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Hypotaxis

Hypotaxis (Gr. ὑπόταξις ‘subjection, submission’ < ‘under’ + ‘arrangement’) refers to the joining of two clauses or phrases by means of an overt function word that indicates the syntactic-semantic relationship between the two. Hypotaxis is the counterpart of parataxis (Gr. παράταξις ‘placing side by side’), which refers to the juxtaposition of two grammatical elements without the presence of a function word.

Hypotaxis and parataxis are often discussed in conjunction with the closely related concepts of → subordination and → coordination (among many others, see Lehmann 1988; Cristofaro 2006:15–60; Fabricius-Hansen and Ramm 2008). Although some equate hypotaxis with subordination and parataxis with coordination, it is equally common that the two sets of concepts are viewed as overlapping but formally distinct: whereas coordination and subordination concern the syntactic-semantic relationship of two clauses, hypotaxis and parataxis refer to the presence or absence of morphological or lexical markers of the relationship. The latter approach is adopted in this entry.

Hypotactic relations fall into two primary categories: coordination and subordination. Coordination is the linking of two or more clauses that are of equal syntactic status (that is, there is no syntactic or semantic hierarchical relationship between coordinated clauses). Hypotactic coordination in Hebrew is signaled by a coordinating conjunction attached to the front of the second clause. The most common Hebrew coordinators are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Hebrew</th>
<th>Modern Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘and’ -א וא- (1 u-, 1 wå-, 1 wa-, 1 wi-)</td>
<td>‘and’ -א ve (u, va, vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘or’ - או ‘or’ אע-</td>
<td>‘or’ אע ‘o’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ‘but’ - כי אabal | ‘but’ - כי aval, אับל
| ‘at’ -ל ulam, אלא | ‘at’ -ל elal, אלאل
| ‘for’ - א ik ’im | ‘for’ - א ve-’l, א ve-’ל, אאל
| Any |יק ’im |


Subordination is the hierarchical relationship between two clauses that have different syntactic status, that is, one clause is syntactically and/or semantically dependent on the other, the superordinate clause (Huddleston and Pullum 2006:198). Subordinate clauses can also be described as ‘embedded’ clauses, since the subordinate clause as a whole is embedded within, and thus is a syntactic constituent of, the superordinate clause. This embedding perspective is illustrated by the brackets and subscripting in the example below:

(1) wat-tère hā-ʾissā ki töḥ hā-ʾēs la-maʿākāl

[And the woman saw [that the tree (was) good for food]] (Gen. 3.6).

In example (1), the subordinate יק ’ki clause is embedded as the syntactic complement of the verb יתירות wat-tère in the superordinate clause.

Hebrew subordination is accomplished by the use of subordinators or the type of verb (see Aarts 2006). For the latter, subordination in Hebrew interacts with the verbal system along...
the axis of finiteness. As (1)–(2) illustrate, finite verbs (including imperatives and participles) may be used in both subordinate and non-subordinate clauses.

Apart from a few constraints (most notably on relative clauses and complement clauses), subordinate clauses may appear either before or after the core of the superordinate clause. In (1) the complement clause follows the verb of the higher clause in which it is embedded, whereas in (2) the subordinate causal clause precedes the higher clause. Within the embedding analysis, the subordinate clause in (2) would be described as a pre-verbal adjunct clause that lies within the boundaries of the superordinate clause.

In contrast to finite verbal (which may serve as either subordinate or non-subordinate), infinitival clauses (3) are necessarily subordinate.

Infinitival subordinate clauses may be unmarked (that is, no overt subordinator is used), but here we will consider only marked examples. The marked infinitival clauses are introduced by a number of prepositional subordinators, most often the clitic prepositions 'In Hebrew, ' and YHWH God cast him out of the Garden of Eden to work the land' (Gen. 3.23).

Infinitival subordinate clauses may be unmarked (that is, no overt subordinator is used), but here we will consider only marked examples. The marked infinitival clauses are introduced by a number of prepositional subordinators, most often the clitic prepositions - י with - או, - י with - או, and - ל (on the overlap between subordinating conjunctions and prepositions, see Huddleston and Pullum 2006:213) (ה双重). The semantics of the subordinate relationship are determined by the functions of the preposition, which, for some prepositions (especially - י with - או, - י with - או, and - ל) leaves significant ambiguity. For example, when the infinitival clause is introduced by - ל, as in (3) (see - ל infinitive), the subordinate clause may present a complement, purpose, result, or temporal clausal constituent (see Waltke and O’Connor 1990:605–610) (ךמ תני נין). Interestingly, the - ל la- + infinitive clause can sit in the nominative position as the clausal subject. Such a role does not fit the typical definition of subordination, although it can accurately be described as embedded.

The hypotactic subordination of two finite clauses in Hebrew is signaled by the presence of a subordinating conjunction (e.g., נ with -Ki) or the combination of a preposition and conjunction (ל with -Ki) at the front of the subordinate clause (for Hebrew subordinators → Conjunctions; Subordination; for discussion and examples of Biblical Hebrew subordination see Waltke and O’Connor 1990:632–646; van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroee 1999:294–305; and Jóuon and Muraoka 2006:537–604; for modern Hebrew see Glinitz 1989:308–336, 356–375 and Coffin and Bolozky 2005:238–239).

One of the primary challenges with Hebrew subordination, especially in the ancient texts, is determining the precise functions of the subordinators, especially in the face of apparent polysemy, such as with the notorious ל -Ki and -Ki Ki. Whereas teaching and reference works often simply list the full range of discerned syntactic and semantic functions for each subordinator, linguistic research exhibits a stronger interest in identifying a core function, or at least a more restricted set of functions, presented within some modern linguistic framework. For example, for Biblical Hebrew ל -Ki there is the question of its categorial status—is it a function word (e.g., a relative complementizer; → Relative Clause: Biblical Hebrew; Relative Particles) or a noun (Schwarzchild 1990)? Also, does ל -Ki introduce many types of subordinate clauses (relational, complement, causal, temporal, and purpose/result clauses; see Jóuon and Muraoka 2006:166–170) or does it have a single, ‘nominalizing’ function?

Similarly, the numerous apparent functions of נ with -Ki have been the object of scrutiny. While reference grammars associate נ with complement, causal, temporal, conditional, consecutive, concessive, adversative, and asseverative clauses (see Jóuon and Muraoka 2006:169–173), focused studies have looked for a core function from which all others derived, such as the etymologically reconstructed demonstrative (deictic) origin of נ with -Ki (see Muilenberg 1961; Schoors 1981; Muraoka 1985). Others assign little importance to etymology and instead use context to argue for a core or core set of
functions for וְ ki, such as introducing complement and causal clauses as well as serving a discourse-pragmatic role beyond the clause level (Bandstra 1982; Classen 1983; Aejmelaeus 1986; Meyer 2001). The most recent major study of וְ ki is perhaps the most provocative: Follingstad (2001) proposes that וְ ki at its core relates to ‘discourse deixis’ (an interesting combination of the etymologically-oriented and discourse-based analyses).

Finally, perhaps the most vexing issue for any discussion of hypotaxis in Hebrew is the status and function of the conjunction -וְ. Although often glossed as a simple coordinating conjunction, such as English ‘and’, its syntactic and semantic characteristics have proven surprising difficult to corral. Fundamentally confusing to any account of the -וְ-is that the implied relationship between two clauses connected with a -וְ is not clearly distinguished from the meaning of the -וְ itself, thereby associating this single simple conjunction with every conceivable type of subordinate clause (see, for example, Joion and Muraoka 2006:584–604). Recent linguistic research has begun to address this confusion. For example, Steiner (2000) executed a logico-semantic analysis of -וְ and concluded that its use falls into two basic categories: in many cases -וְ is lexically empty (“meaningless”) and simply serves to connect two clauses syntactically; at other times, when there is an apparent lexical value, the meaning of -וְ is “the common denominator of ‘and’ (&), ‘or’ (\lor), ‘then’ (\rightarrow)” (2000:266). Another view (in the spirit of Steiner’s reductionism) is that syntactically -וְ could be described as a front-edge phrase and clause marker, whose semantic value can only be determined after the relationship of the preceding and following phrase or clause is contextually determined. As such, the -וְ never formally signals subordination, though the contextually determined relationship between a clause whose front edge is marked with -וְ and its predecessor may reflect a semantically-based hierarchy.

References


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