Let my speakers talk:
Metalinguistic activity can indicate semantic change

Supplementary Material

SM1 Spotting optimal innovations
Giora et al. (2004) suggested that it is the amount of formal modification of the familiar syntagma underlying the innovation that determines whether a given instance of innovation is an instance of optimal innovation, or not. Consider the two variants of body and soul — body and sole and Bobby and Saul. Both variants “preserve the rhythm and the form [syntactic structure – IB] of the original [expression]” (p. 121). However only body and sole (and not Bobby and Saul), “allows for a salient response to get through” (p. 126), as it makes no more than a single modification to the familiar underlying body and soul. In contrast, Bobby and Saul, which is a pure innovation, introduces two formal modifications to the familiar underlying body and soul. In short, the criterion for an optimal innovation is recognizability of the underlying syntagma. The more changes are made, the less recognizable the underlying syntagma is.¹

The requirement for a single modification is a necessary condition for the innovation to be considered optimal, but it is not a sufficient condition. Take, for example, body and souls, which also introduces only a single modification to body and soul. Is body and souls, then, also an instance of optimal innovation? Giora et al. rule out body and souls as an instance of optimal innovation, since this modification is trivial, that is, it is of a quantitative—rather than a qualitative—nature, and therefore produces no meaning contrast between the innovation and the underlying familiar syntagma.

The requirement for a single formal modification and the requirement for a meaning contrast between the surface form and the underlying syntagma are exactly what specifies the optimal innovation as a case of paronymy in absentia (Winter-Froemel 2016).

In order to extract optimal innovations based on xa’val al hazman² from (the part-of-speech tagged and morphologically annotated) HeTenTen, I sought out two kinds of sequences: (i) sequences of any noun or adjective preceding al haz’man (roughly, ‘of the time’), which potentially replace xa’val (roughly, ‘it’s a waste’); (ii) sequences in which xa’val al (roughly, ‘it’s a waste of’) is immediately followed by any noun, potentially taken as replacing haz’man (‘the time’). Three types of optimal innovation,

¹ This criterion which applies to phrases has an equivalent in the field of morphology. It must be satisfied in order to produce a contour blend, such as Chinglish “English with Chinese grammar mixed together”< Chinese + English (the Urban Dictionary; tinyurl.com/2p8wbr5n). According to Ronneberger-Sibold (2006), the matrix word “can be traced, so to speak, by several phonological features of high importance for its recoverability. These are firstly its overall rhythmical contour defined by its number of syllables and the place of its main stress [… ]” (p. 170).

² The transcription here includes stress, because the requirement from an optimal innovation “to preserve the rhythm and the form” (Giora et al. 2004: 121) of the underlying syntagma necessarily includes rhyming which, in turn, involves stress. See also fn. 1.
classified by their rhyming (which is an element of rhythm; see fn. 1), are listed in Table 1 below.

The first query, (i), produced 21 syntagmas which can be counted as optimal innovations, while the second query, (ii), produced none. All 21 syntagmas were of the type in which a noun was immediately followed by *al haz’man*. Each of these 21 syntagmas was evaluated as an instance of optimal innovation by carefully observing the criteria specified above, by myself and then by an informant versed in detecting instances of optimal innovation (see Section 7.2 in the main text).

It should be noted that the surface forms of several instances of optimal innovation are the same. However, these items were produced by different speakers in different contexts. See, for example, the two instances of *xa’lal al haz’man* (*xa’lal* ‘outer space’) listed in Table 1. The first example of *xa’lal al haz’man* is the title of a blogpost about a TV series covering the Roswell UFO incident, and the second example is the title of a positive review about an exhibition focusing on outer space.

**SM2 Classifying web-sites according to religious observance**

I excluded the 142 instances of *xaval al hazman* accompanied by metalinguistic comments (see Section 6.2 in the main text) from the list of 2954 *xaval al hazman* items (extracted from HeTenTen), ending up with 2812 items. I was able to tag 2762 items for their specific function — 1389 instances of the positive (and intensifying) *xaval al hazman* and 1373 instances of the negative *xaval al hazman*. I failed to tag the remaining 50 items for lack of sufficient context.

From the list of 2762 items, I extracted all 865 unique web-addresses. I presented this list of web-addresses to a former ultra-orthodox informant (aged 28) who is highly active on the web. He was asked (for a fee) to identify the community associated with each web-site — as either ultra-orthodox, or not — by examining the web-addresses one by one, that is, browsing through each web-site. He was not informed of the purpose of this classification, nor did he have any access to the 2762 items.

Only 778 web-addresses were accessible. Not only did my informant tag each web-address as related to (and fed by) ultra-orthodox Jews (or not), he provided a more refined tagging of the *exact* religious observance of the population associated with each web-site (see Table 2 below).

Then, each web-address was associated with the original list of 2762 items, producing 2373 items tagged for the religious observance of their writers. The analysis reported in Section 8.3 (in the main text) includes only items extracted from web-sites associated distinctly with either secular or ultra-orthodox populations (2306). The same procedure was repeated for all the other syntagmas (undergoing semantic change) analyzed in the main text and is Section SM3 below.
Table 1: Examples of optimal innovation based on *xaˈval al hazˈman* classified by the type of rhyme. Data extracted from HeTenTen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Form of innovation</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Rhyme</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Meaning in context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>N/ADJ</strong> rhymes with <em>xaˈval</em></td>
<td><strong>N/ADJ</strong> rhymes with <em>hazˈman</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perfect rhyme</td>
<td><em>naˈmal</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>naˈmal</em> — <em>xaˈval</em></td>
<td><em>naˈmal</em> ‘harbour’</td>
<td>The slogan of the 80th birthday celebration to Tel-Aviv harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>xaˈlal</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>xaˈlal</em> — <em>xaˈval</em></td>
<td><em>xaˈlal</em> ‘outer space’</td>
<td>The title of a blogpost praising a TV series covering the Roswell UFO incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>xaˈlal</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>xaˈlal</em> — <em>xaˈval</em></td>
<td><em>xaˈlal</em> ‘outer space’</td>
<td>The title of a positive review about an exhibition focusing on outer space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) <strong>N/ADJ</strong> al hazˈman</td>
<td>general rhyme</td>
<td><em>xaˈva</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>xaˈva</em> — <em>xaˈval</em></td>
<td><em>xaˈva</em> ‘farm’</td>
<td>The title of a positive review about an agricultural farm opened for family visits on weekends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>xaˈlav</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>xaˈlav</em> — <em>xaˈval</em></td>
<td><em>xaˈlav</em> ‘milk’</td>
<td>The title of a newspaper article encouraging parents to feed their children dairy products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perfect rhyme</td>
<td><em>aˈšan</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>aˈšan</em> — hazˈman</td>
<td><em>aˈšan</em> ‘smoke’</td>
<td>The title of a flattering review about a smoky jazz club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>saˈtan</em> al hazˈman</td>
<td><em>saˈtan</em> — hazˈman</td>
<td><em>saˈtan</em> ‘Satan’</td>
<td>A movie about the son of Satan who repents of his sins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) <em>xaˈval ha-N</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Relevant Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Web-sites classified according the religious observance of their contributors. The full list comprises of several hundred web-sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web-site</th>
<th>Ultra-orthodox or not?</th>
<th>Further comments about the web-site and the contributors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pashkevil.co.il</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hassidic and Litvish ultra-orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kikarhashabat.co.il</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mostly Litvish but also Hassidic ultra-orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aish.co.il</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>This site is under maintenance but it is run by an organization associated with Litvish ultra-orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shofar.tv</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The community of Amnon Itzkah – an independent Sephardi ultra-orthodox community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>radio2000.co.il</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mostly Sephardi ultra-orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yardbirdsil.info</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>In this web-site there are links to other web-sites written by ultra-orthodox, not quite clear from which factions exactly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telechofesh.co.il</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>A web-site for ultra-orthodox and national religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aminadav.org.il</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>An organization which recruits national religious teenagers and also ultra-orthodox to civil service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vbm-torah.org</td>
<td>No, but religious</td>
<td>National religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kayama.co.il</td>
<td>No, but religious</td>
<td>The writer is a religious woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toravoda.org.il</td>
<td>No, but religious</td>
<td>National religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>headlines.co.il</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urbanbridesmag.co.il</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mit4mit.co.il</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SM3 Applying the proposed methods to additional syntagmas

SM3.1 Sof haderex, originally, ‘the end of the road’
Sof haderex is a construct phrase which means literally ‘the end of the road’ (sof ‘end’; derex ‘road’), an actual physical road, as exemplified in (1a), alongside a metaphorical road, as exemplified in (1b). And quite like xaval al hazman and en dvarim ka’ele/u, sof haderex too has turned into a positive-flavor idiomatic adjective denoting ‘amazing’ (2a), an adverb denoting ‘amazingly’ (2b), as well as an intensifier denoting ‘really’ (2c). All the new meanings are considered en bloc, since sof haderex (just like xaval al hazman and en dvarim ka’ele/u analyzed in the main text) is a flexible modifier.³

³ A flexible modifier is a modifier of flexible semantics which can modify gradable and non-gradable properties alike, as well as individuals, situations or propositions, and therefore exhibits a wide syntactic distribution (Beltrama and Bochnak 2015; McNabb 2012).
(1) a. yeš le’hagi’a le-taxana česington darom lifnot yamina
one.should to.get to-station Chessington South to.turn to.the.right

ve-lalexet ad sof ha-derex.
and-to.go until the.end.of the-road

‘One should get to Chessington South station, take the right and go up until the end of the road.’
(tinyurl.com/3drs3y2a)

b. ha-seret "predot" osek be-“sof ha-derex”, be-tipul
the-movie departures is.about in-the.end.of the-road in-taking.care.of

b-a-metim.
in-the-dead

‘The movie “Departures” is about the.end.of the-road, about taking care of the dead.’
(http://www.psy.org.il/)

(2) a. ha’iti b-a-seret be-yom revi’i. ha-rikudim šam madhimim
I.was in-the-movie in-day Wednesday the-dances there astonishing

ve-širim sof haderex.
and-the-songs the.end.of the-road → amazing

‘I watched this movie on Wednesday. The dancing there is astonishing and the songs are amazing.’
(tinyurl.com/czehaa8)

b. seret meratek. mevuyam sof haderex.
movie fascinating directed the.end.of the-road → amazingly

‘A fascinating movie. Amazingly directed.’
(tinyurl.com/zvkcdzj3)

c. yofi be-eney ha-mibonen — ma še-nir’eh lexa
beauty in.the.eyes.of the-beholder what that-seems to.you

yefeh u-meyuxad le-axat zeh yafeh
beautiful and-unique to-one it.is beautiful
'Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder — what seems to you beautiful and unique, for someone it is really beautiful, for another it is terribly ugly.'

Examples (1a) and (1b) are emotively neutral, so the connotative contrast between them and (2a-c) is, no doubt, less stark than the contrast between the old (negative) and the new (positive and intensifying) meaning of *xaval al hazman* (presented in the main text; see Sections 6-8), and similar to the case of *en dvarim ka’ele/u* (also presented in the main text; see Section 9).

The data from the Yedioth Ahronoth archives indicate that the semantic change of *sof haderex* has occurred during the late 90s of the 20th century (see Figure 1 below), somewhat later than the change *xaval al hazman* has undergone. In fact, I found a call for linguists in the Yedioth Ahronoth archives from June 1999: "Linguists! For your information: *Sof haderex* is the official replacement of *xaval al hazman*" [my translation]. This observation is corroborated by Triger (2007) who noted that when he had left Israel for New-York in 1999, the new *sof haderex* (2a-c) had not yet existed. However, in one of his visits to Israel (between 1999-2002), he had realized that the new *sof haderex* couldn’t be avoided.
Figure 1: The distribution of the old vs. the new meanings of *sof haderex* as a function of time. The total number of tokens of *sof haderex* for every five-year interval is marked on top of each bar. Items classified as either metalinguistic comments or simply names (of books, shops, resorts and the like) were filtered out. Data extracted from the Yedioth Ahronoth archives (as of 19 November 2021).

In the synchronic HeTenTen, 1306 instances of *sof haderex* were detected, less than half (~45%) of *xaval al hazman* tokens. I next apply each of the three proposed methods to *sof haderex*.

**SM3.1.1 The metalinguistic comment-based method**

Examples, such as (3), indicate that *sof haderex* has changed its meaning, while roughly noting the approximate date of change (compatible with Triger’s 2007 observation above).

(3) *avira šel mesiba sof haderex, kmo še-hayu omrim*

*an.air of a.party the end of the road like that-were saying*

*b-a-naintiz*, *rak še-hapa’am ani be’emet mitkaven la-zeh.*

*in-the-ninetees only that-this.time I truly mean to-this*

’an air of an end of the road party, like they used to say in the nineties, only this time I really mean it.’

(HeTenTen, tinyurl.com/2nrddb7e)

A close inspection of the contents of the 50 instances of *sof haderex*, accompanied by some comment about its meaning, enables the description of this semantic change in more detail. The following (4a-d), are the examples found in HeTenTen where *sof haderex* is used naturally rather than mentioned (which is also the case with (3); see Section 6.2 in main text). In each of them, the speaker indicates explicitly the meaning of *sof haderex* she wishes to communicate (boldfaced), thus revealing that semantic change has indeed occurred. Example (4a) attests to a literal meaning. Example (4b) indicates that there’s a meaning which is not used by youngsters, the literal meaning, and it is therefore an old meaning. Note, that in the context of (4b), this old meaning is not quite literal, contrary to what the speaker indicates. It is, rather, metaphorical. In certain contexts, this metaphorical meaning could be negative, as evidenced by (4c). The new meaning must therefore be the positive one, as indicated by (4d). Taken together, (4a-d) highlight the non-salient meaning which must be explicitly invited. This meaning is the literal and/or the metaphorical one. The new

---

4 The change in the total number of tokens of *sof haderex* is possibly a result of the change in the overall number of tokens printed in Yedioth Ahronoth over the years.

5 It should be noted that I did not distinguish between items of various lexical categories. This is because the focus of the present paper is only the detection of semantic change.

6 This is an example from HeTenTen complemented by a direct link to the relevant web-site.
meaning is, by implication, the positive (and intensifying) meaning. In sum, (4a-d) attest to semantic change, all in line with the data from the Yedioth Ahronoth archives presented in Figure 1 above.

(4)  

a. *ha-kfar turtuk hu pšuto ke-mašma’o sof haderex.*  
the-village Turtuk is its.face.value as-its.meaning the end of the road

‘The village Turtuk is literally the end of the road.’  
(HeTenTen, tinyurl.com/5n6uxxww)

b. *dimuy ha-70 nir’eh mamaš sof haderex. ve-lo*  
the.image.of the-70 seems really the end of the road and-not sof haderex.
*b-a-muvan še-ha-ce’irim mištamšim*  
the end of the road in-the-sense that-the-young.people use

*b-o ela mamaš — sof haderex — lefaxot karov*  
in-it but really the end of the road at.least close

le-sof haderex.  
to-the end of the road

‘The image of [age] 70 seems like the end of the road, and not the end of the road in the sense used by young people, but really the end of the road or at least close to the end of the road.’  
(HeTenTen)7

c. *ha-xa’im nir’im “sof haderex”, aval b-a-muvan ha-šlili*  
the-life seems the end of the road but in-the-sense the-negative

šel ha-musag.  
of the-term

‘Life seems “the end of the road”, but in the negative sense of the term.’  
(HeTenTen, tinyurl.com/2h8mws3s)

d. “*sof haderex*, ve-lo b-a-muvan ha-xiyuvi šel*  
the end of the road and-not in-the-sense the-positive of

7 This is an example from HeTenTen, but unfortunately the direct link to the relevant web-site is broken.
ha-munax.
the-term

‘”The end of the road”, and not in the positive sense of the term.’

(HeTenTen)

Note that unlike in the case of xaval al hazman, where the comments invoke both meanings (although the old one somewhat more so), in the case of sof haderex, all 5 examples (3 and 4a-d) invoke only the old meanings, indicating that sof haderex is presumably at a more advanced stage of semantic change than xaval al hazman.

SM3.1.2 The wordplay-based method
Similar to xaval al hazman, some of the meanings of sof haderex too are collocations/idioms and therefore constitute substrates for optimal innovations. One of the old meanings is metaphorical, and all the new meanings are hyperboles. I found 3 instances of optimal innovation based on sof haderex in HeTenTen: Two instances of xof haderex ‘beach of the road’ in the context of promoting the Israeli version of Burning Man festival (HeTenTen), and as the title of a blog post celebrating the 25th anniversary of the hit song “I’m walking on sunshine” (HeTenTen, tinyurl.com/4xs48p3v); and šef haderex ‘chef of the road’ as a brand name of pre-cooked meals for field trips (HeTenTen, tinyurl.com/234y42mu). Xof haderex observes the phonological criterion used to spot an optimal innovation (see Section SM1 above), and šef haderex in on the verge of observing this criterion. Both observe the semantic criterion. All 3 are based on the new meaning of sof haderex (2a-c). No example of optimal innovation based on the earlier, metaphorical meaning of sof haderex (1b) was detected. This distribution attests to the salience of the new meaning of sof haderex. A few more examples were found on a targeted Google search (as of 11 December 2021). All, but one, are based on the new meaning of sof haderex, again attesting to the new meaning as the current salient meaning, in line with the results of the metalinguistic comment-based method.

SM3.1.3 The conservative speaker-based method
The results of the classification of the 1075 classifiable instances of sof haderex by the religious observance of the speakers who produced them are summarized in Table 3. As in the case of xaval al hazman and en dvarim ka’ele/u, only data of secular and ultra-orthodox Jews are considered.

Table 3: The distribution of sof haderex extracted from HeTenTen by the religious observance of the speakers. (The figures include no instance of sof haderex accompanied by metalinguistic comments.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive and Intensifying</th>
<th>Literal &amp; Metaphoric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sof haderex</td>
<td>sof haderex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General secular Jewish population</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra-orthodox Jews</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of a two-tailed Fisher exact test are significant, \( p = 0.037 \), *Odds Ratio* = 2.24 (95% CI [1.0052, 5.50], which is equivalent to a medium effect size; Chen et al. 2010). The lower ratio between the positive (and intensifying) *sof haderex* and the literal and metaphorical ones among the ultra-orthodox \( \left( \frac{9}{26} = 0.35 \right) \) as compared to the general population \( \left( \frac{441}{568} = 0.78 \right) \), indicates that the ultra-orthodox are less likely to prefer the positive (and intensifying) *sof haderex* over the literal and metaphorical ones. The positive (and intensifying) meaning is therefore the new meaning of this syntagma, whereas the literal and metaphorical meanings are the old ones. These results are in the line with the results of the metalinguistic comment-based method above.

In sum, the results of the three methods here proposed attest to the semantic change of *sof haderex*, and its direction — from the literal and metaphorical (perhaps, but not necessarily, negative) meanings to the positive and intensifying one. They also attest to the current salience of the positive (and intensifying) meaning over the two other old meanings.

### SM3.2 Ba livkot, originally, ‘it feels like crying’

In Section SM3.1 (above) and Section 9 (in the main text) I have shown that it is not necessarily the stark meaning contrast between the old and the new meanings (as in the case of *xaval al hazman*) that attracts speakers’ attention and therefore yields a wealth of data. Even syntagmas in which the contrast between the meanings is debatable, as in the case of *sof haderex* (Section SM3.1) and *en dvarim ka’ele/u* (Section 9), evoke speakers’ metalinguistic interest, and yield a fair amount of metalinguistic data.

I further suggest that syntagmas that are much less frequent, such as *(še)ba livkot*, originally, ‘(that) it feels like crying’, 206 instances in HeTenTen in total, may also benefit from the proposed methods. This syntagma bears two simultaneous meanings exemplified in (5) and (6). Example (5), where a fire fighter describes the landscape after a forest fire, displays the literal meaning. In (6) *(še)ba livkot* can be interpreted as either ‘really’ (intensifier) or ‘amazing’ (adjective), depending on the lexeme it modifies, ‘full’ (adjective) or ‘juice’ (noun), respectively. Again the new meanings are considered *en bloc*.³

(5) \( zo \ avira \ mamaš \ apokaliptit. \ kol \ ha-nof \ nir’eh \)

\( afor-kaxol, \ pašut \ \text{ba} \ livkot. \)

grey-blue \ simply \ feels.like \ to.cry

‘This is an apocalyptic atmosphere. The entire landscape is grey-blue, it simply *feels like* crying.’

(HeTenTen, tinyurl.com/4dpbpvjr)

(6) \( ve-ha-klemantinot \ mele’ot \ asis \ še-ba \ livkot \)
and-the-tangerines full with juice  that-it feels like crying → really/amazing

‘[…] and the tangerines are (really) full with (amazing) juice.’

(HeTenTen)

The data from the Yedioth Ahronoth archives indicate that the new, positive and intensifying (še)ba livkot splashed into the language scene at the early 70s of the 20th century (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: The distribution of the old vs. the new meanings of (še)ba livkot as a function of time. The total number of tokens of (še)ba livkot for every five-year interval is marked on top of each bar.4 Items classified as either metalinguistic comments or simply names (of books, shops, resorts and the like) were filtered out. Data extracted from the Yedioth Ahrontoth archives (as of 23 November 2021).8

Having established that semantic change has indeed occurred, I now examine the 206 instances of (še)ba livkot in the synchronic HeTenTen.

8 Note that all the examples of the new ba livkot are preceded by še ‘that’, since they have not yet changed their grammatical status. They were considered en bloc, regardless of the element that they modify. This is because the focus of the present paper is only the detection of semantic change (but see Becker and Ariel, under review, for the fine details of the relevant process of change in grammatical status).
SM3.2.1 The metalinguistic comment-based method

I detected two instances of (še)ba livkot accompanied by metalinguistic comments. Both are of the type where (še)ba livkot is used naturally rather than mentioned (see Section 6.2 in the main text). One of them is (7), where the comment “and I really cried”, evokes the low-salience meaning, here the literal meaning of actual crying. The other example (not cited here) is similar. Both instances imply that the low-salience meaning of (še)ba livkot is the literal one, and by implication that the salient meaning of (še)ba livkot is the idiomatic intensifying one denoting ‘really’ or ‘amazing’. But note the paucity of data.

(7) ha-sefer madhim, katuv kol-kax yafeh
the-book amazing written so beautifully

še-ba livkot (ve-ani be’emt baxiti).
that-it feels like crying → really and-I truly cried

‘The book is amazing, so beautifully written that it feels like crying (and I truly cried).’
(HcTenTen)

Another interesting example, not quite a comment, but perhaps a creative instance, requires some background. (Še)ba livkot is mentioned for the first time in a popular song from the mid-60s of the 20th century. In that song, a womanizer confesses that he is so emotionally moved by the presence of attractive women, so much so that he feels like bursting into tears: jafot, jafot (še)ba livkot ‘beautiful, beautiful up to a point that it feels like crying’. In fact, the entire syntagma, not just (še)ba livkot, has become idiomatic for speakers. Now, in (8), a review about highly expensive eye shadows, the speaker uses the adjective jafot, jafot which immediately evokes the missing continuation of the intensifier (še)ba livkot. But instead of using the original version of the intensifier, the speaker uses it creatively, to agonize over high prices. This creative use evokes the low-salience, literal meaning. It then shows the intensifying meaning as the one that needs to be actively rejected for it is already the salient automatic meaning (at the time of speech).

(8) lo yaxolti limco l-a-post ha-zeh koteret yoter meduyeket
not I.could to.find to-the-post the-this title more accurate

avuran — yafot, yafot! aval im hen kol-kax yafot,
for.them beautiful beautiful but if they so beautiful

az lama bexol-zot ba livkot?
so why in.spite.of.it feels.like to.cry

9 The lyrics of jafot, jafot: https://tinyurl.com/x9xvjszz
‘I couldn’t have found a more accurate title for this post – beautiful, beautiful! But if they [eye shadows – IB] are so beautiful, why is it that one still feels like crying?’
(tinyurl.com/2p8m7ncz)

Note that in the specific case of (še)ba livkot, the limited selection of metalinguistic comments allows to establish linguistic change and salience, but not the direction of change.

SM3.2.2 The wordplay-based method
As in the case of (še)en dvarim ka’ele/u (see Section 9 in the main text), here too, this method is not applicable. Only the new meaning of (še)ba livkot is collocational/idiomatic and can constitute the substrate for wordplay, not the old one.

SM3.2.3 The conservative speaker-based method
The results of the classification of the 185 classifiable instances of (še)ba livkot by the religious observance of the speakers who produced them are summarized in Table 4. As in all the previous cases, only data of secular and ultra-orthodox Jews are considered.

Table 4: The distribution of (še)ba livkot extracted from HeTenTen by the religious observance of the speakers. (The figures include no instance of (še)ba livkot accompanied by metalinguistic comments.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive and Intensifying (še)ba livkot</th>
<th>Negative (še)ba livkot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General secular Jewish population</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra-orthodox Jews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of a two-tailed Fisher exact test are significant, \( p=8.7\times 10^{-4} \), \emph{Odds Ratio}= 21.18 (95% CI [2.4587, 996.2954], which is equivalent to a large effect size; Chen et al. 2010). The lower ratio between the intensifying (še)ba livkot and the literal one among the ultra-orthodox \( \frac{1}{6} = 0.167 \) as compared to the general population \( \frac{137}{38} = 3.61 \), attests to semantic change — the negative (še)ba livkot gave way to the positive (and intensifying) one.

Noteworthy is the fact that the channel by which (še)ba livkot was introduced into the language scene (as noted above) is a popular song, which may have contributed to the spread of (še)ba livkot among speakers. However, the specific provocative content of this song makes it entirely unacceptable to ultra-orthodox Jews, which may explain why they have barely adopted the new, intensifying (še)ba livkot (thus drawing a linguistic line between them and the general Jewish population in Israel).

Taken together, the results of the relevant methods attest to semantic change from the compositional, negative (še)ba livkot to the idiomatic, positive and intensifying one. It could be
that this change is at an advanced stage where the new meaning is the salient meaning, but keep in mind that data is scarce.

References
Triger, Zvi. 2007. sof haderex/xaval al hazman [the end of the road/it’s a waste of time]. In Amalia Rosenblum & Zvi Triger (eds.), lelo milim: ha-tarbut ha-isre’el bi-re’i ha-safa (Speechless: How contemporary Israeli culture is reflected in language), 228. Or Yehuda: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir. [in Hebrew].