

Affix order in Modern Hebrew: Syntactic and Morphological Interface

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate Hebrew affix order of an orthographic word, where an affix is any bound morpheme attached to the stem. Words can include a connective *ve-* 'and,' other conjuncts, an interrogative particle, prepositions, a definite article, tense indication, person, gender and number, and pronominal affixes, depending on the morphosyntactic category of the stem. In most cases, tense, person, gender and number indicators are suffixes and it is only in the verb system that prefixes exist in addition to suffixes. Vowel infixes occur only in discontinuous derivation by root and pattern combination, not in inflection. Linear formation of nouns, adjectives and adverbs is primarily marked by suffixes; prefixes form prepositions and adverbs.

There is an asymmetry to the order of word bound affixes, which is partly connected to Greenberg's universals (Greenberg 1966). Obligatory and optional components are dependant on syntactic function and on register. Pronominal suffixes tend to change from synthetic to analytic, and are thus optional. Some affixes are replaceable by separate words, while others are inherently inseparable. The difference between different types of affix depends on their syntactic function.

With the exception of the future tense and person, number and gender in verbs, prefixes seem to relate to overall syntactic sentence structure, while suffixes tend to be determined by the interrelationships of sentence components. While conjuncts (including the connective *ve-* and interrogative particle), prepositions, and the definite article dominate sentence structure, suffixes are dependant on various sentence components. This explains the asymmetry between prefix and suffix distributions (Di Sciullo 2005).

References

- Di Sciullo, A.M. (2005), *Asymmetry in Morphology*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
- Greenberg, J.H. (1966), 'Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements', in: J.H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of Language*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, pp. 73-113.