

## **Thursday Interdisciplinary Colloquium**

**Winter 2018-Spring 2018**

*Thursdays, 16:00-17:30, Webb 103*

**26.04.18**

**Paul Wexler**

Tel Aviv University

***The New Field of Afro-Eurasian (Silk Road) Linguistics***

***[The benefits for Yiddish and other old Jewish languages, Hebrew, German, Slavic, Iranian, Turkic, Chinese, Arabic, etc.]***

This talk will address eight topics in "Silk Road linguistics":

(i) By "Silk Roads" I understand trade in the 9th-13th centuries between Germany and China, Korea, Japan, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Andalusia, West Africa, and the Near East; between Central Asia and India; between Iran and East Africa. This trade has led to the rise of sweeping isoglosses linking many Afro-Eurasian languages spoken *en route*.

(ii) New cryptic Jewish languages and a new cryptic Hebrew lexicon of trade were created by peripatetic Jewish merchants around the 9th century in response to the granting of unique trading privileges from the Holy Roman Empire in Western Europe and the Tang dynasty in China in the 9th century. Jews had these rights because they were neutral in the religious disputes affecting Islam. Between 0-1200 A.D., the overwhelming majority of Jews resided in the Iranian empire; they were overwhelmingly the descendants of Iranian converts to Judaism. Today, over 90% of the world's Jews still call themselves "Ashkenazic" or "Sephardic", using an Iranian ethnic and toponymic term, respectively. The term Ashkenazic was originally used by Slavic- and Iranian-speaking Jews and had originally nothing to do with Germany. The Iranians and Jews had a monopoly on the Silk Roads.

(iii) Jewish trade languages founded by the 9th century include Yiddish, Judaized Arabic, Iranian, Berber, Ibero-Romance, and Georgian. They can elucidate many topics in the histories of the non-Jewish contact languages, and Jewish history, and show the need for study within a broad Afro-Eurasian, rather than a narrow monolingual, context. The history of the Old Jewish languages can only be understood fully in the context of the Silk Roads.

(iv) Yiddish, the focus of my research, is a Slavic language, created in the Khazar and Holy Roman empires, which underwent massive Iranianization and modest Turkicization, and even has influences from other Asian and African languages, including Ethiopic, Berber, Mongolian, Chinese, and maybe even Tocharian. Hence, Yiddish is a priceless "litmus test" for uncovering hidden Iranian, Turkic, and Slavic influences in German, and

Iranian and Turkic elements in German, can elucidate the chronology of the Arabicization of Iranian and Turkic languages, can reconstruct the location of Irano- and Turko-Slavic tribal confederations in Europe up to c. 1000 A.D., and can explain how Iranian language, ethnography, religion (including Christianity), and art styles spread to China, Japan, and Europe.

(v) Because Silk Road trade was so lucrative, countless non-Jews sought membership in the Jewish trading guilds. This required "conversion" to Judaism, which also brought freedom from the status of slavery (affecting Slavs and other pagans). Since new converts far outnumbered the Jewish descendants of earlier converts, many pagan customs were introduced into Judaism – most of which had been dropped from Islam and Christianity, e.g., the glass-breaking ceremony at a wedding. Hence, most ritual terms in the old Jewish languages are not genuine Hebraisms (e.g., Iranian *xo/hamo'ed*, *kašer*, *xala*, *bet-hakneset*). Conversion led to the formation of multi-ethnic Jewish communities and a universal religion.

(vi) Since Jewish merchants were always in close contact with co-religionists speaking other, often mutually unintelligible, languages, it was imperative to create a common lexical corpus of Hebraisms and Hebroidisms. All speakers contributed to this cryptic corpus, but Slavic Yiddish speakers predominated. About 50% of Modern Hebrew lexicon consists of neologisms created for "Silk Road Hebrew" users 1000 years ago.

(vii) Old Jewish languages are crucial for elucidating how cryptic trade languages and lexicons are created, since they are the oldest surviving examples. When the Jews lost their paramount role in the Afro-Eurasian trade routes, roughly by the 13th century, they abandoned their cryptic "Hebrew" trade lexicon to their former non-Jewish partners (e.g., Hebrew and Romani > German by the 14th century, and > Afro-Asian trade lexicons in North and West Africa and Western China). While Yiddish is *geographically* a "peripheral" Slavic Silk Road language, it is faithful to the norms of the two "core" language families – Turkic and Iranian.

(viii) Without the Chinese, Iranians, Turks, Slavs, and Arabs, Modern Hebrew, the Jewish tribal confederations and Judaism would not exist today. Arabic flooded Persian and became models for the acquisition and creation of Hebraisms by the Jewish languages; the Chinese, Iranians and the Arabs maintained the Silk Roads which emphasized the role of Iranian Jews who alone spoke Aramaic (and could thus preserve a Hebrew language tradition), and enabled massive conversion to Judaism, which vastly increased the Jewish population.

12.04.18

**Elior Elkayam**

Tel Aviv University

***From Predication to Prediction: Grammaticalization of the Temporal, Aspectual, and Modal Senses of the Hebrew Past Tense Copula***

In Modern Hebrew, the *qatal* form of *haya* 'be' functions as a past tense copula to predicate non-verbal predicates (e.g., *hu haya more* 'He was a teacher'), or as an auxiliary (i.e., the *haya* + participle construction) to convey a range of meanings, all the way from past habits (e.g., *hem hayu garim po* 'They used to live here') to generic or past predictions (e.g., *xaval lo amart li, hayiti mevi'a mašu* 'It's a shame you didn't tell, I would have brought something').

This presentation delineates the grammaticalization of the predicative, aspectual, and modal senses of *haya* all the way from Proto-Semitic to Modern Hebrew. I will show that the '*haya* + participle' construction emerged in Biblical Hebrew as the past imperfective, which in Modern Hebrew was narrowed to the past habitual (Rosén 1977, Doron 2006). I will also claim that the predictive *haya* construction is traceable to the irrealis sense of *haya* in Biblical Hebrew. In Mishnaic Hebrew, the irrealis *haya* was incorporated into a conditional construction which persisted in Modern Hebrew.

Relying on Narrog's (2005) conceptual space of modality, I categorize predictions as tensed, generic, or attitudinal. Based on a corpus analysis of spoken (CoSIH) and written Hebrew (HeTenTen), I will argue that generic predictions are grammaticalized via reanalysis of tensed predictions and that attitudinal predictions share both generic and desiderative senses, placing it in-between volitive and non-volitive modality.

I will show that each grammatical step is characterizable according to formal (Lehmann 1995) as well as functional (Narrog 2005, 2017; Kranich 2015) criteria. I develop this idea further and propose a new model for grammar and grammaticalization, called the Lexicogrammar Spectrum. This model represents forms with a reference to their function, syntax, and embodied representation. Thus, it has two dimensions: the x-axis stands for the lexicogrammar continuum (Halliday & Mathiessen 2004), which I argue is another name for embodied representation (Zwaan 2004). The y-axis stands for variability, which is manifested in (a) syntactic restrictedness (for words or morphemes), (b) constructional variability (Michaelis 2017), and (c) paradigmatic (i.e., oppositional) variability (Lehmann 1995). The advantage of this model is that it visualizes both synchronic and diachronic information, while at the same time providing formal, syntactic, and representational information.

**Selected References**

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## 22.03.18

**Alexander Grosu and Koji Hoshi**

Tel Aviv University and Keio University

### ***Analyses of Japanese 'Internally-Headed' Relatives, and the Pitfalls of Homophony***

There are (at least) three types of formal syntactic-semantic approaches to J(apanese) I(nternally) H(eaded) R(elative) C(onstruction)s, represented by [i] Shimoyama (2001) (built on Hoshi 1995), [ii] Landman (2016) (built on Grosu & Landman 2012), and [iii] Erlewine & Gould (2016). *All these view J-IHRCs as **necessarily definite** complex DPs.*

IHRCs have the superficial appearance of (1).

(1) [[[complete sentence]-*no*]-Case]

#### **The gist of the three approaches is:**

[i] The complex DP contains a CP-internal DP (the 'I(nternal) H(ead)'), which serves as **antecedent** of a CP-external **discourse-type definite anaphor**. *The IH and the anaphor are thematic participants in their clauses.*

[ii] The IH is a **co-argument** of a N(ull) O(perator) attached to the clause immediately containing the IH. The NO undergoes cyclic A-bar movement to the top of the relative, where it gets construed as a lambda operator. The lambda abstract combines with a CP-external null definite determiner, yielding a denotation for the complex DP. *The IH and the complex DP are thematic participants in their clauses.*

[iii] The IH does **not necessarily determine** the denotation of the complex DP, which can also be built on a distinct contextually salient set of entities.

Many of the properties on which [i] and [ii] are built (at least seven of them) have been challenged in earlier literature. All of these challenges were argued in Grosu & Hoshi (2016, 2018) to be traceable to a confusion of IHRCs with one or more of three other constructions that have the superficial appearance of (1), and that can, under certain circumstances, be string-wise homophonous with IHRCs.

In this talk, I will focus on two types of challenge, which deny the following two tenets of [ii]: [A] IHRCs are island-sensitive, and [B] the IH necessarily determines the denotation of the complex DP. I describe in detail the situations in which homophony may seem to justify the denial of [A] and [B], I then refute the challenges to [A]-[B] by relying on carefully constructed unambiguous data, and I finally reach the conclusion that this refutation supports the analysis in [ii] over those in [i] and [iii].

**15.03.18**

**Avital Deutsch**

The Hebrew University

***The Interrelation between Root and Nominal-Pattern Extraction in the Course of the Morphological Decomposition of Hebrew Words in a Fast Priming Procedure for Sentence Reading***

Hebrew words are composed of two non-concatenated morphemes: a consonantal *root* embedded within a *nominal* or a *verbal-pattern* morpho-phonological unit. Research on written-word perception using the masked-priming paradigm has revealed a robust effect of the roots and the verbal-patterns, but not the nominal-patterns, on word recognition. These findings suggest that the Hebrew lexicon is organized and accessed via root units. However, the absence of a nominal-pattern effect creates theoretical difficulties for describing the extraction of the root morphemes. We explored the hypothesis that the potential facilitative effect induced by a shared nominal-pattern was annulled in previous studies by an interference effect induced by the competition between the roots of two words derived from different roots but with the same nominal-pattern. A fast-priming paradigm combined with a letter-delay paradigm was used, where the target words are embedded in sentences in places that are initially occupied by a random letter string. While the eyes move into the target space, the random string is changed into the prime, which consists of the nominal-pattern letters, while the root letters are replaced by dashes. After a brief presentation of the prime, it is replaced by the target. This procedure makes it possible to isolate the initial influence of nominal-patterns on lexical access. The results, based on eye-fixation latency, demonstrated a facilitatory effect induced by nominal-pattern primes over orthographic control primes when presented for 33 ms or 42 ms. However, using this

paradigm for the root letters, i.e., using prime stimuli consisting of only the root letters while the nominal-patterns are replaced by dashes, did not reveal the robust root effect usually observed with the masked priming paradigm. The results are discussed in relation to the effect revealed by the two paradigms and the role of the word-pattern as a mediating unit of morphological decomposition of Hebrew complex words and root extraction.

*The lecture will be delivered in Hebrew.*

**08.03.18**

**Anna Inbar and Leon Shor**

Tel Aviv University

***Expression of Negation in Hebrew:  
From Grammar to Co-Speech Gestures***

The present study will examine negation in spoken Israeli Hebrew as a multimodal phenomenon that is expressed not only in the spoken modality, but also in the gestural one. We will focus on the semantic nature of the gestures associated with negation in Hebrew, and on how these gestures are employed as a component in utterance construction. Since negation is essentially an abstract concept, analyzing its image-like representation in the form of gestures could contribute to a better understanding of negation in general. Furthermore, it will be shown that, exploring the different ways in which these gestures interact with morphosyntactic negators, may lead to a more thorough understanding of the discourse functions of negators in Israeli Hebrew.

Additionally, it was found that the gestural patterns revealed were used to indicate explicit (grammatical) negation as well as implicit (covert) negation. According to Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1996), the identity of negation does not depend solely on the overtly expressed negative words, and the negative identity of some linguistic units may be covert. We will show that the negativity of such linguistic units may be uncovered by gestures.

### **References**

Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, B. (1996). *Depth of Negation: A Cognitive Study*. Lodz University Press.