



## Introduction

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The papers that make up this collection are all concerned with the form and meaning of prefixes and suffixes in Afroasiatic, focusing mainly on Semitic. The complex distribution and positioning of many Afroasiatic affixes raises critical phonological, morphological, and syntactic issues, for which, as Itamar Kastner puts it, “there is no easy fix”.

Kastner’s *Prefixes and suffixes in Afroasiatic: No easy -fix* formulates some of the descriptive and theoretical problems that arise in the study of Afroasiatic inflectional morphology. The most outstanding one is the distribution of the agreement markers—person, number and gender—with respect to the verbal stem, namely, their complex positioning as prefixes, suffixes, or a combination of both (since Harbour 2007, 2008, the term *discontinuous agreement* has often been used to describe such cases of circumfixing). Kastner then discusses some of the solutions that have been proposed in the literature and the directions that research on Afroasiatic inflection has taken.

Daniel Harbour’s *Discontinuous agreement: Nine birds, two stones* develops and expands ideas from the author’s earlier work, arguing, in essence, that discontinuous agreement arises under certain conditions given a syntax that deals in whole phi structures, namely feature bundles, and a morphological linearization algorithm. His reasoning is supported by analyses of discontinuous agreement in some non-Afroasiatic languages.

Ur Shlonsky’s *Rescaffolding the bundle in Afroasiatic inflection: Tamazight and Hebrew* takes the opposite view. Shlonsky tries to develop a purely syntactic account of the distribution of agreement features. He argues that if one takes each feature to be merged as a separate head in the syntax (i.e., no feature bundles), then computational devices that are independently necessary in syntax, to derive word order permutations in complex verb constructions and

in noun phrases, can be harnessed to capture the distribution of prefixes and suffixes in Tamazight and Modern Hebrew.

Matthew Hewett's *Discontinuous first person agreement in Semitic and post-syntactic modularity* is a detailed study of several cases of discontinuities in first person agreement. Adopting a modular and post-syntactic approach to morphology, Hewett argues that first person discontinuities across Semitic languages are generated in two distinct ways. One kind of first person discontinuity is attested across paradigms and is derived via the morphological operation Fission, while the other kind is limited to a single paradigm and is derived via the morphological operation Doubling.

Hewett's contribution, like Harbour's, is steeped in Distributed Morphology theory, according to which the syntax provides a structural input to a word-building component. These papers stand in contrast to Shlonsky's contribution to this issue, which tries to build a case for a grammar without a morphological component, in which syntactic structures and processes alone are responsible for assembling and ordering morphemes.

Ruth Kramer's *The morphosyntax of imperative agreement in Amharic: A haplology analysis* asks why and how the agreement prefix (but not the suffix) is lacking from imperative verbs in Amharic. She argues that while the second-person feature is syntactically represented on the imperative verb, it vanishes from the surface form because it doubles an independently-merged second person feature on the head of Imp(erative)P. A haplology rule bans multiple occurrences of a morphosyntactic feature(s) and is thus responsible for the absence of prefixes in imperatives.

A second paper in this issue that deals with an Ethiosemitic language is Gioia Cacchioli's *The Tigrinya zi- prefix: A morphological reflex of successive-cyclic movement*. Differently from other papers in this volume which focus on agreement affixation, Cacchioli's contribution deals with a verbal prefix that appears in Tigrinya relative clauses and does not seem related to inflection. She argues that *zi* is a functional head and that the head of the relative clause raises through the specifier of *zi*P on its way to the left-periphery. Movement of this sort is required, she argues, to meet locality conditions on movement.

Iris Kamil's *t-Forms of the Akkadian stative* provides a new argument to the effect that the Akkadian stative forms are verbal. Kamil's argument is based on the distribution of the *t*- affix. In Akkadian, unlike in the other Semitic languages, *t*- can be inserted into any verbal form in any template. It is, however, restricted to verbs. Hence, its occurrence in many stative forms argues that these are not nominal but genuine verbal forms.

Noam Faust provides a novel perspective on the *Nif'al* binyan of Modern Hebrew in his *Nif'al—A verbal class which is two*. Faust delineates several prop-

erties of this verbal class that distinguish it from all the others. He then argues that verbs in the *nif'al* verbal class arise from two distinct templates: one for the past/present tense bases and one for future/infinitive bases. The prefix *n-*, which occurs with the past/present forms of binyan, is taken to code for the feature [+REAL(is)]. This specification makes it impossible for a structure involving /n/ to combine with the future/infinitive template, since it carries the opposite specifications. As a result, the use of another template is required for these forms.

Overall, the eight papers in this collection investigate Afroasiatic affixes to considerable empirical and theoretical depth. Kastner, Harbour, Shlonsky, and Hewett analyze Afroasiatic agreement with a fine-toothed comb, discovering rich empirical patterns and identifying important implications for the structure of the morphology-syntax interface. Kramer and Cacchioli present novel data from Ethiosemitic languages that leads to specific theoretical results, while Kamil and Faust dive into older problems in Semitic affixation and develop freshly illuminating perspectives.

At the same time, the collection also instantiates breadth. Several different kinds of Afroasiatic affixes are analyzed, and many of the papers draw connections to languages outside of Afroasiatic. Several papers also map out directly opposing viewpoints in linguistic theory, e.g., the syntax-centered approaches of Shlonsky and Cacchioli vs. the morphology-centered approaches of Hewett, Harbour, and Kramer. As a whole, the collection represents the many ways in which Afroasiatic affixes continue to yield new empirical insights about natural language and to contribute to the development of linguistic theory.

## References

- Harbour, Daniel. 2007. Against PersonP. *Syntax* 10. 223–242.  
 Harbour, Daniel. 2008. Discontinuous agreement and the syntax-morphology interface. In Daniel Harbour, David Adger, and Susana Béjar, eds. *Phi Theory*. Oxford: OUP. 185–220.