

## Written prepositional prefixes in Hebrew narratives: morpho-orthographic and semantic analyses

Dorit Ravid; Ronit Naydic Rosen

Tel Aviv University, Israel

Written Hebrew words are constructed of a multi-layered stem-and-envelope structure, at the heart of which lies the root core, surrounded by derivational and inflectional affixes respectively, with syntactic prefixal units attached to the very beginning of the word (Ravid, 2012). This is illustrated in the string ***uxsheb******mahalaxan*** spelled **וּכְשֶׁבְמַהֲלֶכְךָ** ‘**and-when-in**-course-3rd Masc Pl = and when in their course’ starting with three bound syntactic prefixes (in bold) preceding the inflected noun stem (underlined). Four syntactic prefixes obligatorily bound to the written stem are of particular interest in the current context – כ, מ, ל, ב, respectively signifying the prepositions ‘in, to, from, as’. These participate in the construction of a plethora of Modern Hebrew adverbials, complex conjunctions and discourse markers such as *be’emet* באמת ‘really’, *le’umat* לעומת ‘as against’, or *kamuvan* כמובן ‘of course’ (Brandes & Ravid, 2019; Ravid & Shlesinger, 1999).

The current study examines these four prepositional prefixes in the context of developing written text production abilities in Hebrew. The study population consisted of 293 typically developing, native Hebrew speaking participants in five age groups – 4th, 7th and 11th graders, young adults during military or civil service, and older adults, each of whom wrote two narratives in the general theme of ‘a journey story’. The study corpus thus consisted of 586 narrative texts, containing 33,876 words tokens. All preposition tokens in the texts were identified and analyzed by morpho-phonological structure and semantic / discourse functions across the five age groups. The most prevalent class of prepositions, consisting of over 2/3 of the total number of preposition tokens, was composed of the four prepositions written as bound to the stem, with a sharp increase in the two oldest groups. The talk will present a functional analysis of the syntactic and discourse roles of these prepositional prefixes in developing written text production abilities.

Ravid, D. (2012). *Spelling morphology: the psycholinguistics of Hebrew spelling*. New York: Springer.

Ravid, D. & Shlesinger, Y. (1999). Modern Hebrew adverbials: Between syntactic class and lexical category. In E. Contini-Morava & Y. Tobin (Eds.), *Grammatical categories* (333-351). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Brandes, G., & Ravid, D. (2019). The development of adverbial clause functions in Hebrew narrative and expository writing across adolescence. *Written Language and Literacy*, 22(1), 130-158.