Burning Issues in Afro-Asiatic Linguistics

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Edited by

Ghil'ad Zuckermann

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

Dedicated with love to Giovanni Lahav Zhiran Zuckermann, an exquisite Jewrasian hybrid, born in Brisbane on 12 September 2009, during the first Australian Workshop on Afro-Asiatic Linguistics (AWAAL).

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CHAPTER ONE

BRIDGING THE DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES IN THE AREA OF AFRO-ASIATIC LINGUISTICS

GHIL'AD ZUCKERMANN

'I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.'
—John Adams, 1735–1826, second president of the United States

'A Senegalese poet said 'In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.' We must learn about other cultures in order to understand, in order to love, and in order to preserve our common world heritage.'
—Cellist Yo Yo Ma, White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy, 28 November 2000

'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.'
—Nelson Mandela

'Language is a guide to 'social reality'. Though language is not ordinarily thought of as of essential interest to the students of social science, it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies

live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels
attached.'
—Linguist Edward Sapir, Language, 1921

'Linguistic and social factors are closely interrelated in the development of
language change. Explanations which are confined to one or the other
aspect, no matter how well constructed, will fail to account for the rich
body of regularities that can be observed in empirical studies of language
behavior.'
—Weinreich, Labov & Herzog 1968: 188

This refereed volume is a collection of scholarly articles resulting from
research conducted for the first international Australian Workshop on
Afro-Asiatic Linguistics (AWAAL), held on 11-13 September 2009 at the
State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, Stanley Place, South Bank
(Brisbane); as well as at the Great Court, The University of Queensland, St
Lucia (Brisbane). The University of Queensland has been home to
scholars and linguists such as Georges Perec, Eric Partridge and Rodney
Huddleston.

World-class papers were delivered by established scholars and promising
postdoctoral fellows and doctoral students from all over the globe,
including Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Eritrea, France, Germany, Hungary,
India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Poland, Saudi Arabia,
United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States. They all
analysed languages and cultures belonging to the Afro-Asiatic family, e.g.
Egyptian, Berber, Cushitic, Omotic, Chadic and Semitic.

This volume is divided into ten chapters and two parts:

I: Cushitic, Berber, Semitic, Omotic
and Proto-Afro-Asiatic

CHAPTER 2, 'Negation in Highland East Cushitic', takes a comparative
look at the forms and functions of negative morphemes in languages
belonging to the Highland East Cushitic (HEC) branch of Cushitic, all of
which possess at least two, at the most five different negative morphemes.
In all HEC languages except Sidaama, negation is indicated by negative
suffixes on verbal or non-verbal predicates. In Sidaama, the negative
morpheme is a proclitic, the host of which is not necessarily the predicate.
After a short typological profile of the HEC languages sketched in section
2, section 3 shows which negative morphemes are used in which clause

types. Section 3.1 elaborates on the standard negation strategy. Section 3.2 and 3.3 take a closer look at negative existential clauses and negative non-verbal clauses. The subsequent sections 3.4 and 3.5 are dedicated to non-declarative main clauses, i.e. imperative and jussive clauses. The negation of converb clauses is examined in section 3.6. Relative clause negation is dealt with in section 3.7. A short excursus on the means of negating verbal nouns is found in section 3.8. In section 4, the division of labour of the negative morphemes in the individual HEC languages is compared and diachronic issues are addressed. Section 5 discusses how the analysis of negation can contribute to our understanding of the internal relationships in HEC.

CHAPTER 3, 'From Proto-Berber to Proto-Afroasiatic', proposes that traces of fossilized linguistic structures in ancient toponymic Berber layers and their preserved relics in the modern varieties of the language enable us to access a set of characteristics of proto-Berber and identify the different stages of evolution of this language and the type of evolution it has undergone (see Allati, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2009). These Berber reconstructions are probably not without influence on our understanding of remaining elements of ancient stages still maintained in other Afroasiatic branches, and, in general, of structural features that are supposed to be proto-Afroasiatic, as well as of the evolution this family has undergone. Now, how do the proto-Afroasiatic and its evolution appear at the point where Berber reconstructions are available? For reasons of clarity and to lay out some steps to facilitate productive discussions, I would like to answer this question in the form of a set of concise points.

CHAPTER 4, 'On Construct State Nominals: Evidence for a Predicate Approach', argues that construct state nominals are predicates (of type <e,t>), because the only way adjectives can be interpreted in the context of constructs is if they compose with the construct as a whole. The leading semantic account on constructs – namely the one that treats constructs as individuals (of type e), here referred to as the Individual approach – succeeds in accounting for the ban on the definite determiner semantically. However, it encounters fundamental difficulties with constructs composing with adjectives. The chapter shows that these are difficulties which the predicate approach easily overcomes. However, establishing that constructs are predicates and abandoning the individual approach leave a supporter of the predicate approach with the task of explaining the ban on the definite determiner without resorting to type mismatch. To resolve this, and following a phrasal movement of a projection containing both Head and

Non-Head to SpecD for definite phrases and Spec# for indefinite phrases, this chapter proposes an explanation on the ban on the occurrence of definite determiners on the head of a construct by the unavailability of a head noun in D that allows the determiner to be realised.

CHAPTER 5, 'Ancient Aramaic and its Use in the Biblical Translation, *Targum Onqelos'*, explores Targum Onqelos, the translation of the Pentateuch into Aramaic. According to the Babylonian Talmud *(Megila* 3a), this translation is attributed to Onqelos the Convert. According to research, however, the identity, time, and place of the translation are not definite. In the matter of the translator's identity – Onqelos (or Akylas) was the nephew of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (or Titus). He converted to Judaism in the early second century AD. Scholars are divided as to whether Onqelos' translation of the Pentateuch into Aramaic and Akylas' translation of the Bible into Greek were written by the same person or two different people. While the majority believe that each translation was made by a different individual, a minority claim that one individual made both translations. Targum Onqelos is a literal-semantic translation of the majority of Pentateuch verses, closely adhering to the Hebrew text without deviations, additions, or omissions. This Chapter discusses three types of Pentateuch verses for which the Targum Onqelos deviates from the typical literal mode of translation.

CHAPTER 6, 'Addressing Strangers in Riyadh', proposes that when addressing an adult Saudi male stranger, the terms that are used depend on the sex of the speaker, his age and the situation surrounding the interaction. In normal situations, where the address mode is formal, male speakers across all age groups usually use the terms *ax* (brother, and its derivatives) and *ash-shaix* (sheikh) for the function of addressing adult males. In addition to these terms adult male speakers (as opposed to teenagers) also use the terms *ṭaieb* (good natured), *al-ḥabib* (beloved one), *al-ɣali* (most valuable) and *abu-i* (my father). This difference between adults and teenagers may indicate an increased level of politeness that comes as one ages and as one becomes more exposed to different types of addressee. However, this variation could also be the beginning of a shift in what is perceived as polite in the Riyadh society. In informal situations, adult male speakers usually use the term *abu ash-shabab* (father of youths) in addition to the terms above, while male teenagers also use *abu* (father of Ø). Working females and housewives usually use the terms *axu-i* (my brother) and *walad* (boy, especially with younger males) while younger females usually use *axu-i* (my brother) and *law samaht* (excuse me). In

situations marked with anger or annoyance male speakers usually use the term *abu ash-shabab* (father of youths) but may prefer the terms *axu-i* (my brother) and *abu-i* (my father) if they want to maintain a polite demeanor. Terms like *walad* (boy) and *hih* or *hoh* (hey you), however, are considered extremely impolite if used to address adult male strangers by other males.

CHAPTER 7, 'Meeting the Prince of Darkness: A Semantic Analysis of English *The Devil*, Arabic *Ashshayṭān*, and Hebrew *Hasatan*', explores the folk understanding of the English concept *the devil* and its Arabic and Israeli Hebrew near equivalents (*ashshayṭān* and *hasatan*, respectively). Based on linguistic evidence, analysis is carried out to delineate the similarities and differences between the three concepts. The results demonstrate similarities in how ordinary native English speakers, Muslim Arabs, and native Israeli speakers categorize these beings, as well as what they think about their number, nature, and relation with people. Differences emerge when discussing where these beings live, whether or not there is a hierarchy among them, what they look like or how they are visualized, and how they are different from human beings. Using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) method, an explication is constructed for each term. The three explications, whose building blocks are universal human concepts and are translatable into most languages, provides the cultural outsider with an insider's perspective on each of the three terms. One of the implications of this chapter is the limit of translation.

CHAPTER 8, 'Omotic Lexicon in its Afro-Asiatic Setting II: Omotic *b- with Nasals, *r, *l, and Weak Consonants', examines Omotic lexical roots with *b- and is hoped to become part of a set of papers identifying the Afro-Asiatic heritage in the Omotic lexicon according to initial consonants. The aim of the chapter is to present new etymologies in addition to those Omotic lexemes whose etymologies have already been demonstrated by other authors. In the first part of this series, Omotic roots with *b- plus dentals, sibilants, and velars are dealt with from an etymological standpoint.

II: Asiatic Etymology versus Etymythology

The remaining two chapters of the book constitute a debate. The very fact that the sacred texts of the monotheistic religions were written in Semitic languages, and the fact that those religions have had a major impact on Western Eurasia and the Americas, as well as Oceania, has tended to

reinforce some trends that have been frequently occurring in the history of ideas. One trend is that of seeking links and connections. When the Maccabees managed to carve for themselves a nativist splinter polity (the Hasmonaic kingdom) from the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire, they formed alliances with Sparta and with Rome. The Spartans mentioned what, they claimed, was their common ancestry with the Judaeans.

After Alexander the Great had settled Macedonians in many towns of the Near East as far as the Oxus Valley in central Asia, the Hellenistic culture they promoted appreciated it if some natives could claim even just partially Greek (or Macedonian) ancestry, or any relation to Greek mythology. The Macedonian or Greek (or Hellen[ist]ically acculturated) settlers in Scythopolis (Beit-Shean) in the southeastern Galilee, who had a special veneration for Dionysus, were apparently pleased to seek connections to the Jews they were seeing locally. As a Jewish rite consists of waving a palm-branch (a *lulav*) during a particular festival, observers identified that as a Dionysiac rite. To the Scythopolitans, this was quite possibly ground for friendship, but later adverse propaganda (Seleucid or Alexandrian) seized upon the supposed connections of Dionysiac rites and both Barbarians and barbarity to make sinister claims, with the resulting evolution of the blood libel that is still with us in the new millennium.

This is preliminary to saying that seeking connections (as Chapter 9 does) is a very old human penchant, actually a penchant that owes much to the best in human nature. Seeking connections, in turn, has historically relied much on the *étymologisant* penchant of human nature, a phenomenon that Gérard Genette has analysed in his *Mimologiques*. Since antiquity (think of Socrates in Platus *Cratyle*), through Erasmus of Rotterdam in his philological debate of a bear and a lion, up to the Nostratists and Laryngealists our contemporaries, detecting lexical coincidences across languages (or within languages) has exerted a stronger fascination on the human (naïve or even scholarly) mind than truth would afford.

Chapter 9, the work of a semioticist, would rather yield to such fascination. Chapter 10 is an extensive refutation. Deceptive lexical coincidences occur, it claims and shows, because the odds are just too high, and the more manipulation you allow, the easier it becomes to devise a trajectory that would relate a source item to a target item. Chapter 10 marshals ample evidence of the risks of such fascination (other than when it is put in the service of entertainment in communications among *blasé* agents). At the same time, Chapter 10 asserts the legitimacy of researching folk-etymology, not in order to believe it, but rather in order to see more clearly the impact it has had on the history of human cultures.

CHAPTER 9, 'A Syllabic Melodic Structure in a Japanese Obon Song – A

Probable Hebrew-Aramaic Narrative', analyses the song *Naniya Doyara Naniya Donasareno Naniya Doyara,* a Japanese 'special occasion' Obon/shrine/folk/dance song performed in the village of Shingo/Herai, Aomori, Japan, and presents a case that there is a possibility that the song is a Japanese/Hebrew-Aramaic homonym. The argument for the Hebrew-Aramaic language of the song is based on the song's psalmodic structure, as well as its semantic elements.

CHAPTER 10, 'Asia at Both Ends: An Introduction to Etymythology, with a Response to Chapter 9', suggests that the proper framework for assessing Chapter 9 is one that appreciates the odds being too high for either some individual words, or even entire utterances *not* to lend themselves to interpretation in different languages sometimes. Whereas historical linguists realise this, it is also important to recognize that research into how folk-etymology and etymythology 'work' is a legitimate field of inquiry. For scholarly etymology or even textual philology seeking truth, the stakes are too high not to give proper weight to plausible cultural contexts (including material culture, and plausible contacts). Truth-seeking is ill served by mere word-games (even well-regarded etymologists have on occasion been accused of being enigmatists, paying scant attention to the evidence from material culture). Word-games instead have a conspicuous role across cultures, and satisfy urges to play (cf. Huizinga's *homo ludens*) or even mythopoietic needs with religious significance. The latter is relevant for the topic Chapter 9 discusses. Chapter 10 adopts a slippery slope approach, and shows how easy it would be to 'Judaize' the history of early Japan, if such a goal is set for narrative myth-formation based on folk-etymologising local place-names. It is also shown that that kind of practice has not been uncommon in how human cultures have related to the Other. If today you do it for fun, fine. But it must remain tongue-in-cheek. Do not succumb to believing deceptive coincidences.

As the reader can gather, this volume is cross-disciplinary, and could thus function as an epistemological bridge between the various disciplines often producing parallel discourses within the area of Afro-Asiatic languages and cultures.

Here are the detailed contents of the two sections:

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References

Contributors

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Dr Bruria Bergman (of blessed memory) unfortunately passed away in September 2009, after years of poor health. She was a passionate person, based in Melbourne, Australia. She obtained a doctorate from the Middle Eastern Studies Department, University of Melbourne, where she also taught. Of her thesis entitled *Metaphor a Transformation of Symmetrical Signs, with Examples from Hebrew Literature,* a chapter was published in *Semiotica.* In that paper she established that George Boole's 1854 magnum opus employed signifier/signified/sign to describe his 01 binarism. She suggested an intrinsic mathematical quality/property at the very baseline of language in the semiotic sense, and perhaps at other aspects of language. She also suggested that group and field structures prevalent in quantum physics, are likewise fundamental to 01 and could be extended to the intrinsic definition of language. Her thesis also was, she claimed, the first since ancient Greece to take metaphor away from the varieties of analogy, and define metaphor as a semiotic entity with a mathematical invariant.

Dr Ephraim Nissan has worked in Italian, Israeli, and British academia. His doctoral project was in computational linguistics (PhD, 1989, project prized), namely, in Hebrew word-formation. He graduated in engineering in Milan (where he was raised), discussing two Laurea theses (one prized) in 1982. Of his ca. 260 publications (of which almost 130 journal articles) in 2012, about half are in computer science, and half in the humanities. A guest editor for journals about 20 times, he co-founded and held editorial roles in four journals (in computer science in 1985–1991, in Jewish studies in 1999–2010, and in humour studies from 2011). He has published in, e.g., *Semiotica, The American Journal of Semiotics, Quaderni di Semantica, Pragmatics & Cognition, Hebrew Linguistics, Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages, Journal of Semitic Studies, Fabula, La Ricerca Folklorica, Ludica, Humor Mekuvvan: A Research Journal in Humor Studies, Israeli Journal of Humor Research, European Review of History, Journal of Modern Jewish Studies, Australian Journal of Jewish Studies, Rassegna Mensile di Israel, Revue européenne des études hébraïques, Shofar, Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies, Journal of the American Oriental Society, Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli, Aula Orientalis, Orientalia Parthenopea, Quaderni di Studi Indo-Mediterranei, Bibbia e Oriente, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Studies in Rabbinic Logic, Jewish Law Annual, MHNH* [μηνη]: *revista internacional de investigación sobre magia y astrología antíguas, Journal of Sociocybernetics, Revue Informatique et statistique dans les sciences humaines.* He also published e.g. in *Artificial Intelligence and Law, Applied Artificial Intelligence,*

Journal of Intelligent and Robotic Systems, Annals of Mathematics and Artificial Intelligence, Nuclear Science and Engineering, Computers in Industry, Artificial Intelligence for Engineering Design, Analysis and Manufacturing, and so forth (even minor items in *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica*). Several authored or edited books, in press or nearly completed. The year 2012 saw the publication of an authored book of almost 1,400 pages, *Legal Evidence, Police Investigation, Case Argumentation, and Computer Tools* (Dordrecht: Springer), as well as the completion of the authored book *Animal Names: Studies in Onomasiology and Dialectology.* Email: ephraim.nissan@hotmail.co.uk

I

CUSHITIC, BERBER, SEMITIC, OMOTIC AND PROTO-AFRO-ASIATIC

CHAPTER TWO

NEGATION IN HIGHLAND EAST CUSHITIC

YVONNE TREIS

1. Introduction

The Highland East Cushitic (HEC) branch of Cushitic is a small group of languages and dialects spoken in the South of Ethiopia: Hadiyya-Libido (i.e. the Hadiyya subgroup), Kambaata-Alaaba-K'abeena (i.e. the Kambaata subgroup), Sidaama, Gedeo and Burji, listed here roughly according to their geographical distribution from north to south (see Figure 1). Sidaama, Gedeo and Burji are also referred to as Southern Highland East Cushitic (sHEC), the Hadiyya and Kambaata subgroups as Northern Highland East Cushitic (nHEC).[1]

Our knowledge of HEC languages has been significantly advanced in the past years through the production of PhD theses, grammars and articles on individual languages. The steady increase in literature enables us more and more to determine in which details these closely related languages are similar or different and it allows us to add to the comparative work started by Hudson (1976, 1981, 1989, 2007).

This chapter takes a comparative look at the forms and functions of negative morphemes in HEC languages, all of which possess at least two, at the most five different negative morphemes. In all HEC languages except Sidaama, negation is indicated by negative *suffixes* on verbal or non-verbal predicates. In Sidaama, the negative morpheme is a proclitic, the host of which is not necessarily the predicate. After a short typological profile of the HEC languages has been sketched in section 2, section 3 shows which negative morphemes are used in which clause types. Section 3.1 elaborates on the standard negation strategy. Section 3.2 and 3.3 take a closer look at negative existential clauses and negative non-verbal clauses. The subsequent sections 3.4 and 3.5 are dedicated to non-declarative main

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[1] The term 'Northern Highland East Cushitic' was introduced by Sim (1988); the term 'Southern Highland East Cushitic' has here been created in analogy.
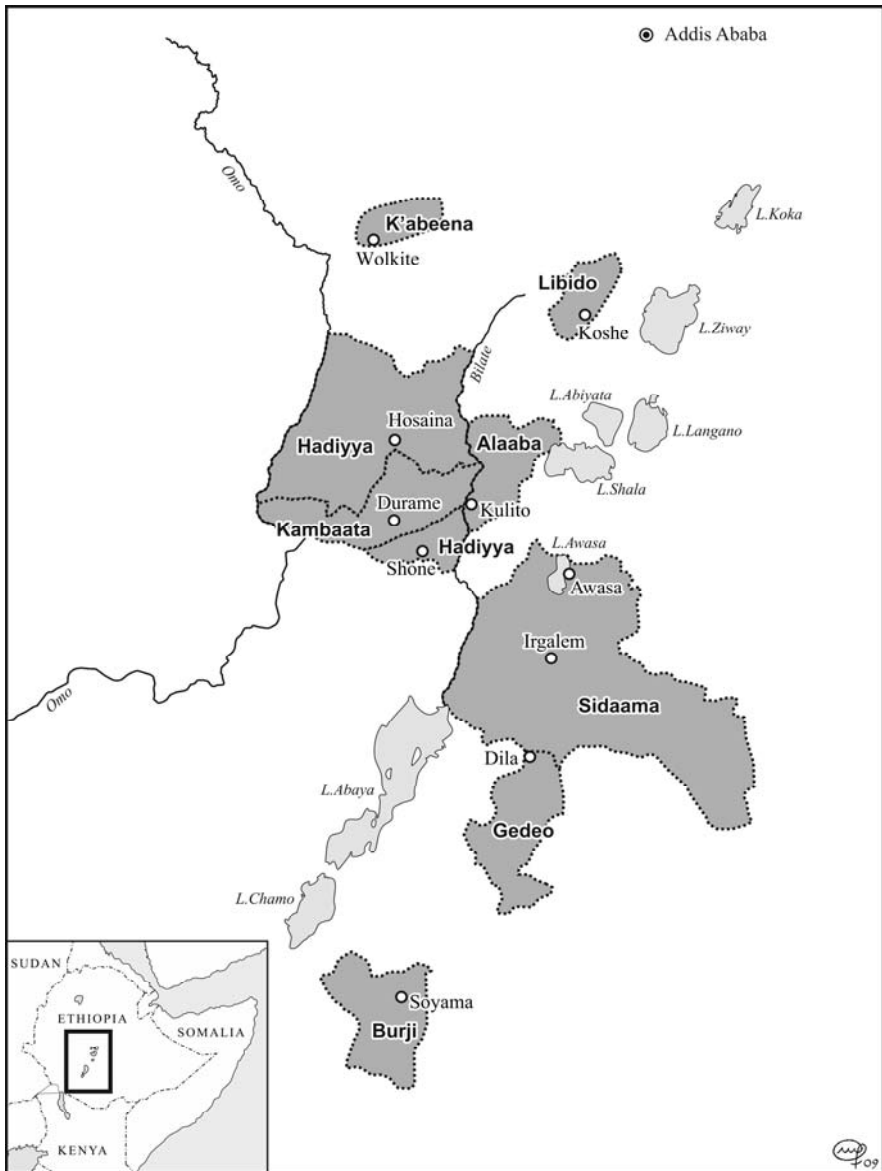
Figure 1. Approximate distribution of the Highland East Cushitic Languages

clauses, i.e. imperative and jussive clauses. The negation of converb clauses is examined in section 3.6. Relative clause negation is dealt with in section 3.7. A short excursus on the means of negating verbal nouns is found in section 3.8. In section 4, the division of labour of the negative morphemes in the individual HEC languages is compared and diachronic issues are addressed. Section 5 discusses how the analysis of negation can contribute to our understanding of the internal relationships in HEC. Section 6 presents the conclusion.

2. Typological profile

All HEC languages have a five vowel system with phonemic length contrast. The consonant system is of medium complexity, a characteristic feature is the presence of ejective plosives and affricates (p', t', tʃ', k'). In addition, the southern HEC languages Sidaama, Gedeo, Burji have an alveolar implosive stop (ɗ). The distinction between single and geminate consonants is phonemic.

The HEC languages are all head- and dependent marking [2] and agglutinating-fusional. Nouns are marked for gender (masculine vs. feminine), case (at least a distinction between nominative, accusative and genitive is made), and number (general number, singular and plural). The derivational morphology of verbs includes at least a causative, a middle and a passive morpheme. Inflectional categories on verbs are aspect/tense, subject agreement and mood. Declarative main verbs are usually fused verbal complexes and originate, in most cases, from a combination of a converb and an existential verb form. Apart from these internally complex independent main verb forms, all HEC languages (with the possible exception of Gedeo; see §3.6) have at least one paradigm of dependent converbs, which are used in non-final clauses. Adverbial clauses that are not headed by converbs seem to be based on relative verbs.

Apart from nouns and verbs, it makes sense to assume a separate word class of adjectives, at least for some HEC languages. Ideophones are a common open word class, pronouns a closed word class. The existence of other word classes such as adpositions and adverbs is contentious.

All HEC languages are head-final languages. The verb is the last element in the clause. Nominal modifiers precede the head noun and subordinate clauses precede main clauses. For a more detailed overview of

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[2] The syntactic relations within the clause are marked both by case morphology on the arguments and by agreement morphology on the verb. In the noun phrase, the possessor is dependent-marked.