

## ABSTRACTS

### ASPECTUAL MEANINGS OF *NIF'AL* FROM SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC POINTS OF VIEW

*Keren Dubnov*

Often, a single Hebrew root generates intransitive verbs both in *Pa'al* and *Nif'al* templates. In many cases, the *Nif'al* verb tends to have a marked aspectual meaning, such as inchoative, ingressive, cumulative or semelfactive, dependent on the semantics of the root and on the possibility of the *Pa'al* verb to indicate a durative action. The common denominator of all of these meanings is punctiliarity. The aspectual contrast between intransitive *Pa'al* verbs and their *Nif'al* counterparts is not an innovation of modern Hebrew but it has developed some new expressions, probably inspired by Yiddish and Slavic languages which have various aspectual prefixes. Some *Nif'al* verbs with a marked aspectual meaning are only documented in early modern literature, but are no longer existent in contemporary Hebrew.

### WHAT'S *ZE*? A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF THE COPULA *ZE* IN MODERN HEBREW

*Gabi Danon*

Verbless clauses in Hebrew involving the pronominal copula *ze* never display subject-copula or subject-predicate agreement, with the copula and adjectival predicates invariably being in the default masculine singular form. Additionally, these sentences are often characterized by an interpretation that differs from the typical predicational interpretation found with the copula *hu*. After surveying the basic syntactic and semantic properties of *ze*-clauses, this article argues against several possible analyses which would explain these properties by claiming that the clause-initial noun phrase is not the subject. Instead, it is argued that the clause-initial noun phrase is a featureless DP in subject position, where lack of features blocks not only agreement but also the possibility of binding and control relations; features of the noun, in this case, are present at the NP level but are not present at the DP level. This leads to the question of what constrains the distribution of such featureless DPs. Following standard assumptions in current minimalist syntax, lack of agreement is argued to correspond to lack of case; and following the central insight of Chomsky's visibility condition (1986), it is argued that the possibility of having a caseless DP is limited to non-thematic DPs. Hence, lack of agreement in *ze*-clauses is argued to follow from general syntactic principles rather than from any construction-specific property, under the assumption (independently argued for in a previous work) that *ze*-clauses are not predicational. This is further supported by showing that similar syntactic and semantic properties can be found in a variety of Hebrew-raising constructions that do not involve the copula *ze*, as well as in similar constructions found in other, unrelated, languages.

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‘UNSAYABLE’ WORDS: MORPHOLOGICAL CHOICES AND GAPS

*Lior Laks*

This study examines blocking of word formation where words that are semantically possible are not formed. Word formation and the selection of one form rather than another are subject to some extent of arbitrariness, as this is part of the nature of human languages and specifically of the mental lexicon. There are various examples of words that could theoretically become part of the speakers’ lexicon but fail to do so, for no apparent reason. While some of these cases are indeed arbitrary, I show that many of them are not and result from morphological constraints. Specifically, I argue that the morphological mechanism in the grammar aims at structural transparency between existing words. I examine three cases of word formation (and lack thereof): agent nouns, able-type adjectives and intransitive ‘weak’ verbs. In addition to the claim that lexical gaps are not random, this study provides support to the claim that word formation relies on existing words, which are the base of the formation of other semantically related words. In each case study, I show that word formation is based on internal modifications of existing words, and that the morphological mechanism has to examine their structural properties such as syllable structure, without separate reference to the consonantal root. In case there is no structural transparency between an existing word and a candidate for word formation, the morphological component either selects an alternative form or blocks word formation. The nature of the mental lexicon is such that allows some degree of arbitrariness, but also functions as an active component of the grammar where processes take place in systematic interaction with grammatical constraints. The constraints discussed in this study are not specific to a certain lexical category, but seem to be common for the formation of nouns, adjectives and verbs.

*YIHUD* SENTENCES IN CONTEMPORARY HEBREW LITERATURE

*Bruria Margolin*

This paper offers an empirical examination of *yihud* sentences in contemporary Hebrew literature. A corpus chosen to reflect contemporary Hebrew prose was examined for *yihud* sentences, and the structures found were classified into two main models: simple *yihud* sentences and stressed *yihud* sentences. *Yihud* sentences are used in contemporary Hebrew prose to mark the discourse topic using syntactic focalization by means of extraposition. The author uses the *yihud* clause, i.e., the extraposition topic, to mark the discourse topic in its limited sense, i.e., the dialogue subject, and the extraposition comment to mark the discourse topic in its broader sense, i.e., the dialogue topic. The main textual function of simple *yihud* sentences in contemporary Hebrew prose is to change the discourse topic, while that of stressed *yihud* sentences is to change the discourse topic and at the same time to express conflict or contradiction. Due to their textual function of changing the discourse topic, *yihud* sentences disrupt the flow of the sentences and do not allow the linear connectivity that is characteristic of the discourse in contemporary Hebrew prose (Margolin, 1996).

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AN EXAMINATION OF SYNONYMS IN KASPI'S DICTIONARY –  
*ŠARŠOT KESEF*

*Moshe Kahan*

Joseph ibn Kaspi (1280-1345), a philosopher and logician, was a radical student of Maimonides from Provence. His outlook on philosophy and logic is clearly evident in all of his works. Among others works, Kaspi compiled a Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary named *Šaršot Kesef*. This study demonstrates that this dictionary differs in essence from all previous Hebrew dictionaries, including Jonah Ibn-Janāh's *Kitāb al-'Uṣūl* and David Kimhi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim*. The distinction stems from the fact that the dictionary is based on Kaspi's rules of logic, which he discusses in *Rəṭukot Kesef*. One of the two most prominent elements of Kaspi's dictionary is the different implications of synonyms – that no two words can be truly synonymous in meaning. This study is devoted to the differentiation between synonyms, highlighting the distinction between synonym differentiations in general scholarship and specific innovations by Kaspi.

IS OUR WAY HASTENED? ON SPEECH RATE IN HEBREW IN ISRAEL

*Judith Rosenhouse*

Speech rate depends, among other things, on speech proficiency, whether acquired as mother tongue or foreign language. Although speech rate has been researched in many languages for various goals such as speech synthesis, few studies deal with this subject regarding contemporary spoken Hebrew. This study focuses on checking speech rate of Hebrew native speakers. The work method involved measurement of syllable durations of natural spontaneous speech recordings found in the COSIH (MAAMAD) site on the internet and recordings accompanying a textbook of Hebrew. Speech units from these texts were selected and their syllable durations were measured using a speech analysis program, the various speakers' data were analyzed and compared to findings in other speech rate studies of Hebrew and other languages. This work and the studied literature revealed speech rate differences between different periods, and demographic variables such as age and sex of native speakers of Hebrew. Other variables, such as discourse type and subject also seem to affect speech rate in contemporary Hebrew. As literature shows that speech rate affects speech perception, this topic is discussed in an appendix about acquiring Hebrew as a foreign language.

MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING AN IMAGE OF INCONSISTENCY  
IN ISRAELI NEWS DISCOURSE

*Pnina Shukrun-Nagar*

This study focuses on the construction of non-logical paradoxes, of the type known as ‘inconsistencies’, in the Israeli news discourse. I argue that inconsistencies are constructed by various discursive devices and demonstrate the key role played by semantic means in this regard. The discussion focuses on 28 items covering disputes between ultra-Orthodox (*Haredim*) and secular Jews, broadcast on mainstream Israeli television news in 2009. I show that the journalists consistently attribute paradoxicality to *Haredim*, presenting alleged inconsistencies between actions in the past and in the present as well as between sayings and actions or between values and actions. The construction is based on an antonymy between expressions, words or components of words, which emphasizes the alleged contradiction between the items compared (‘always’ ≠ ‘this time’; ‘claim’ ≠ ‘found out’). In some of the cases the impression of an antonymy relies on the polysemic nature of one antonym (‘non-kosher’, which means in its context *immoral* but also implies irreligious conduct ≠ ‘religious’). In addition, semantic signs and components which express contrast to norms and expectations (‘surprisingly’, ‘exceptional’) are used to mark the alleged irrationality of the *Haredi* conduct.