<p align="center">Prototypicalization – a cognitive bias for cyclic language change</p>

We propose a cognitive bias motivating cyclic language change: *Prototypicalization*. We argue that under usage-based assumptions, the function of a construction tends to gradually specialize for its most prototypical discourse use. As prototypical sub-constructions become more strongly entrenched, use of the construction for non-prototypical functions becomes more restricted. This in turn induces the emergence of novel linguistic devices, compensating for the functional reduction of the prototypicalized construction. Prototypicalization is predicted to occur independently for competing constructions, resulting in continuous functional specialization and renewal: a cyclical language change.

We provide *synchronic* empirical evidence for the prototypicalization of two competing pronominal possessives in Modern Hebrew: a suffixed construction (1a) already attested in biblical Hebrew, and a prepositional construction (1b), which emerged during the later period of Mishnaic Hebrew (Kutscher & Kutscher 1982). Specific instances of both constructions are argued to be independently stored in the grammar of speakers. These instances exhibit the crosslinguistically prototypical functions of possessives: (i) definite reference to (ii) inalienable nouns[1], (Aikhenvald 2013).

1.   a.   Suffixed: xaver-**i/xa/o**
                          friend-POSS.1/2.MASC.SG /3.MASC.SG
                          My/your/his friend

        b.   Prepositional: xaver **ʃel-i/xa/o**
                          friend of-POSS.1/.MASC.SG/3.MASC.SG
                          Friend of mine/yours/his

A spoken corpus examination revealed that the older suffixed construction is restricted to definite reference to inalienable nouns (although definiteness is not morphologically marked), while the later prepositional construction is not so restricted (and is explicitly marked for definiteness). Furthermore, the two constructions stood in near-complementary distribution in terms of the nominal tokens they hosted. We conclude that the suffixed construction is coded as a family of low-level, formally specified constructions of prototypical possession.

An acceptability judgment task experiment we ran revealed that prepositional possessives hosting (the prototypically possessed) kinship terms did not require the usually obligatory definite article *ha* 'the' in order to be interpreted as definite (2a), while non-relational animate nouns in similar configurations (2b) were rejected by our participants. We thus conclude that instances of the prepositional construction too are represented independently in the grammar.

2.   a.   ha-mitlamedet idkena <u>et</u>[2] **ax**   **ʃel-a**

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the-intern   updated ACC **brother of-POSS.3.FEM.SG**
The intern updated her brother.

b.   #ha-xaʃuda takfa   <u>et</u>   praklit **ʃel-a**
the-suspect attacked   ACC attorney **of-POSS.3.FEM.SG**
The suspect attacked her attorney

All in all, we propose that as the older, suffixed construction prototypicalized, the innovative prepositional construction was mobilized, initially for nonprototypical possession cases. However, once this later construction got entrenched for all possessions, it too prototypicalized, and a sub-construction dedicated to prototypical possession emerged. Just like the suffixed construction the latter is restricted to (i) inalienable, and (ii) definite possessions despite the lack of an explicit definite marker.

Thus, the corpus reveals the effect of prototypicalization on the older, suffixed construction in that it's restricted to prototpypical possession, and the acceptability experiment reflects the effect of prototypicalization on the newer prepositional construction, which has evolved a specialized sub-construction for prototypical possession.

<u>References</u>
Aikhenvald, Alexandra. Y. 2013. Possession and ownership: A cross-linguistic perspective. Possession and ownership: A cross-linguistic typology, 1-64.
Kutscher, Edward Y. and Kutscher, Raphael. (1982) A history of the Hebrew language. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.