

# Different roads to Verum

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# Introduction: Verum Focus

- Means of insisting on the truth of a proposition via a prosodic pattern that places stress on the verb or the auxiliary.
- It emerges in contexts where the statement was already doubted:

German: (1) A: *Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, dass Peter den Hund getreten hat.*

I can me not imagine that Peter the dog kicked has  
'I cannot imagine that Peter kicked the dog.'

B: *Peter HAT den Hund getreten.*

Peter has the dog kicked

'Peter DID kick the dog.'

# Introduction: Verum Focus

- English: stress falls on the verb or an inserted auxiliary.

(2) A: *I don't think Sara read the letter.*

B1: *She READ it.*

B2: *She DID read it.*

- The puzzle: Focus should activate alternatives to the stressed constituent rather than conveying that the sentence is true.

[[ She [read]<sup>F</sup> it ]]<sup>f</sup> = {she read it, she wrote it, she burnt it...}

[[ She [did]<sup>F</sup> read it ]]<sup>f</sup> = {she did read it, she had read it, she will read it...}

# Verum focus targets T

- Richter (1993) showed that focusing verbs only lead to Verum meanings in the lack of auxiliary.

(3) a. *Karl SCHREIBT ein Buch.*

Karl write a book

‘Karl IS writing a book.’

(as opposed to NOT writing one)

b. *Ich habe einen Roman GESCHRIEBEN.*

I have a novel written

‘I have WRITTEN a novel.’

(as opposed to READING a novel)

# Today

- Three possible answers:
  1. Focus activates a Verum operator
  2. Verum without focus
  3. Focus without Verum
- Show that Hebrew provides a clear case of verum meanings that are generated through focus alternatives without a verum component.
- Suggest that Verum strategies may include verum, focus, or both

# Previous analyses: Focus activates a Verum Op.

- Höhle (1992) proposed that any indicative sentence contains a Verum operator in the left periphery that expresses the speaker's belief in its realness.

(4)  $\llbracket \text{VERUM}(p) \rrbracket = \llbracket \textit{it is true that } p \rrbracket$

$\llbracket \text{VERUM}(p) \rrbracket^f = \{ \textit{it is true that } p, \textit{it is not true that } p \}$

- Verum accent targets this element and is manifested on near functional heads (T or C)
- Licensing condition: stressing the truth of a sentence is trivial, unless someone else has doubted it. This derives the licensing context seen in (1-2).

(Höhle 1992, Romero and Han 2004, Lohnstein and Stommel 2005, Gutzmann and Castroviejo Miró, a.o.)

# Previous analyses: Verum without focus

- Gutzmann et al. (2020) argue that Verum has its own accent which does not go through focus mechanisms.
- Tone languages with separate operators for focus and Verum

Bura (Chadic)      Focus: (5) *Kilfa an tí Kubílí másta akwa kwasúku.*

fish    foc    rel    Kubili buy    at    market

‘It’s FISH that Kubili bought at the market.’

Verum: (6) *A’á, Pindár (kú) sá mbal náha.*

yes    Pindar    verum drink    beer    yesterday

‘Yes, Pindar DID drink beer yesterday.’

- Verum operators remove “not p” from the QUD

# Previous analyses: Focus without Verum

- Alternative views propose that Verum focus can be minimally derived from available focus theories (e.g., Rooth 1992, Schwartzsilde 1999) **without** assuming truth operators:
    - The alternative to any proposition is its negation.
    - The licensing of Verum Focus follows from general conditions of focus.
- (7) *Appropriateness condition on free focus* (Katzir 2013:5) :
- Each sentence must have a focus alternative in the context.



# Previous analyses: Focus without Verum

- Goodhue (2018) showed that assuming  $\neg p$  as a necessary antecedent derives three patterns of licensing for Verum Focus accent:

| <b>Antecedent</b>        | <b>VF accent</b> | <b>Example</b>  |
|--------------------------|------------------|---|
| Negative claim: $\neg p$ | Obligatory       | A: <i>Naomi didn't buy wine.</i><br>B: <i>She DID buy wine.</i> |

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| Negative claim: $\neg p$        | Obligatory       | A: <i>Naomi didn't buy wine.</i><br>B: <i>She DID buy wine.</i>                              |
| Polar question: $\{p, \neg p\}$ | Optional         | A: <i>Did Naomi buy wine?</i><br>B1: <i>She bought wine.</i><br>B2: <i>She DID buy wine.</i> |

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| Unrelated                       | Infelicitous     | A: <i>Is everything set for dinner?</i><br>B1: <i>Naomi bought wine.</i><br>B2: <i># Naomi DID buy wine.</i> |

# Verum focus in a language with no Auxiliaries

- Most Hebrew sentences lack auxiliaries.
- Verum focus may be expressed either by stress on the verb or through stressed *ken* ‘yes’ particle insertion.

Hebrew: (8) A: *xašavti*      *še-Amal*      *lo*      *ohevet*      *marak.*

think.PST.1SG COMP-Amal NEG like.PRTC.F soup

‘I thought Amal didn’t like soup.’

**B1:** *amal*      ***OHEVET***      *marak.*

Amal like.PRTC.F soup

‘Amal LIKES soup.’

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‘I thought Amal didn’t like soup.’

**B2:** *amal*      ***KEN***      *ohevet*      *marak.*

Amal yes like.PRTC.F soup

‘Amal DOES like soup.’

# Other focused affirmative particles

- Focus affirmatives are not unique to Hebrew:

Spanish: (9) *A Lola **SÍ** le gusta baila-r.*

DAT.PREP Lola yes DAT.3SG like.3SG dance-INF

‘Lola DOES like to dance.’

Yiddish: (10) *Amal ot **JO** liib jojx.*

Amal have.1SG yes love soup

‘Amal DOES like soup.’

# Licensing condition: recent doubt

- Hebrew stressed *ken* has the same licensing condition as Verum focus, i.e., it depends upon on a negative alternative in the preceding context:

(11) A: *ma naxin le-aruxat erev?*

what make.SUBJ for-meal.of evening

‘What should we make for dinner?’

B: *amal (\*KEN) ohevet marak.*

Amal yes likes soup

‘Amal (\*DOES) likes soup.’

# Licensing condition: recent doubt

- The antecedent may contain the negative alternative implicitly.

(12) A: *Amal sonet et rov ha-oxel ha-temani.*  
 Amal hate.PRTC.F ACC most DET-food DET-Yemen  
 ‘Amal hates most Yemenite dishes.’

B: *hi KEN ohevet MARAK.*  
 she yes like.PRTC.F soup  
 ‘She does like soup.’



# Licensing condition: recent doubt

- When there is no antecedent, the negative alternative is accommodated as an inference:

(13) *hi KEN nesu'a.*  
she yes married  
'She IS married.'

Inference: (1) *someone said that  $\neg p$*   
(2) *speaker wondered whether  $p$*

# The distribution of *ken*

- Hebrew differs from, e.g., Spanish, in having a free use of constituent negation, which allows the same distribution for *ken*.

(14) a. *ze me'od lo raxok.*

this very NEG far

‘It’s very much not far.’ [me’od > ¬]

b. *ze lo me'od raxok.*

this NEG very far

‘It’s not very far.’ [¬ > me’od]

(15) a. *at kcat ken ašema.*

you bit yes guilty

‘It seems you are guilty.’ [kcat > ken]

b. *at ken kcat ašema.*

you yes bit guilty

‘You are a bit guilty.’ [ken > kcat]

# Low interpretation of stressed *ken*?

## High KEN

- (16) (a) *ze KEN ha-of ha- metubal.*  
 this YES DET-chicken DET-seasoned  
 ‘this IS the seasoned chicken.’  
 (it is true that this is the seasoned chicken)

- (17) (b) *ani KEN roca lalexet.*  
 I yes want go.INF  
 ‘I DO want to go.’ (I truly want to go)

## Low KEN

- (a) *ze ha-of ha-KEN metubal.*  
 this DET-chicken DET-yes seasoned  
 ‘this the SEASONED chicken.’  
 (and not the unseasoned one)

- (b) *ani roca KEN lalexet.*  
 I want yes go.INF  
 ‘I want to go.’ (instead of not going)

no interaction  
with truth value

# Licensing conditions?

- Sentence-KEN and constituent-KEN create different inferences:

|             | <b>Statement</b>                               | <b>Inference</b>                  |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| High<br>KEN | (16a) <i>This is the KEN seasoned chicken.</i> | The seasoning was doubted.        |
|             | (17a) <i>I KEN want to go.</i>                 | The speaker's desire was doubted. |

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|             | (17a) <i>I KEN want to go.</i>                 | The speaker's desire was doubted.           |
| Low<br>KEN  | (16b) <i>This is the KEN-seasoned chicken.</i> | There is another chicken that's unseasoned. |
|             | (17b) <i>I want to KEN go.</i>                 | Going was debated.                          |

# Proposal: Constituent polarity

- Hebrew stressed *ken* varies from overt Verum particles like English *indeed* or Bura *kú* in having no Verum meaning.
- This is evident in its ability to modify constituents that aren't truth-conditional.
- Stressed *ken* restrict the alternatives set of adjectives to the *P/not P* binarity
- Focusing an adjective without *ken* generates a broader set of alternatives:

(18) *ze ha-of ha-METUBAL.*

this DET-chicken DET-seasoned

'This is the SEASONED chicken.'

(19)  $\llbracket 18 \rrbracket_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}^f = \{\text{seasoned chicken, spicy chicken, lemon chicken...}\}$

# Proposal: Cross-categorial polar alternatives

$$(20) \quad \llbracket ken \rrbracket (P)_c = P$$

$$c = \llbracket \llbracket ken \rrbracket^F (P) \rrbracket = \{P, \neg P\}$$

$$\llbracket \text{This chicken KEN is seasoned} \rrbracket_{\langle s,t \rangle}^f =$$

{chicken is seasoned, chicken is **not** seasoned} Inference: Someone said  $\neg p$

$$\llbracket \text{KEN seasoned} \rrbracket_{\langle e, \langle s,t \rangle \rangle}^f =$$

{seasoned, **not**-seasoned}

Inference: Complementary set  $\neg P$

# Distinction from stressed auxiliaries

- Although stressed *ken* may raise an inference that the speaker asked themselves a polar question, stressed *ken* cannot respond to actual ones:

(21) A: *hiamznt pica?*  
 order.2SG.PAST pizza  
 ‘Did you order Pizza?’

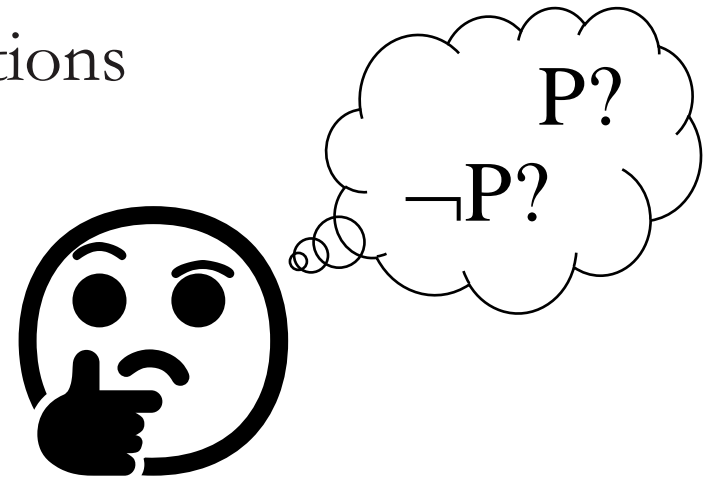
B: (\**KEN*) *hizmanti.*  
 yes order.1SG.PAST  
 ‘I did.’

- Why do internal polar questions license stressed *ken*, but actual ones do not?



# Distinction from stressed auxiliaries

- The difference: wondering about polar questions usually includes considering both options.



- Stressed *ken* cannot access the alternatives in questions' denotation (unlike stressed auxiliaries)

# Verum components

|   | <b>Insists the truth of<br/>the utterance</b> | <b>Requires a negative<br/>alternative</b> | <b>Answers polars<br/>questions</b> |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Overt Verum phrases<br>(English <i>indeed</i> ) | ✓   | ✗  | ✓                                   |
| Sentence polarity<br>(stressed Aux.)            | ✓   | ✓  | ✓                                   |
| Constituent polarity<br>(Hebrew KEN)            | ✓   | ✓  | ✗                                   |

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| Sentence polarity<br>(stressed Aux.)            | ✓   | ✓  | ✓                                   | ?                         | ✓            |
| Constituent polarity<br>(Hebrew KEN)            | ✓   | ✓  | ✗                                   | ✗                         | ✓            |

# Conclusion

- Verum strategies are a variable phenomena that employ both lexical operator and focus on the sentence polarity.
- Hebrew stress affirmatives prove that a lexical operator is not required.

# Thank you

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