* ‘exit’

In section 2.2.3 I argued that *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ can accommodate both a verbal element and a nominal/adjectival element in the open slot of the construction. As a consequence, *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ actually has two related but slightly different senses that alter with respect to the element in the open slot. In this sense, the profiling of *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ comprises both the leaving of a place, and the place that is left (that is, the Source element of the motion frame). Thus, in *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’, two aspects in the motion event frame play a role: the first is just after the departure point (*yoce* ‘exit’ being a boundary-crossing verb (Slobin and Hoiting 1994)), and the second is just after the event has ended: in this case the state of ‘leaving the place’ is profiled in the sense that the endpoint of an event is the boundary that is crossed towards the resulting state. Filtering out the spatial meaning, we are left with two points: (1) the point when an event has already begun, the event being an outcome of certain circumstances, and (2) the result of event itself:



For the use at hand, once something left a place, once an event has begun, there’s no stopping it; the Actor has less control over the coming about of the event, and such a state in an event is a good candidate for the conceptualizing of an event which is not necessarily volitional. On the other hand, once an event has ended – we are left with its result and there’s nothing we can do about it either. In the same way that was argued for *holex le-X* ‘goes to-X’ and *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’, the nominal referent, the initiator of the event, is presented here as a non-initiating participant due to the dative marking, thus

contributing to the reduced responsibility for the coming about of the event (presented in (53)–(54)) or for its results (presented in (55)–(56)):

- (53) *etmol yaca li ledaber im madrixa shel kvuca she-ani*
 yesterday exit.PAST.3SG to-me to talk with (a)guide of group that-I
zoxeret mi-shana she-avra
 remember.PRES.3SG.FM from-year that-pass
 ‘Yesterday I happened to speak with a guide of a group I remember from last year.’

(54)

Form:	[<i>yaca le-N V_{Inf}</i>] (‘exits to N V _{Inf} ’)
Meaning:	profiles the event as an outcome of certain circumstances
Semantic inference:	no longer here.
Pragmatic inference:	no longer under control → not under control → at the hands of chance. → less responsibility.

- (55) *yaca li tov*
 exit.PAST.3SG to-me good
 ‘It came out well.’

(56)

Form:	[<i>yaca le-N N/Adj</i>] (‘exits to N N/Adj’)
Meaning:	profiles the result of the event; its outcome
Semantic inference:	no longer here.
Pragmatic inference:	no longer under control → not under control → at the hands of chance. → less responsibility.

3.1.2 Lower Transitivity, happenstance and responsibility

As was argued in the previous section, in the structural environment of the LTC the three motion verbs under discussion (which are inherently non stative) function, in a way, as stative verbs in that they denote states: a state of progression (*holex* ‘go’), the state at the completion point of the event (*ba* ‘come’), and an ‘already begun’ state or

the outcome of the event (*yoce* ‘exit’). I argued that the special status of being a non-stative verb in a stative construction yields a special construal of a state within and with respect to an event. However, as was shown in section 2.2, and as made explicit by the construction’s name, the main function of the construction is to lower the Transitivity of a conceptualized event; to present it as not highly effective, as Agentless, and not as initiated by some initiator. I also argued that a pragmatic effect of less responsibility on the part of the initiator is a potential interpretation of this construal of events. I claim that it is the stative construction/non stative verb interaction that yields the ‘no responsibility’ interpretation.

An event is construed through the LTC as a state. The nominal referent is construed not as an initiator but rather as an experiencer of a state with respect to some stimulus, much like the difference in construal between *sleep* and *be sleepy* or *fear* and *be afraid*.¹⁴ To begin with the verbs, the common concept that arises through the non-initial state profiling of the construction is of *Happenstance*; once the completion of a progress is not controlled by an initiator, once an event is not volitionally initiated by an instigator, the event can be conceptualized as an happenstance. And as for the construction, Berman (1980, 1982a,b) shows that the dative in Hebrew serves to downgrade the Experiencer in a stative construction (see section 1.2.4). With respect to the LTC, I claim that it serves to downgrade the initiator. By downgrading the initiator, the state of affairs (and its effects on its experiencer) is conceptualized as an already existing state of affairs, and not as emanating from the nominal referent.

The combination of the dative morpheme – which downgrades the initiator (or shades it, in the sense of Goldberg (1995)) – on the one hand, and the happenstance interpretation that is a possible result of the non-initial state profiling on the other hand, leads to an interpretation that attributes no responsibility to the nominal referent of the construction. Simply put, we can say that the nominal referent of the LTC is presented as

¹⁴In this respect, an interesting stative/active differentiation by a non-canonical subject marking can be seen in Imbabura Quechua, where the desiderative verb derived from ‘eat’ expresses a controllable desire to perform an action (‘desire to eat’) with canonically nominative marked subject, while with the non-canonical accusative marked subject it denotes an uncontrollable state ‘be hungry’ (Onishi 2001:38).

if he is engaging in an activity (which can be conceptualized as coincidental) over which he has no volition or control, and because of that – no responsibility.¹⁵

3.2 Grammaticization

In the context of a usage-based approach, the existence of a construction and its emergence can be accounted for in one of three ways: (1) grammaticization via metaphorical extension, (2) grammaticization as an inference strengthening process (e.g. Bybee et al., 1994; Traugott and Dasher, 2002; Hopper and Traugott, 2003), and (3) what Bybee (2006) describes as “new constructions without grammaticization”. In order to decide which of the three can serve as a proper explanation for the construction at hand, few points need to be made.

The decision between the first two options should be made based on diachronic data: a metaphorical extension can be abrupt, and there should be very few instances in which the older and newer meaning overlap. An inference strengthening process requires that the relevant inference will occur frequently enough (Bybee et al. 1994:194).

Regarding grammaticization, my claim is that the ‘contribution’ of the verb to the construction is the relevant inference to be grammaticized. As we have seen so far, the construction is a stative construction in that it denotes certain states within an event. Thus the spatial senses of the verbs are ‘filtered out’ and only the relevant inferences, which can modify a state, are part of the conveyed meaning. In the previous section I argued that each relevant inference associated with a verb is related to a specific state of affairs in the process of an event. That is, the specific state is the one profiled by the verb when it is used as the predicate of the Lower Transitivity Construction.

Bybee (2006) characterizes the hallmark of grammaticization as the creation of a new grammatical morpheme (p. 721). However, as Bybee notes, there are cases in which a new construction arises without grammaticization. I claim that the LTC is such a case.

¹⁵A very similar case is Spanish impersonals, which are used when the action is non intended and the experiencer is not responsible (Croft, 1993).

But first, in order to justify this claim, let us view Bybee’s account for such a change in the language in her analysis of the creation of the ‘What’s X doing Y’ construction (Johnson 1997; Kay and Fillmore 1999). The WXDY construction is exemplified in (57):

(57) What is this scratch doing on the table?

(Kay and Fillmore 1999:3)

Bybee (2006) discusses the WXDY construction as evidence that “particular instances of constructions that have been experienced by a speaker must be present in his or her cognitive representation of language” (p. 721). The main claim for the representation of such constructions is that they are associated with the representation of their components parts on the one hand, and that they still maintain at least a surface resemblance to the construction from which they arose, on the other hand. For example, although the meanings of prefabs are conventionalized, they are nonetheless transparent to some extent. They therefore must have such a dual representation (Nunberg et al. 1994; Bybee 2006; Erman 2007).

In the WXDY construction (57), the ‘original’ WH question-construction interpretation seems to be part of the meaning of the construction as well as “surprise at incongruity accompanied by more than a hint of disapproval” (Bybee 2006:721–722). With respect to the creation of the construction, i.e., of the conventionalized form–meaning correspondence, Bybee (2006) asks: “Since there is nothing in the form or content to suggest a meaning of incongruity, how did an ordinary WH-question with *doing* and a locative phrase acquire these implications?” (p. 722). The answer she suggests is very similar to Ariel’s (2008) Salient Discourse Pattern. The negative subjective evaluation of disapproval which accompanies the incongruity interpretation of the WXDY construction must have come from a very large and frequent number of instances of use in contexts in which such subjective evaluations were present by inference. Bybee argues that listeners and speakers notice an implication that occurs in particular contexts, and keep track of these recurring cases. From the very first exposure, the context and the implication

are registered by speakers; in this way they come to know that a certain implication is associated with a certain form.

The fact that the WXDY construction was, at first, just a special instance of a more general construction suggests that “particular instances of constructions are registered in linguistic memory indexed with their implications and contexts of use” (Bybee 2006:723).

It seems that the LTC is a very similar case. It is partly idiomatic in the sense that putting together the verb *ba* ‘come’ and the preposition *li* ‘to me’, for instance, cannot simply mean ‘I experience an impulsive desire’. Nevertheless, the construction’s components are separable and the form is not all frozen; in the following section I show that the verb *ba* ‘come’ can be related to other instances of the verb in the language, and so can the preposition, by analogy to other instances of the “higher”, more general adjectival dative construction in Hebrew (e.g. *acuv li* sad to-me ‘I’m sad’).

We can now refine the definition of the ‘happenstance’ interpretation presented in section 3.1.2: The happenstance interpretation is an implication of the lower Transitivity interpretation, which, in turn, is an effect of the combination between the non initial state interpretation and the dative construction. As was argued earlier, a happenstance implication can lead to a ‘no responsibility’ inference. A frequent use of such a construction in contexts in which a ‘no responsibility’ inference is present may lead to the creation of a form–meaning correspondence that pairs the $[V_{\text{Motion (3sg)}} \text{ } le\text{-}N \text{ } (Y)]$ form with a ‘happenstance/no responsibility’ meaning.

A context in which such an inference is invited is exemplified in various examples throughout the study; three representative ones are repeated in (58):

- (58) (a) okey, az lo mamash **holex** **l-i** be-ze. b-a-ktana,
 OK, so NEG really go.PRES.3SG to-me in-that. in-the-small,
 nishtaper. nitamec **ve-ani betuxa she-nacliax**
 get better.FUT.1PL. try hard.FUT.1PL and-I certain that-succeed.FUT.1PL
 ‘OK, so I’m not really succeeding in (doing) it. No biggie. We’ll get better at it.
 We’ll make an effort and I’m sure we’ll succeed.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=120442>)

- (b) hi shalxa l-i hodaa be-svivot shmone b-a-erev im
 she send.PAST.3SG.FM to-me message at-around eight in-the-evening if

ba **l-i** lavo, be-spontaniyut mevorexet she-kazo... az
 come.PRES.3SG to-me to come in-spontaneous blessed that-such... so
 kafacti al otobus (shlosa, le-yeter diyuk) ve-nasati
 jump.PAST.1SG on bus (three, to-more accurate) and-travel.PAST.1SG
 ‘She sent me a message around 8:00 PM, asking if I feel like coming, in this blessed
 spontaneity... So, I jumped on the bus (three to be exact), and went.’
 (<http://israblog.nana10.co.il/blogread.asp?blog=339>)

- (c) ani mictaer she-lo **nasati** ha-shavua le-yerushalaym. yoter naxon,
 I sorry.PRES.3SG that-NEG go this-week to-Jerusalem. more correct,
 ani mictaer she-lo **yaca** **l-i** linsoa
 I sorry.PRES.3SG that-NEG exit.PAST.3SG to-me to go
 ‘I regret not going to Jerusalem this week. To be exact, I regret not having the
 chance to go.’

In the following section I outline a possible grammaticization cline, focusing on the verb *ba* ‘come’ as an example for such a possible cline of change.

3.2.1 Possible grammaticization: the case of *ba* ‘come’

For the verb *ba* ‘come’, the relevant meaning components for the present discussion are of ‘to enter’ and ‘to come upon’, together with a motion toward a speaker-related place. The first entry of the verb in Gesenius (1985 (1910)) Biblical Hebrew Grammar is: ‘to come in, to enter’, and it is regarded as the opposite of *yoce* ‘exit’. This use of the verb is demonstrated in sentences such as:

- (59) (a) **va-yavo** noax u-vanav [...] el ha-teyva
 and-come.FUT.3SG Noah and-his-sons [...] to the-ark
 ‘And Noah went in, and his sons [...] into the ark’
 (Genesis 7:7)

- (b) ani mitnacel **she-bati** be-ixur
 I apologize.PRES.3SG that-come.PAST.1SG in-delay
 ‘I apologize for being late.’
 (26/01/06: Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs)

Note that *ba* ‘come’ entails reaching the goal, and this meaning cannot be canceled:

- (60) *bati l-a-shiur be-ixur aval lo hegati elav
 come.PAST.1SG to-the-class in-delay but NEG reach.PAST.1SG to-it
 ‘I came late to class, but I didn’t arrived there.’

The second relevant entry of *ba* ‘come’ in Gesenius (1985 (1910)) is ‘to come upon anyone, to fall upon anyone, especially suddenly’. As an example for such a use Gesenius cites the sentences in (61), which seem very similar to the LTC in that they involve the dative cliticized pronoun, but different in that they are restricted to trouble or disaster coming upon somebody:

- (61) (a) *asher yagorti yavo li*
 that fear.PAST.1SG come.FUT.3SG to-me
 ‘That which I was afraid of hath overtaken me.’
 (Job 3:25)
- (b) *va-tavona le-xa shtey ele rega be-yom exad,*
 and-come.FUT.3PL.FM to-you two these moment in-day one,
shxol ve-almaon
 bereavement and-widowhood
 ‘But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of
 children, and widowhood’
 (Isaiah 47:9)

(61 a) describes a metaphorical event of trouble coming upon the speaker; in (61 b) the ‘suddenly’ interpretation is even stronger and explicit: the use of the phrase *rega be-yom exad* (‘in a moment in one day’) indicates that it will be a sudden event.

The fusion of these two senses of the verb *ba* ‘come’ (‘to enter’ and ‘to come upon suddenly’), together with the fact that it has been already used in the very similar structural environment demonstrated in (61) – a structure that combines together the verb *ba* ‘come’ and a dative marked nominal – may lead to an extension of the possible contexts in which the verb can appear.

The transition to the current state of affairs, in which the combination of *ba* ‘come’ and a dative marked nominal is rather restricted to an evaluative use that indicates a sensation of desire, may have its origins in another use of the verb, which we can also find in Gesenius (1985 (1910)): ‘to come to pass, to be fulfilled, accomplished, of desire’. And as an example of this kind of use he cites:

- (62) *toxelet memushaxa, maxala lev; ve-ec xayim, taava baa*
 expectation long, disease heart; and-tree life, desire come.PAST.3SG.FM
 ‘Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but **desire fulfilled** is a tree of life.’
 (Proverbs 13:12)

Notice that the English translation does not involve a verb denoting ‘to come’; rather, ‘fulfill’ is the parallel verb in this case. It seems, then, that the verb *ba* ‘come’ is used in a context of a fulfilled desire as early as (approximately) 960 B.C. This use does not contradict the ‘trouble coming upon’ sense that was mentioned above; rather, they both indicate ‘reaching a goal’ in a way which is clearly related to the spatial sense of the verb.

A combination of all these parameters may lead to the following grammaticization cline:

$$\text{spatial entering} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{coming upon/sudden} \\ \text{accomplishment/fulfillment} \end{array} \right\} \rightarrow \text{a sudden desire}$$

A support for the notion behind the end of cline comes from other (very recent) uses of the verb *ba* ‘come’ in the language, where the verb is associated with certain meanings of ‘desire’ or intention (and see also Ariel 2008, chapter 5):

- (63) (a) *az ma ani ba lehagid lexa?*
 so what I come.PRES.1SG to say to-you?
 ‘In other words, here’s what I’m saying:’
- (b) *b-a-boker kshe-bati lacet amru l-i she-hakol*
 in-the-morning when-come.PAST.1SG to go out tell.PAST.3PL to-me that-all
xasum
 blocked
 ‘In the morning when I was about to go out, they told me everything is blocked.’
 (07/03/06: Parliamentary Inquiry Committee, Amona events)

In these sentences, an ‘about to’ meaning is being conveyed, but with a strong inference of ‘I want/wanted to do X (but something came up)’. This kind of use supports the claim regarding the close relationship between the verb *ba* ‘come’ and the set of concepts it is associated with, one of them being ‘desire’. That is, once a meaning of ‘desire’ is related with the verb *ba* ‘come’ in many constructions in the language, it may get this meaning in other constructions as well. For instance, a combination of a metaphorical ‘urge’ that

suddenly approaches a referent, together with the facts that (1) a dative marked nominal is already used in the language to denote an experiencer (as in (61) for example), and (2) that *ba* ‘come’ is already associated with desire ((62) for example) can be an explanation for the analogical use of the construction *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’ to convey that the dative marked nominal referent is the experiencer of a desire.¹⁶

For the other two verbs, I will not propose a cline, but rather note the possible meaning components that may invite inferences which, in turn, may grammaticize into the current state of affairs.

holex ‘go’ is a directed motion verb. The directed motion can invite two inferences: The first is of a process; since ‘going’ is not a punctual event but rather a durative motion from point A to point B, a process is inferred. The second inference is goal attainment: if one is involved in a directed motion, other things being equal, he will eventually get where he wanted; he would attain his goal.

The ‘process’ meaning of *holex* is realized in other uses of the verb, and especially in cases such as (64) in which it denotes growth and intensification:

- (64) (a) *ve-ha-naar shmuel holex ve-gadel ve-tov gam im Jehovah*
 and-the-boy Samuel goes and-grows and-good also with God
ve-gam im anashim
 and-also with people
 ‘And the child Samuel grew on, and increased in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.’
 (1 Samuel, 2:26)

¹⁶Note that the same concept seems to be used in Malayalam as well, for the same function (Mohanani and Mohanan 1990):

- i. *kuṭṭik'k'ə kaṛaccil waṇṇu*
 (child.DAT crying come.PAST)
 ‘The child felt like crying’
 (Lit: Crying came to the child)
- ii. *kuṭṭik'k'ə ciṛi waṇṇu*
 (child.DAT laughter come.PAST)
 ‘The child felt the urge to laugh’
 (Lit: Laughter came to the child)

- (b) ani mevakesh lehavi lifney tsumet lev ha-vaada tofaa
 I ask to-bring in-front-of attention-of the-committee phenomenon
holext ve-goveret
 go.PART.FM and-becoming stronger.PART.FM
 ‘I would like to bring to the Committee’s attention a phenomenon that’s been
 spreading rapidly.’
 (26/01/2006: Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs)

These uses of the verb (to convey a process or goal attainment) are the meaning components that the verb brings with it to the construction when it is bleached out of its spatial meaning. These could have been at first invited inferences, that got grammaticized.

For the verb *yoce* ‘exit’, the relevant meaning components are of ‘leaving a place’, departing and perhaps an etymological kinship to *tocaa* ‘result’, ‘outcome’. As was described in section 3.1.1, a meaning of ‘going out’ or ‘leaving a place’ entails that something is no longer here. When used non-spatially, this entailment can invite an inference of ‘there’s nothing to do about it’, or lack of control and responsibility, which might, through frequent use, become grammaticized.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I characterized the constructional meaning of the Lower Transitivity Construction. After accounting for three of its variants in chapter 2, I argued here that due to the characteristics of events in the world, and the very basic knowledge speakers has about motion events, the conceptual frame of Motion is an effective candidate for representing specific aspects of an event. The Lower Transitive Construction was argued for as a partially specified construction with two functions: profiling a non-initial state within an event and lowering the degree of Transitivity of the utterance, which together lead to reducing responsibility on the part of the initiator of an event. The special nature of the LTC as a combination of a stative construction with non-stative verbs was argued to be crucial for understanding the construction’s function as profiling certain states within an event.

From a diachronic point of view, I suggested a possible cline of grammaticization that could explain, through a process of metaphorical extension, inference strengthening and analogy, the participation of motion verbs in the dative construction and their special function within the construction. This proposal was demonstrated with a presentation of a possible cline of change that *ba* ‘come’ might have gone through.

Chapter 4

Concluding Remarks

This study demonstrated a special use of three motion verbs in Hebrew, which in a certain structural environment lose their spatial meaning and function as stative verbs that denote an experience. This structural environment was argued to be a from–meaning correspondence, a partially filled construction with special semantic and pragmatic functions.

The Lower Transitivity Construction was argued to be a partially filled construction in the sense that it has a constant element as well as two open slots (each of which restricted to different degrees). The form $[V_{\text{Motion (3sg)}} \text{ } le\text{-N (XP)}]$ was argued to correspond to a meaning of profiling a non-initial state within an event through a lower Transitivity construal of the event on the one hand, and describing the event as stative rather than dynamic on the other hand. This meaning was argued to yield inferences of ‘happenstance’ and ‘no responsibility’ on the part of the initiator of the event.

The contextual distribution of one variant of the construction (*yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’) supported this claim: it was shown that the construction tends to appear in a context of an intermediate level of Transitivity. This distributional fact was explained by the claim that using a construction that suppresses the part of an initiator is an unlikely step to take when speakers talk about a highly transitive event (in which the initiator has a major role).

I argued that the Lower Transitivity Construction is a special case of a more general dative construction, which is adjectival and stative in nature, in the sense that it shares with it structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects. Being a special case of a stative construction, the LTC demonstrates a combination of a stative construction with inherently non-stative verbs (i.e., motion verbs); this combination leads to the special denotation of certain states within and with respect to an event. The stative construction is regarded as a filter that bleaches out the spatial meaning components of the motion verbs. It was argued that each of the three verbs profiles a non-initial state in an event, contributing to the ‘happenstance’ and ‘no responsibility’ interpretations.

The cognitive representation of the construction was discussed in terms of a prototype based category, and I proposed a possible cline of grammaticization that could have led to the current form–meaning correspondence (i.e., to the current cognitive representation), demonstrating it on one of the construction’s variants, *ba le-X* ‘comes to-X’.

As a consequence of such an account, a few other questions remain to be asked: (1) I discussed a set of three rather basic motion verbs. But what would happen if a manner of motion verb is the predicate (for instance, uses such as *eyx holex li? zoxel li*. ‘how is it going for me? it crawls for me’)? (2) A close look at the data shows that the predicate in the LTC sometimes agrees with the XP slot of the construction (for example, *eyx yac?a lax hapashtida?* ‘how did the pie.3SG.FM turn-out.3SG.FM for you?’); what can it tell us? (3) I argued that the function of reducing responsibility on the part of the initiator of an action is a pragmatic function; can we decide whether it is an implicature or an explicated inference, and what may this decision contribute to the cognitive representation of the construction? (4) In light of the claims made in this study, is it possible to give a full characterization of the relationships between the LTC and other dative constructions in Hebrew, and between their cognitive representations, in terms of categories and sub-categories? I will leave these questions for further research.

Appendix A

Degree of Transitivity in *yoce le-X*

‘exits to-X’

This appendix elaborates on the distinction between low, intermediate and relatively high Transitivity in the *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ construction. The distinction is made within a sample of 45 tokens of the *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ (randomly extracted out of a 1,000 tokens set) which have a verbal element in the open slot of the construction.

Predicates with only one participant were counted as manifesting relatively low Transitivity; these are the predicates: *lenamnem* ‘to take a nap’, *lishon* ‘to sleep’, *lanuax* ‘to rest’, *lehitraxeyex* ‘to become smiley’, *lexakot* ‘to wait’, *lihiyot* ‘to be’.

The set of two-participants predicates was divided into two groups, namely, intermediate and relatively high Transitivity. Prototypical high Transitivity predicates rarely occurred with *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ in the sample. Thus, distinguishing intermediate from relatively higher Transitivity was based mainly on the affectedness of the Object. Other parameters such as activity vs. state (Kinesis in Hopper and Thompson’s terms), punctuality, aspect (telic vs. atelic) and individuation of the Object were considered as well. The findings are summarized in table A.1.

Low Transitivity 15.5% (7/45)	Non-Low Transitivity 84.4% (38/45)	
	Intermediate Transitivity 68.5% (26/38)	Relatively high Transitivity 31.5% (12/38)
<i>lenamnem</i> ‘to take a nap’	<i>lish?ol</i> ‘to ask’	<i>la?asot</i> ‘to do’
(2) <i>lishon</i> ‘to sleep’	(2) <i>laxshov</i> ‘to think’	(2) <i>lifgosh</i> ‘to meet somebody’
<i>lanuax</i> ‘to rest’	(7) <i>lir?ot</i> ‘to see’	<i>lehikanes le-</i> ‘to enter’
<i>lehitzrayex</i> ‘to become smiley’	<i>lehakir</i> ‘to know somebody’	<i>lagaat be-</i> ‘to touch at something’
<i>lexakot</i> ‘to wait’	<i>lehavxin be-</i> ‘to notice’	<i>la?vor al</i> ‘to cross a bridge/to cross over on a bridge’
<i>lihiyot</i> ‘to be’	(2) <i>lehitakel be-</i> ‘to bump into’	<i>limco</i> ‘to find’
	(3) <i>lomar</i> ‘to say’	<i>lehadlik</i> ‘to light (candles)’
	(2) <i>lishmoa</i> ‘to hear’	<i>lefarsem</i> ‘to publish’
	(2) <i>licpot</i> ‘to watch’	(2) <i>ledaber im</i> ‘to talk with somebody’
	(2) <i>likro al</i> ‘to read about something’	<i>letapel be-</i> ‘to take care of’
	<i>lesaper al</i> ‘to tell about something’	
	<i>lehagid (bituy)</i> ‘to say (a phrase)’	
	<i>lehargish</i> ‘to feel’	

Table A.1: Degree of Transitivity in the *yoce le-X* ‘exits to-X’ construction

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