Contact or Inheritance?
Criteria for distinguishing internal and external change in genetically related languages

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Abstract
Several prominent scholars have recently doubted whether it is possible to differentiate borrowing from internal change, to the point that in some cases subgrouping is not feasible or is restricted (Dench, 2001; Dixon, 2001). Since a situation of prolonged and intense contact between closely related languages is very common, language contact and its results are a major problem if not a real hazard to historical linguistics. The main practical problem is how to differentiate internal changes, changes motivated by internal processes, from external changes, changes due to language contact, when the structure of the languages is so similar. In other words, how do we know which linguistic form is the source of the change: one of the attested languages, or the mother of both of them? In this paper, I suggest two preliminary criteria to isolate the source language in cases of contact: 1) the existence of intermediary stages, and 2) an even spread of the change across categories. I will show, using test cases from the Semitic language family that these criteria can help us distinguish between internal and external changes.

Keywords
syntax; contact; Semitic; historical linguistics; genitive; subordination

1. Introduction
The field of language contact has seen a huge spike in interest in the last several decades. This concentrated interest has led to the development of innovative theoretical approaches, which effectively have moved us from the days of simply identifying the realms and possibilities of contact (Weinreich, 1953) to speaker-based approach and sociolinguistics (Myers-Scotton, 2002) and attempts at general prediction based on types of contact situations (Thomason

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and Kaufman, 1988; Thomason, 2001). While many of these studies focus on modern languages, where speakers can be monitored or questioned, there have been studies on dead languages where information is solely written and socio-linguistic information is typically rather restricted (Adams and Swain, 2002).

In other words, we’ve come a long way. Still, language contact theories are primarily based on case studies of contact situations between unrelated or very distantly related languages. For example, the two recurrent Semitic examples are the change of sentential word order in Ethiopic (< Cushitic) and Akkadian (< Sumerian), both cases of contact between unrelated or very distantly related languages, whereas most contact in Semitic is a result of intra-family contact.

But does contact between genetically related languages deserve special treatment, or can it be subsumed under the regular definitions of the phenomenon? Common definitions of contact are not easily applicable to genetically related languages. Thomason (2006: 688), for example, defines contact as “a source of linguistic change whenever a change occurs that would have been unlikely, or at least less likely, to occur outside a specific contact situation.” This definition works well for most cases of contact, but when it comes to closely related languages, which share so much of their structure and genetic makeup, it is very difficult to calculate what the likelihood is of any change to take, or not take, place and therefore, how to distinguish between internally and externally motivated changes. As many linguists note, proving contact is much more convincing if the languages involved come from different structural subsystems (Thomason, 2012).

This is not merely a problem of definitions; the origin of a particular change may have significant implications for linguistic subgrouping, and therefore it is of particular interest to historical linguists (see Bowern, this volume). While it has been acknowledged that typologically similar systems are more prone to borrowing (Thomason, 2001), borrowing from genetically similar languages may be untraceable. In fact, some scholars think that it is nigh impossible to differentiate borrowing from internal change (Dench, 2001). Others are less pessimistic, but still see great hurdles. Aikhenvald (2001) notes that extensive and prolonged contact has obscured the subgrouping of Arawak (an Amazonian language) to the point that it is difficult to determine whether certain features are inherent or a result of areal diffusion (p. 191). A similar problem was noted for several Semitic languages, especially those native to the Syria-Palestine area, which were in constant contact with each other for millennia. A well-known example is Hebrew, which was even called Mischsprache

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1 For example, Moroccan Arabic and Dutch in Myers-Scotton (2002).
because of the major changes in its grammar due to extensive contact with Aramaic (Bauer and Leander, 1927). The result of this contact has led some scholars, most recently Rainey (2007), to mistakenly assume that Hebrew is an Aramaic dialect (Hackett and Pat-El, 2010). Dench (2001: 131) argues that in some cases subgrouping is not possible at all, because the origin of the features cannot be reconstructed, and thus it is not clear whether they were borrowed or developed internally. Dixon (2001: 87) argues that while it is possible in such cases to discover low-level subgrouping, it is impossible to build higher-level ones. If Dench and Dixon are correct then language contact and its results are a real obstacle to historical linguistics. Failing to acknowledge the properties of contact between closely related languages is therefore to our detriment.

From a historical linguistic point of view, when two related languages contain the same feature, it may be a result of either inheritance or contact. The main problem is how to differentiate borrowed features from inherited features, when the structure of the languages is so similar. Furthermore, in known or proven cases of contact, how do we know which language is the source of the change? It is, of course, misleading to assume a change is the result of only one mechanism. As was noted by a number of historical linguists, most changes have multiple causations (Harris and Campbell, 1995; Thomason, 2012). In this paper, I will suggest that we do have tools to deal with such phenomena: comparative historical linguistics. As will be argued below, the careful application of these principles can help distinguish what is inherited and what is borrowed.

2. Scope and Methodology

The study of linguistic contact is one branch of linguistics where not only linguistic evidence is evaluated, but also, when available, sociological, historical, archeological and sometimes epigraphic evidence. Claims of contact between languages, which are unlikely to have been in contact historically should be investigated through a variety of angles. For example, claims of contact between speakers of Phoenician and some North American languages have been dismantled by epigraphers and archeologists, as well as linguists (Cross, 1968; McKusick, 1979). In Semitic, we are lucky enough to have depth and wealth of attestation, which allows us to determine if there was contact and sometimes to what extent. But physical contact does not necessitate linguistic transference. Frequently, claims of contact are thrown around with very little linguistic evidence and with very poor application of linguistic
principles; e.g., Gordon (1971), a linguist who studied Phoenician, reached the conclusion that there was in fact contact between speakers of the language and Native Americans, on the basis of extremely meager evidence. The ability to assess sources of changes and shared features is, of course, essential even between unrelated languages.

Most studies of contact concentrate on lexical or morphemic borrowing because it is relatively easy to detect through the absence of regular sound changes (see also Mithun, this volume); for example a causative verbal prefix ša- in Aramaic is an obvious borrowing from Akkadian, because the expected form in Aramaic is ha- or ʾa-, both of which are attested. Some borrowed lexical items are identifiable through changes in their semantics. For example, the root √ktb in the basic verbal stem in early Arabic means ‘sew, prick, join’, while later the root also means ‘write’; this was identified as a borrowing from Aramaic, a more literate society, where the root is only attested with the meaning ‘write’ before any known contact with Arabic speakers has taken place. Similarly, Arabic speakers use a noun from a different root, maṣḥaf, for ‘book, codex’, instead of the expected derivation from a root meaning ‘write’ or ‘tell’. This noun was also identified as a borrowing, this time from Classical Ethiopic, maṣḥaf.

The problem of identifying the source of a certain feature, however, becomes particularly acute when complex patterns are involved. Because syntactic patterns do not necessarily share cognate material (Harris, 2008), sound correspondences or historical semantics cannot be effectively used to identify borrowing. How can syntactic borrowing be identified in these circumstances and are we able to point to the source of the pattern and the direction of borrowing?

In this paper I cautiously suggest the following criteria, which can help distinguish between internal and external changes and identify the likely source of the change:

1. Intermediate stages: if two languages, known to be in contact, exhibit a similar pattern, but only in one of them are intermediate stages in the development of said pattern attested, that language is the source of the change. The language which only attests to the final result is more likely the borrowing language;

2. Consistency across categories: if two languages, known to be in contact, exhibit the same pattern, but in only one of them is the change consistent across various categories or related patterns, that language is the source of the change. The language with the restricted distribution is more likely the borrowing language.
The first criterion reflects the difference between an internal change, which by definition includes a number of stages and a string of less obvious changes, and external change, where a pattern is transferred in its completed form, with no transitional stages. Many syntactic changes are not restricted to categories and tend to either spread to related patterns or cause additional subsequent changes (‘pull-chain’; see Breitbarth, 2009). Spread is an indication of the productivity and viability of the pattern. The second criterion reflects the difference between the vitality of a living process and the limited effect of a borrowed pattern with no internal motivation. As I will show below, the second criterion cannot exclude parallel development.

These criteria obviously assume some historical records, which is by no means readily available in every case of contact; however, my argument is that a careful application of the historical comparative method is probably the only tool we have to separate internal change from borrowed features in closely related languages. In order to exemplify this point, two test cases from the Semitic family will be investigated: the development of a causal subordinator in Hebrew, allegedly under the influence of Aramaic, and the development of proleptic genitive in Aramaic, allegedly under the influence of Akkadian. Aramaic and Hebrew, a Canaanite language, are more closely related, as both Aramaic and Canaanite belong to the Northwest Semitic sub-branch. Akkadian is a distant relative of Aramaic, as Akkadian is subgrouped under one of two main branches to have split off from proto Semitic, East Semitic, while Aramaic, is subgrouped under the other, West Semitic.

3. Test Cases

The Semitic language family is a good place to start evaluating contact between genetically related languages, because there we are fortunate enough to have a long trail of evidence, which enables us to compare the structure of these languages pre- and post-contact. Evidence from Semitic may help us untangle some of the difficulties Aikhenvald has pointed to and examine the validity of the criteria suggested above. In order to exemplify these criteria, test cases I have already studied in the past will be described briefly below; more details may be found in Pat-El (2012a,b).

Aramaic and Hebrew were in close contact in antiquity for many centuries; initial contact was sporadic and loose (Malamat, 1958; Miller and Hayes, 2006; Kottsieper, 2007). This contact yielded some lexical borrowing and was used by the educated elite, but following the Babylonian exile (~587 BCE - 520 BCE) speakers of Hebrew were bilingual and Aramaic was present in
daily speech (Rendsburg, 1995; Hurvitz, 2006). The difference between pre- and post-exilic Biblical Hebrew is evident in many features of the lexicon and grammar of Hebrew (see Wagner, 1966; Polzin, 1976; Rooker, 1990; Joosten, 2005; Hurvitz, 2006 among many others).

3.1. Intermediate Stages: Causal Subordination

Languages belonging to the West Semitic branch exhibit several causal subordinators; however, on the basis of attestations in Old Aramaic, Ancient South Arabian, Biblical Hebrew and Classical Ethiopic it is possible to reconstruct a preposition followed by the relative pronoun, *bi-ðV 'because', as a common West Semitic causal subordinator (Pat-El, 2008: 63):

(1) wə-lō ḥāak minmen-ni maʿūmā kiʿim
    and-NEG withhold.pf.3ms from-me nothing except
   ʿār-āk ba-āšer ʾitt-ō
    ACC-2FS in-REL 2FS wife-his

He did not withhold anything from me, except you, since you are his wife. (Biblical Hebrew, Genesis 39: 9)

(2) wa-bārak-u . . . baʿonta za takāta l-omu
    and-bless-pf.3mp in-rel reveal.pf.3ms to-them
   səm-u la-wald-a ʾeqāla
    name-his to-child-CNSTR man

They blessed [god] because the name of the son of man was revealed to them. (Classical Ethiopic, Enoch 69: 26)

(3) ʾlm nḥpn w-bnḥ-hw . . . w-}$/m ʾymn mlk Sb
    PN1 PN2 and-sons-his and-PN3 PN4 king Sheba
   hqny-w ʾym-hmw tlb rymm . . . tltn-hn ʾslm-n
    dedicate-pf.3mp deity-their PN5 PN6 three-DEF statue-pl.DEF
   ḡḏ-hbh-n ḫdmn b-di tḥw-hmw b-stkml-n kl
    rel-gold-DEF praise in-REL help.pf.3ms-them in-complete-INF.-DEF all
   tyb w-ṣrf tnṭ-w
    tyb-incense and-ṣrf-incense plant-pf.3mp

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2 The existence of a linguistically distinct stage of Hebrew from the 5th century BCE is accepted by most scholars; there are, however, some dissenting voices. The core of their arguments, outlined in Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd (2008), has been repeatedly rejected.
‘Alhan Nahfan and his sons and Yarim Aiman, king of Sheba, dedicated to their patron deity, Ta’lab Riyam, these three golden statues in praise, because Ta’lab helped them in completing (the planting of) all the ṭyb-incense and ṣrf-incense they had planted. (Ancient South Arabian, CIS 308: 1-4)

Independently of the relative pronoun, the preposition *bi- carries no causal meaning, but rather spatial, primarily ‘in, on’. Causal meaning is mostly carried by the preposition *‘alay, which like *bi-, has primarily a spatial semantics, this time ‘on top, about’. However, in both Hebrew and Aramaic there is a newer form, structurally identical in both languages, which is not found in other Semitic languages: Hebrew bə-šel ‘āšer; Aramaic bə-dīl dī. In both languages, the different parts of the subordinator are native, and functionally, though not etymologically, the new forms and all their separate parts are identical:

| Hebrew: | bə | še | l | ‘āšer |
| Aramaic: | bə | dī | l | dī |

This subordinator is not attested in the earliest dialects of these languages, but rather makes its first appearance in Late Biblical Hebrew (post 5th c. BCE) and some Middle Aramaic dialects (200 BCE). The question is whether it developed independently in both languages, or was borrowed from one language to the other. The evidence seems to point to Aramaic being the source, given the attestation of various stages of development there and the complete lack of such stages in Hebrew.

In Aramaic, subordinators are constructed on the basis of prepositions with a following relative marker (zī and later dīl/də). The language, therefore, has regular sets of prepositions and subordinators with the same lexical base and the same semantics; e.g. qədām (preposition) : qədām d- (subordinator) ‘before’; ‘āyk (preposition) : ‘ayk d- (subordinator) ‘as’ etc. The causal subordinator bə-dī-, however, can only introduce sentences (subordinator), but does not have a corresponding preposition. The expected corresponding preposition bə- is already used in Aramaic with a spatial meaning (‘in, on, at’), but has no causal meaning synchronically. So the two members of a doublet bə- (preposition) : bə-dī- (conjunction) do not correspond semantically. In analogy with regular sets in the language, speakers constructed a new prepositional counterpart to the subordinator bə-dī with the addition of the

3 Note, however, that the relative pronoun in Hebrew and Hebrew are not cognates (Huehnergard, 2006). Speakers of Hebrew must have identified šeC as functionally identical with Aramaic dī, but there is no phonological similarity which would have facilitated transfer.
preposition l-. This preposition allows for the addition of pronominal and nominal complements, thus creating an irregular pair in Middle Aramaic: bədî-l- (subordinator) : bə-di- (conjunction).

Because the preposition was not an exact counterpart of the subordinator bə-di, most dialects which use the preposition bə-dîl- extended it to subordinating function with the addition of the relative particle d- and created a new Aramaic conjunction bədîl d-. The change, as with many such changes, has not been sweeping and not all dialects shifted to the new system completely. Qumran Aramaic (Middle Aramaic) is a dialect where the change has not been fully incorporated yet, and for the most part only the subordinator bə-di- is used, except for a single attestation of bə-dîl dî- (Sokoloff 1974: 145). Some dialects, like Palmyrene (Western Late Aramaic), use both conjunctions, bə-di- and bə-dîl d-, with no coherent semantic difference. Hence we can safely outline a gradual change in Aramaic from its reflex of proto Northwest Semitic to Late Aramaic, since all stages are well attested:

**Table 1** The development of the causal prepositions bədîl in Aramaic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal</th>
<th>Northwest Semitic</th>
<th>Old-Official Aramaic</th>
<th>Middle Aramaic</th>
<th>Western Late Aramaic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>*ʿalay</td>
<td>ʿal</td>
<td>bə-di-l-</td>
<td>bə-dîl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>*bi-ðV</td>
<td>bə-zî l-di</td>
<td>bə-di / bə-dîl dî</td>
<td>bə-dîl dî</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Late Biblical Hebrew, a complete set of preposition (bə-šel-) and subordinator (bə-šel ʾāšer) is attested. Hebrew lost its original Semitic relative pronoun *ðV fairly early, certainly prior to its earliest written records, and replaced it with a new relative particle, ʾāšer, originally a noun meaning ‘place’; this relative particle has a reduced proclitic form ʾāC-, which is attested sporadically in early texts and becomes more common in Late and post Biblical Hebrew (Huehnergard, 2006). In early Hebrew texts, ʿal is used as a causal preposition and ʾiš as a causal subordinator. The combination of the relative particle ʾāšer with the preposition l-, similar to Aramaic di-l, does appear in early Hebrew texts, but it is always used to mark possession and is a common Semitic pattern. There is no example in early Biblical Hebrew of this pattern with a causal meaning:

(4) kōl ʾāšer l-ô
all REL to-him
‘Everything he had, all of his property’ (Biblical Hebrew, Genesis 12: 20)
Unlike the gradual change observed in Aramaic, in Hebrew the new causal preposition and subordinator are attested at the same time (with the relative particle ‘āšer or its proclitic variant šeC). Furthermore this function is restricted to this layer of Hebrew and even there it is not common.\footnote{Mishnaic Hebrew (1c. CE - 4c. CE), a later dialect of Hebrew, does not use the subordinator bə-šel ‘āšer, but another later dialect, Qumran Hebrew, does (Mor 2009: 277).}

\begin{Verbatim}
(5) yōdēa ʿāni ki bə-šel-l-i has-sāʿar bag-gādōl
know.ptcl.3ms I comp in-rel-to-my def-storm def-big

haz-ze ʿāl̓-kem
DEF-DEM.MS OR-YOU.MP

'I know that this great tempest that is upon you is because of me' (Biblical Hebrew, Jonah 1: 12)
\end{Verbatim}

\begin{Verbatim}
(6) lō yūkal hā-ʾādām li-mšōʿ et ham-maʿāie
NEG be.able.3ms DEF-man to-find ACC DEF-deed

ʿāšer naʿāšā tahat hāš-lēmeḥ bə-šel ʿāšer
rel done.pass.ptcl.ms under DEF-sun in-rel-to REL

yaʿāmol hā-ʾādām lə-bagqēš wə-lō yimṣā
labor.impf.3ms DEF-man to-ask and-NEG find.impf.3ms

'Man cannot understand what was done under the sun because though man may labor to seek (an answer), he will not find (it).' (Biblical Hebrew, Ecclesiastes 8: 17)
\end{Verbatim}

In Hebrew, the preposition and the subordinator are attested simultaneously as full forms and there are no traces of a process. In other words, there are no intermediate stages to account for the development before the period of intense contact with Aramaic. Furthermore, Hebrew did not have the same motivating factors to develop a new form. There are no regular doublets of prepositions and subordinators, and frequently the preposition and the subordinator are from different lexical bases.

Although all the different elements in the conjunction bə-šel + relative exist in Hebrew, we must conclude that their combination and its semantics are a borrowing from Aramaic. Furthermore, while in Aramaic the subordinator’s distribution grew to eventually replace the old form, in Hebrew the attestation is concentrated at a particular time with no lead-up at all. Therefore, bə-šel and bə-šel ‘āšer are most likely a calque of an Aramaic formation.
3.2. Consistency across Categories: Proleptic Genitive

Aramaic had originally two strategies to mark nominal relations: direct dependency, known as ‘construct’, and a periphrastic strategy, with the use of the relative marker $dī$, which will be called here ‘periphrastic genitive’. Both strategies are common Semitic (Pat-El, 2012c). In the construct strategy, the head noun is morphologically marked as the head of the pattern, while in the second strategy, the marking is syntactic: the head is to the left of the relative marker, while the dependent is to its right (head REL dependent). Additionally, in the first strategy the head cannot take any affixes, such as possessive suffixes or the definite article, while in the second strategy there are no such restrictions.

Already in Official Aramaic a third type appears, seemingly on the basis of the second strategy, where a possessive suffix is appended on the head noun and reflects agreement with the dependent. This strategy will be called here ‘proleptic genitive’:5

(7) Official Aramaic
   a. Synthetic construct: $wšr^\text{mlk}$-treasure.cnst king-def
      ‘The king’s treasure’ (B3.11: 4)
   b. Periphrastic genitive: $wšr^\text{-}zy^\text{mlk}$-treasure-def rel king-def
      ‘The king’s treasure’ (B3.4: 9)
   c. Proleptic genitive: $bw-hy^\text{zy}^\text{'srh'dn}$father-his rel PN
      ‘The father of Esarhadon’ (C1.1: 47)

This pattern is also attested in other Semitic languages: Ethiopic (example 8), Akkadian (example 9, from the 13th century BCE) and post-Biblical Hebrew (example 10):

(8) $kʷǎnāne-hu la-ǎgzi ab$hēr
    ordinance-his to-God
    ‘The ordinance of God’ (Gǎ’az, Luke 1: 6)

(9) ȘEŠ-ìi ša $NIN.DINGIR
    brother-her rel PN
    ‘PN’s brother’ (Emar Akkadian; Ikeda, 1998: 59)

5 Examples are from Porten and Yardeni (1986-1999).
The opposite opinion was also expressed, i.e. that Aramaic is the source of the pattern in Akkadian, most prominently by von Soden (1966:4), but was rejected by most scholars (e.g., Barton, 1927; Kutscher, 1971; Kaufman, 1974). For other examples of a potential Aramaic influence on Akkadian dialects, see Beaulieu, this volume.

Indeed, the consensus is that the periphrastic genitive in Aramaic is a calque of a similar Akkadian construction (Kutscher, 1971: 106-107; Kaufman, 1974: 131-132). The reasons for assuming Akkadian is the source are primarily extra-linguistic. Kutscher (1971) argued that the pattern is primarily attested in texts from the East, where Akkadian influence is substantial. Furthermore, he, and others, have pointed to an Aramaic text which was assumed to be a translation of Akkadian, where the occurrence of the proleptic pattern corresponds to a similar pattern in the Akkadian text. Example 11a below is in Aramaic, and example 11b is the corresponding Akkadian.

(11) a. br-h zy Krš
   son-his REL PN
   ‘Cyrus’ son’ (Bae, 2001, OfA, §1: Col.1.3)

b. mār-u-šu ša Kuraš
   son-NOM-his REL PN
   ‘Cyrus’ son’ (Bae, 2001, AA §10: 12)

However, two later discoveries have made these arguments far less persuasive: first, there have been attestations of the pattern in the West (Syria), and second, the Aramaic text has been shown conclusively to not have been a translation of the Akkadian original (Bae, 2001). The close structural similarity between the patterns and the established contact between Akkadian and Aramaic still seem to point to Akkadian as the source. But this is a superficial impression, and a closer look at the distribution and syntax of the pattern may yield a different conclusion.

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The proleptic genitive is not very common in standard Akkadian. It is attested in Old Babylonian (2000-1500 BCE), yet it is rather rare (von Soden, 1995: 239 §138j; Huehnergard, 1989: 227). Following this language period, the pattern almost completely disappeared from written records; it is, for example, only rarely attested in Middle Babylonian (1500-1000 BCE), the most relevant period for Akkadian influence on Aramaic. It eventually reappears in Neo-Babylonian (1000-600 BCE), where it is again not very frequent. The pattern is slightly better attested in peripheral dialects of Akkadian, which do not always follow normative Akkadian. Features found in these dialects may be a reflection of extant but rare features in normative Akkadian (Huehnergard, 1989: 229) or belong to the native languages of the scribes, most of whom were non-Akkadian speakers (Huehnergard, 2000: xxv).

On the other hand, from the moment prolepsis is attested in Aramaic it is not restricted to nominal relations. First it spread to prepositions and their objects, whose syntactic relationship is identical to construct. Furthermore, with the exception of a small set of prepositions, most of the prepositions in the Semitic languages are based on nominal forms. Thus, it is natural for prepositional phrases to imitate the syntax of the nominal phrase. The following example is from the text quoted in example 11 above, and is the only example of prolepsis with a preposition dated to the Official Aramaic period:

(12) ʾzl-w ʾrq-h zy Ddrs l-mbd qrb  
go.pf-3mp towards-him REL PN to-do.inf battle  
‘They went towards Dadaršu to fight’ (Bae, 2001, OfA, §1: Col. IV:15)

Prolepsis with prepositions, however, is very common in all Aramaic dialects thereafter. Examples 16-17 are from Syro-Palestinian Aramaic texts dated to around the turn of the era:

(13) w-gw-hwn dy t[wny]  
and-in-them REL chambers.mp  
‘In the chambers’ (Qumran Aramaic, 5Q15 f1ii:9)

(14) qbl-t-h mn-h ʿI have received it from Šarruq  
receive.pf-1cs-it from-him REL-PN  
‘I have received it from Tamarqos’ (Old Syriac, Drijvers & Healey, 1999, P3: 13)

Later dialects saw the spread of similar proleptic patterns to other categories, primarily to the verbal system. It is quite clear, however, that by the first century CE, the pattern was already very widespread in the nominal system and its frequency high. From the earliest attestation of the pattern, roughly in the
4th century BCE, it had wide distribution and versatile use. The pattern has been quickly adopted to represent various similar relationships, first in the nominal system and then in the verbal system. This never happened in Akkadian, where the pattern is very restricted and rarely attested. This difference is what led von Soden to postulate an Aramaic source despite the wide gap in attestation. While this is unlikely, there could still have been influence, though not a direct borrowing. Brinkman (1969) suggested that while both languages developed the pattern independently, it is possible that the wide distribution and frequency of the pattern in Aramaic was a factor in the elevated use in Neo-Babylonian Akkadian.

4. Summary and Future Direction

In this paper I have suggested that there are well-tested historical linguistic tools to help us distinguish between internally and externally motivated changes: i) Intermediate stages, where the various stages of a process are attested in one language, while the other shows only the final result. I claimed that the source language is likely the one where the various stages of the process are attested. ii) Consistency across categories, where a change is observed in various patterns in one language, but is much more restricted in another. I claimed that a language where a pattern is used broadly and its development is motivated is the more plausible source language. More generally, it is argued here that historical linguistic tools are adequate to distinguish between internal and external change and to help identify the source of a change, if it is external.

The influence of contact, however, is not restricted to outright borrowing, and it is quite possible that in some cases the influence of contact was not responsible for direct transference of linguistic material, but rather to the change in distribution and frequency of an already existing pattern. This, of course, is more likely to take place in related languages, which have such existing and shared patterns and where speakers more easily identify foreign morphemes as identical to their native morphemes. Far more research is needed to ascertain what rules regulate these types of changes, but it is important to keep in mind the possibility that frequency is also borrowable.

With genetically related languages, contact may be harder to detect due to the similarity between the systems; therefore, particular caution should be exercised. Without an in-depth and careful historical and comparative evaluation the true picture eludes us and we are left with false impressions. External change is always a clear possibility and should be considered alongside other more traditional historical scenarios.
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