

Onomatopoeia and reduplication in Modern Hebrew

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This research describes a systematic association between onomatopoeia and reduplication in the verb system of Modern Hebrew (MH). It is argued that, as a result, iconicity came to assume a role in the process where verbs with Reduplicated Roots gradually have become the encoding of semelfactive aspect. Cross-linguistically, repetition is often expressed by reduplication, but this is not the general rule (Inkelas & Zoll). Also, onomatopoeic verbs tend to describe repetitive events in nature, but reduplication is not a necessary property of these verbs. The combination of onomatopoeia and reduplication may be found within a single word, particularly in ideophones. Their structure is less morphologically constrained (Watson). For instance, the English ideophone *tick tock* is reduplicated, but the verb *tick* is non-reduplicated. In MH, repetitiveness came to be systematically encoded by reduplication within verbal roots - Quadriliteral Reduplicated Roots (QRR). They consist of the repetition of two pairs of consonants - $C_1C_2C_1C_2$, e.g. *tiktek* 'ring' (TKTK). Moreover, reduplication within verbal roots also systematically characterizes onomatopoeic verbs in MH, for example, *kirker* 'cackle'.

The factor of iconicity becomes very strong because of a special characteristic of the Hebrew verb system. It is 'well-suited' for reduplication, which iconically represents repetition, because the morphology of some Hebrew verb patterns can allow Quadriliteral roots. It is 'ill-suited' for onomatopoeia, which iconically represents a sound, because the vowels are determined by template and inflection, so it cannot consistently retain syllable patterns, therefore, the onomatopoeic effect is weakened. Thus, the morphology of Hebrew verbs is 'ill-suited' to represent onomatopoeic iconicity and 'well-suited' for an iconic representation of cyclic events, therefore the role of QRR in iconicity is enhanced.

The claim of this research is that the encoding of these two types of iconicity within the system promoted QRR verbs the means of encoding the Semelfactive Aspect. These verbs have become the exclusive productive form to express semelfactiveness in MH, for example *hinhen* 'nod', *rišreš* 'rustle'. The development of this trend began in the earlier periods of Hebrew, and was strengthened by the Russian influence during the Revival Period of MH.

References: • Inkelas, S. & C. Zoll. 2005. *Reduplication: Doubling in morphology*. Cambridge: CUP.
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