A matter of time: tense, mood and aspect in spontaneous Spoken Israeli Hebrew

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7. Sociolinguistic aspects

Some sociolinguistic variables are checked below. It is interesting to see if any significant differences can be found between different populations in the usage of structures vs. functions in SIH, and if any sociolects exist in IH.

The following populations were compared using correlation coefficient tests. The notions tested are structures vs. meanings, i.e. it is checked if two populations are using the same structures to express the same TMA category or not. The following populations are considered:

- Gender: male vs. female
  The distribution of males and females in the research corresponds to their distribution in the general population, which is about 50%-50%. Eleven male informants and eleven female informants are compared.

- Origin: Ashkenazi vs. Mizrahi
  The Jewish population has its roots in many different countries, which are usually classified into two major groups. Ashkenazi Jews originate in American and European countries, whereas Mizrahi Jews originate in Asia or Africa, mainly in Arab countries. Only SIH native speakers are considered. There are twelve Ashkenazi Israelis and ten Mizrahi Israelis among the informants in this research.

- Education: high (15 years and up) vs. low-mid (0-14 years)
  Israelis with a university degree or equivalent are considered as having high education, whereas Israelis who do not hold an academic degree or equivalent are included in the low-mid education group. There are ten Israelis with high education vs. twelve Israelis with low-mid education among the informants in this research.

  Age groups are not compared, because the number of informants per group is 13 (young: 16-34 years) vs. only 9 (older: 35-70), too large a
difference in the number of informants per group, as well as too low a number of informants in a group with a too wide age range (35-70).

It is important to note that the number of informants in this project is 22. The control group included at least this number. Yet, sociolinguistic comparisons could be done only for the informants, since the origin – education distribution of the non-informants is unknown. Therefore, it is possible that in case of a significant difference between the two groups, the real difference in the population as a whole is insignificant. Hence, it should be taken into account that the differences presented here serve only as recommendations for future research in this direction.

7.1. T-M-A

A comparison of the major distribution of tense, mood and aspect is made between the research and control groups. The general percentages turn out to be similar. The largest differences that can be observed between categories in the groups are 0.8-0.9%, see 5.5.2 above. A correlation coefficient analysis shows that the correlation between the research and control groups is 0.999. This means that the differences in the usage of TMA categories between the two groups are completely insignificant, and that the findings in the control group strengthen the ones that are observed for the research group.

The TMA distribution is also compared between the group of informants with high education and the group of informants with middle and low education. The correlation between them is 0.999 as well. This means that no differences can be observed between these two groups in the usage of major TMA categories.

TMA distribution can be compared further between the group of male informants and the group of female informants. The correlation between these groups is also 0.999. Here too, no significant differences can be established between the two groups in the usage of major TMA categories.
The last two groups that can be compared are the groups of informants from Ashkenazi origin vs. informants from Mizrahi origin. The correlation between these groups is 0.992. Although the correlation between these two groups is lower than found in the other ones, the result can still be considered as representing a high degree of correlation. Therefore, no significant differences can be said to exist between these two groups in the usage of major TMA categories.

7.2. Tense

Since tense is a marginal category in SIH, the results in the tense category may not be representative, because the low number of structures expressing tense is not sufficient in order to come to a definite conclusion. The error rate may also be too high. Yet, the comparison is made here to serve as an initial indication of potential changes.

The distribution of tense may be compared between the research and control groups. The correlation between the research and control groups is only 0.924. Under certain conditions, this would mean that the differences in the usage of TMA categories between the two groups are possibly significant. Yet, because of the low number of forms representing tense in IH, I would not concur with this position, but would recommend that the use of tense in IH be further investigated.

In this research, the distribution of tense is not compared between sub-groups, because the number of occurrences of tense is too low to draw any valid statistical conclusions.

7.3. Aspect

The distribution of aspect types may be compared between the research and control groups. Correlation coefficient tests are performed separately for the perfective aspect and imperfective aspect, since the distribution of the two main aspectual categories could differ between the two groups. Such a difference would not be necessarily a result of differences in the use of forms between the groups, but could be a result of the conversation
Sociolinguistic aspects

Therefore, the perfective and imperfective categories are analyzed separately.

The correlation between the research and control groups is 0.999 in both aspectual categories. This means that the use of both perfective and imperfective categories is very similar, almost identical, in the research and control groups, and that probably no significant differences exist between the groups in their use of aspectual categories.

Correlation coefficient tests can also be performed in the same way for (i) the groups of male informants vs. female informant; (ii) the group of informants with high education vs. the group of informants with middle and low education; and (iii) the groups of informants from Ashkenazi origin vs. informants from Mizrahi origin.

The results in all groups show a constant correlation value of 1.0 in the perfective aspect category, and a correlation of 0.999 in the imperfective aspect category. This means that the use of both perfective and imperfective categories is practically identical in all groups, and that there are no significant differences between the groups in the use of aspectual categories.

There is a minor difference of 0.001 in the correlation tests of the subgroups (i)-(iii) vs. the research and control groups in the perfective aspect category. This difference was regarded as meaningless.

7.4. Mood

The variety of forms used to express mood can be compared between the research and control groups. Two correlation coefficient tests are performed here; the first one checks the correlation between groups in the use of forms to express specific mood types; the other one checks the correlation between groups in the use of forms to express the imperative mood. This is necessary because the imperative mood has a relatively large number of occurrences. The two correlation coefficient tests are performed, as in the previous categories, for all four groups: the research
vs. control group, as well as the three sub-groups mentioned in Section 7.3 above.

The correlation between the research group and the control group is 0.998, when checking the mood category as a whole, i.e. the variety of forms used to express all types of mood. When checking the forms used to express the imperative mood, the correlation between the two groups is 0.999.

In the groups of male informants vs. female informants the correlations are identical to those of the research vs. control groups: 0.998, when checking the mood category as a whole, and 0.999 when checking the forms used to express the imperative mood.

In the other two groups the correlations are slightly different from those of the research vs. control groups.

In the group of informants with high education vs. the group of informants with middle and low education the correlation is 0.998, when checking the mood category as a whole, and 0.992 when checking the forms used to express the imperative mood.

In the groups of informants from Ashkenazi origin vs. informants from Mizrahi origin the correlation is 0.995, when checking the mood category as a whole, and 0.999 when checking the forms used to express the imperative mood.

Although very slight differences are observed between the groups, these differences do not point to any significant differences in the use of forms to express mood. The differences are negligible, and are probably a result of the fact that the informants tested in the sub-groups are a subset of the research group, whereas speakers in the control group were not part of the tested sub-groups, but rather additional subjects. Differences can also be a result of rounding the numbers in the test.
7.5. **Summary**

Since there is nearly complete agreement between all groups and sub-groups in the aspect and mood categories, sociolects cannot be defined for IH in this regard. Rather, to a large extent, it may be assumed that the core systems of IH are common to all speakers.

Although marginal, the difference in the use of the category of tense between the group of informants and the control group merit further investigation. They can be indicative of change, or they can be the result of the relatively low number of occurrences of tense in IH. It is also possible that more extensive research would reveal no such differences at all.

In general, according to this research, I would conclude that there are no significant differences between populations in the use of TMA categories in IH, and that there is a great deal of agreement between all populations in the use of these categories.