Negative Concord in Modern Israeli Hebrew and its Origin

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Modern Israeli Hebrew (MH) experiences strict Negative Concord (NC) (Giannakidou 2000), as an N-word is in objects or subject position must appear with negation (examples 1, 2). MH is allegedly a revived version of Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew. Conversely, lexical items used as item-negation N-words in MH, biblical *meuma* and Rabbinic *klum* and *ʃum-davar*, were allowed at typical NPI contexts (like questions and conditionals) in classical Hebrew texts (examples 5-8). In MH these contexts are excluded (examples 3, 4). Classical Hebrew's lexical items for person negation, Biblical *Iʃ* (man) and *exad* (one) and Rabbinic *adam* (human), were always considered positive (Tzivoni, 1993). MH uses a compound of the particle *af* and the numeral *exad* for this purpose.

My work studies how this shift in lexical items' function arose. Like Blanc (1968) and Zuckerman (2008), I view MH is a contact language, Classical Hebrew being its lexifier, Slavic and Germanic languages donating it syntactic structures. According to the Bio-Program Hypothesis (Bickerton), NC might be the default parameter set for children acquiring an unstable contact variety. This is correlated with Zeijlstra's finding (2002), that languages of Jespersen's Cycle stage 1 tend to exhibit NC, since creoles are always 'new' languages. So, does NC in MH result from the default parameter set? Or does it result from substrate influence of languages spoken at the years of MH's "revival"? If none of the native tongues of MH's first users showed NC, this would have supported Bickerton. Conversely, Yiddish, Russian and Polish, the native languages of many immigrants to Israel /Palestine at the time, do show NC (van-der Auwera and Gybels, 2010, Fitzgibbons, 2008, Richter, & Sailer, 2002, respectively). Rosén (1977) and others have suggested that NC in MH results from influence of European languages. However, they have not tested locality constraints on the N-word's distance from negation in those languages or in MH. My research did exactly that. The results show that the constraints on NC in MH resemble those of Russian and Polish, which both have strict NC, and differ from those of at least some dialects of Yiddish, in which NC is not as strict. Also, some unique NC constructions allowed in Polish and Yiddish are disallowed in MH (examples 9, 10). Therefore, NC in MH seems a bit more restricted than Russian, Polish or Yiddish NC. As for Palestinian Arabic, three dialects tested used only NPI's. On the whole, my Data seem to support Siegel model of Transfer and Reinforcement (2001) as the source of NC in MH. However, there is no contradiction with Bickerton's Hypothesis.

Examples

1. *(lo)   ra'iti   af-exad   (Modern Hebrew)
   no   see.PAST.1S   af-exad
   I didn't see anybody / I saw no-one

2. af-exad   *(lo)   ra'a   oti   (Modern Hebrew)
   af-exad   no   see.PAST.SM   ACC.1S
   Nobody has seen me

3. * ra'ita   af-exad?   (Modern Hebrew)
   see.PAST.2SM   af-exad
   Did you see anyone?

4. * 'im   tir'e   af-exad,   tagid   lo…   (Modern Hebrew)
   if   see.2sm   af-exad   tell.FUTURE.2SM   to-him
   If you happen to see anyone, tell him…

5. …'ata   ha-yaxo   uxal   daber   meuma...   (Biblical Hebrew)
   …now   Q-can.INF   can.1s   talk.INF   meuma
   "…have I now any power at all to say any thing? …" (Numbers, 22, 38)

6. ki taʃe   be-re'axa   maʃʾat meuma lo   tavo   el- beito...   (Biblical Hebrew)
   If lend.2SM   in-friend.GEN.M thing   meuma no   come.2s   to house.GEN.M
   "When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go…" (Deuteronomy, 24, 10)

7. ro'im   atem   klum be-exad   min   he-harim   halalu?   (Rabbinic Hebrew)
   see-PRES.pm   you.pm   klum in-one   of   the-mountains those?
   "Do you see anything upon one of those mountains?"(Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great, 31)

8. ve-exad...   ʃe-se'alan   ve-sxaran   le-mla'xa axeret   o   (Medieval
   and-one.M...   that-borrow.ACC.PF   and-rent.ACC.PF   for-work   other.SF or   Hebrew)
   le-ʃum-davar   ba-olam …   harei   zo   ʃe'ila   ba-be'alim   ve-patur
   for-ʃum-davar   in.the-world…   EMPH   it.FM borrowing   in.the-owners and-quit.3SM
   "whether the commodatory… borrowed the services for the same work, … or for anything in the
   world,… it is a case of borrowing with the owner and the commadatory is quit."
   (Borrowing and Depositing, 2, 1 (6), The book of civil laws, The code of Maimonides).

9. kocham   ja   jak   zadna   inna   (Polish)
   *ani ohev   ota   kmo   af-axat   axeret   (Modern Hebrew)
   I love   her.ACC   as   no/ on one other
   'I love her more than (I love) any other (girl).'   (Taken from Richter & Sailer, 2002)

10. Ikh   her   gornit.   (Yiddish)
    *ani   ʃome'a   klum   (Modern Hebrew)
    I   hear   nothing
    'I hear nothing.' or 'I don't hear at all.' (Taken from van der Auwera & Gybels, 2010)

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