12 Yiddish

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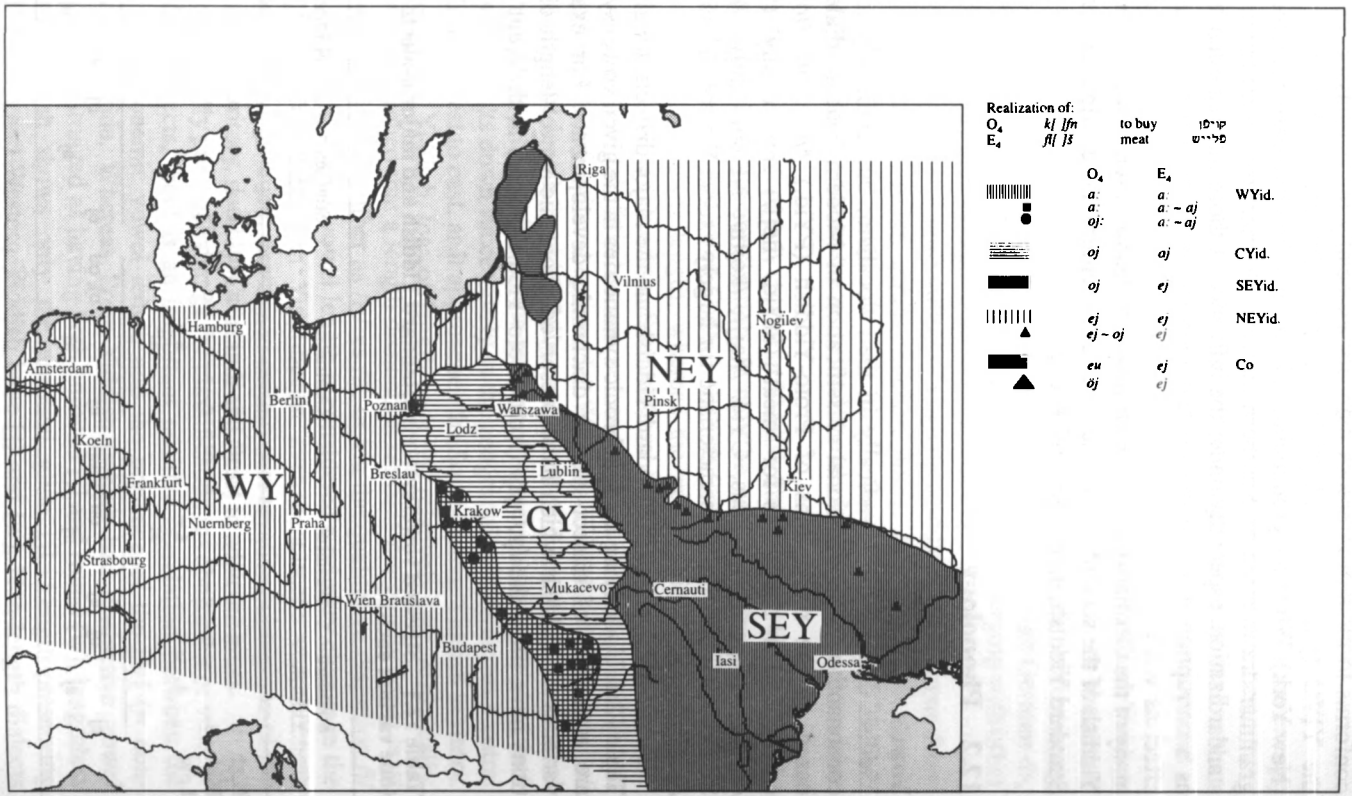
12.1 Introduction

Of all the Germanic languages, Yiddish looks least Germanic: it uses a Hebrew alphabet and is read from right to left, and its grammar and lexicon have undergone considerable influence not only from Hebrew and Aramaic (HA), but also from various Slavic languages. Today Yiddish exists as an international minority language of an older generation of Jews whose sons and daughters have largely assimilated themselves to English, Hebrew, Russian, French or whatever other language is spoken by the co-territorial majority, as well as of Orthodox Jewish communities that decide against assimiliation and keep Yiddish as a part of their identity. Both groups have their origin in the Jewish population of Eastern Europe, especially Poland and the western parts of the former Soviet Union. The drastic decline of the Yiddish speech community is due to a combination of the Nazi genocide, assimilation, and massive migration, caused by persecution, poverty or Zionism. That East European Jews spoke a Germanic language, amidst speakers of Slavic and Baltic, was again due to assimilation and migration, for their forebears had come from Germany (from the twelfth century onwards), where they had created Yiddish from Middle High German – in particular from the Southeast dialects – and a Semitic, primarily Hebrew, substratum and adstratum. East European Yiddish developed more in isolation from High German than the Yiddish of the Jews that had stayed in German lands and it was further influenced by co-territorial Slavic languages. This led to the emergence of two dialect groups, Western Yiddish (WYid.) and Eastern Yiddish (EYid.). From the end of the eighteenth century most Jews in the West began assimilating to their German linguistic environment and Western Yiddish has now virtually died out. Modern Yiddish, therefore, is Eastern Yiddish, even though it may now be spoken in the West again.

According to phonological and other criteria, the main Modern Eastern dialects are: Central Yiddish (CYid.; often called 'Polish' Yiddish), Northeastern Yiddish (NEYid.; 'Lithuanian', though encompassing large parts of Byelorussian territory as well), and Southeastern Yiddish (SEYid.;

Map 1 Classification of Yiddish Dialects (based on Landau and Wachstein 1911)



'Ukrainian' Yiddish). Modern Standard Yiddish (StYid.) is the variety that conforms to modern reference manuals, especially the ones associated with the YIVO (*yidisher visnshaftlekher institut*) Institute of Jewish Research (New York). While the pronunciation is inspired by Northeastern dialects, the grammar draws more on Southern dialects. German, too, contributed to the standardization, especially under the influence of those that regarded Yiddish as a corruption of German. Yet this German-based purism had an inverse effect as well, as it triggered an anti-German purism, successfully banning many of the German-inspired (*daytshmerish*) features, typical of some written Yiddish of the second half of the nineteenth century. Discussion will concern Standard Yiddish, unless otherwise noted.

12.2 Phonology

Vowels

Yiddish dialects differ radically in their vocalism, but minimally in their consonantism. The traditional classification of Modern Yiddish dialects is based on the realizations of Proto-Yiddish (PYid.) */ei/ and */ou/, as exemplified in the words for 'meat' (StYid. /flejʃ/) and 'to buy' (StYid. /kojfn/), respectively. Thus, CYid. /flajʃ/, /kojfn/; NEYid. /flejʃ/, /kejfn/; SEYid. /flejʃ/, /kojfn/. (Characteristic for largely extinct Western Yiddish are /fla:ʃ/, /ka:fn/.)

The vowel systems of Standard Yiddish and the major dialects are given in Table 12.1. Underlying the synchronic symmetries in the given vowel systems are a number of dialect-specific diachronic developments. For example, varieties of Yiddish which have preserved phonemic vowel-length distinctions have filled the /a:/ gap (from Proto-Yiddish times) in different ways:

Table 12.1 Stressed vowel systems: Standard Yiddish and major dialects (one variant each)

	Standard Yiddish	Western Yiddish	Central Yiddish	Southeastern Yiddish	Northeastern Yiddish
High	i u	i – i: u – u:	i – i: u – u:	i – ɨ u	i u
Mid	e o	e – e: o – o:	e – — o – —	e o	e o
Low	a	a – a:	a – a:	a	a
	ej oj	ej ou (~ au)	ej oj, ou	ej oj	ej oj
	aj	aj	aj	aj	aj

CYid. /aː/ < PYid. */aj/ (CYid. /haːnt/ < */hajnt/ 'today'); WYid. /aː/ < PYid. */ei/, */ou/ (WYid. /flaːʃ/ < */fleiʃ/ 'meat'; /kaːfn/ < */koufn/ 'buy').

The stressed-vowel system of Standard Yiddish is – historically – a simplified one, with mergers occurring at every point in the system except Proto-Yiddish */aj/ (cognate MHG /iː/). Standard Yiddish has a basic five-vowel system: /i, e, a, o, u/, plus the three diphthongs /ej, aj, oj/ (and is thus identical – synchronically, though not in terms of historical development – with one variety of Northeastern Yiddish). Distinctive vowel length has been lost; Proto-Yiddish long monophthongs are realized in Standard Yiddish either as diphthongized (PYid. */eː/, */oː/ as StYid. /ej/, /oj/), or shortened (PYid. */iː/, */uː/, */ɛː/, */ɔː/ as StYid. /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/, merging with existing diphthongs or short monophthongs. The cognates of Middle High German ‹î›, ‹û› are Standard Yiddish diphthongs /aj/ and /oj/ (the latter merging with other /oj/ [< PYid. */ou/], and */oː/).

Yiddish shows general unrounding of cognate Middle High German front rounded vowels; cf. StGer. *schön*, *Löcher*, *müde*, *Häuser*, StYid. /ʃejn/, /lexər/, /mid/, /hajzər/ 'pretty', 'holes', 'tired', 'houses'. Regional Yiddish instances of front roundedness (e.g., [y] in Brajnsk; [øy] in Courland) are later innovations.

The issue of vowel length is crucial in Yiddish dialectology. Using a rough, geographically based generalization, it may be said that the westernmost dialects – Western Yiddish and Central Yiddish (an Eastern Yiddish dialect) – have distinctive vowel length, whereas the geographically easternmost dialects – Northeastern Yiddish, Southeastern Yiddish – lack this feature. However, the dialectal divisions are not as clear-cut in fact as this rough geographical classification implies. In Western Yiddish, the system of phonemic vowel length is quite fully entrenched and exploited. In Central Yiddish, it is arguably limited to the peripheral vowel qualities, /iː/, /aː/, /uː/. The system breaks down successively in the geographic sweep across Central Yiddish from west to east, as it approaches the Southeastern Yiddish territory. In Southeastern Yiddish, loss of length occurred relatively late, historically, and it may be argued that a length distinction remains marginally for at least one vowel quality: /i/ (either as /iː/ vs /i/, or via the qualitative distintion /i/ vs /ɨ/). Loss of distinctive vowel length is considered a primary change in the development of Northeastern Yiddish, yet even here some vowel length survived into the twentieth century in certain conservative subregions of the Northeastern territory, notably, Courland, and (less) in adjacent areas.

Glides typically pose a challenge for classification (as consonant or vowel). In Yiddish dialects, there is an important positive correlation between the presence of phonemic vowel length and the presence of the [w] (= non-syllabic [u]) glide. Whereas Proto-Yiddish (which had distinctive vowel length) is reconstructed as having both unround [j] and round [w], lengthless Standard Yiddish shows only the unround glide [j]. Length-preserving Central Yiddish and Western Yiddish have [j] and [w]. Non-length dialects

Northeastern Yiddish and Southeastern Yiddish generally lack a [w] glide. In the conservative Courland subregion of Northeastern Yiddish, which has preserved phonemic vowel length (though with rapid collapse of length distinctions in the twentieth century under the influence of Standard Yiddish), the [w] glide is found. While both glides – [w] and [j] – may be associated (in Yiddish dialects) with long vowels/diphthongs, only [j] has independent consonantal function; cf. StYid. /ojx/ 'also' vs /jojx/ 'broth'; but not /**wojx/. (The double asterisks are used to show non-occurring or non-grammatical forms.) For Standard Yiddish, at least, there is little or no synchronic justification for deriving surface [v] (e.g. /ven/ 'when') from an underlying phoneme **/w/.

A situation of vocalic overlength (three morae) is found in Central Yiddish *breaking* and *drawl*. In both processes, [ə] is inserted between certain long vowels or diphthongs and a tautosyllabic consonant, resulting in overlong vocalic sequences. In Central Yiddish *breaking*, [ə] is inserted between any long vowel/diphthong (possible exception: /aː/) and tautosyllabic velar fricative /x/, /r/ (= [ɣ]); thus, compare forms with breaking (/r/ in syllable rime undergoes later vocalization and loss): /biːx/ 'book', /fiːr/ '(I) lead', /fuːr/ '(I) travel', /hojx/ 'high', /boux/ 'belly, stomach', /fiːrst/ '(you) lead' → [biːəx], [fiːə], [hojəx], [bouəst], [fiːəst], versus forms without breaking ($ = syllable boundary): [fiː $ rŋ] 'to lead', [biː $ xə] 'books', etc. Central Yiddish *drawl* appears to be an analogical partial extension of breaking to other (non-labial/velar) tautosyllabic consonants. Here, however, the vowels/diphthongs eligible are generally more limited to those with second mora [u]; thus: /buːd/ 'bath', /hout/ 'skin' → drawled [buːət], [houət], while remaining undrawled are: [buː $ dn] 'to bathe' ([d] not tautosyllabic and /brojt/ 'bread' (second mora of vowel ≠ [u]). Central Yiddish breaking is an obligatory rule, whereas drawl is an ongoing and incomplete change with optional application. In the eastern part of the Central Yiddish area drawl has been analogically extended phonologically to include the high front vowel /iː/. Also, in eastern Central Yiddish, breaking has been extended (though not uniformly) to environments where the velar fricative is not tautosyllabic: /fiː $ rn/ 'to lead', /biːxər/ 'books' → [fiːə $ rŋ], [biːə $ xə].

Unstressed Vowels

In dealing with unstressed vowels (at the word level) it is best to make two distinctions: (a) pre-tonic vs post-tonic position; and (b) underlying versus derived schwa. Because Germanic word stress overwhelmingly falls on the initial root syllable, pre-tonic syllables in Germanic tend to be habitually unstressed inseparable prefixes, with a greatly reduced inventory of possible vowels. In pre-tonic position, Germanic-component words tend to be limited to either [ə] (/gəzén/ 'seen') or [a] (/bakúmən/ 'get, receive', /antlójfn/ 'run away'; cf. Ger. *bekommen* 'get, receive', *entlaufen* 'run away'). Through input from the Hebrew and Aramaic, and Slavic components (as well as

through more recent internationalisms), virtually any vowel/diphthong may occur in pre-tonic position (although here too there may be a tendency – especially in Yiddish dialects – toward a reduced inventory); e.g. /m[i]snágəd/ 'Orthodox Jewish opponent of Hasidism', /h[e]fkéjrəs/ 'neglect, wantonness, arbitrariness', /m[a]pólə/ 'defeat' /k[o]ntákt/ 'contact', /k[u]ndéjsəm/ 'urchins', /h[oj]dóə/ 'announcement'.

There is a strong general tendency in Yiddish for any post-tonic vowel or diphthong to reduce to schwa (with regional coloration). A schwa that – synchronically – is linked paradigmatically to a full vowel/diphthong is considered phonologically derived, as in: /kúnd[ə]s/ – /kund[éj]səm/ 'urchin-s', /tálm[ə]d/ – /talm[í]dəm/ 'pupil-s'. Non-linkable schwa is considered underlying in, e.g. /xánəkə/ 'Hanukkah' (cf. HA /ħănukkɔ:/, /blótə/ 'mud' (cf. Pol. *błoto*). In varieties of Northeastern Yiddish there is some retention of vowel quality in post-tonic position: PYid. */ó:ləm/ 'world, public' > NEYid. [éjləm] (StYid. /ójləm/).

As part of the general weakening tendency, the sequence post-tonic vowel + tautosyllabic sonorant tend to be realized as syllabic sonorants. The deletion is not uniform, however; the tendency is strongest with nasals, less so for /l/, and generally does not occur in Standard Yiddish with /r/; thus: /nígn/ ([nigŋ̩]) 'melody' (cf. pl. /nigúnəm/; /mənúvl̩/ 'ugly/contemptible person' (pl. /mənuvóləm/), but /ʃíkər/ 'drunk' (pl. /ʃikúrəm/). Furthermore, when oblique marker *-n* is added to personal names ending in [ə], deletion does not occur: *mójʃə-n* → [mójʃən] 'Moyshe (obl.)'. Compare the oblique forms of /tátə/ meaning either 'father' or the proper name 'Dad': /tátə-n/ → [tatn̩] 'father (obl.)', versus [tatən] 'Dad (obl.)'. Deletion is also blocked where an unacceptable nasal cluster would otherwise result: deletion in /ʃrajb-ən/ → [ʃrajbm] 'to write', but no deletion in /kum-ən/ → [kumən] 'to come'. The historical apocope in the Germanic component which yields Yiddish /(ix) ʃrajb/, /kum/, /gas/, etc. (cf. StGer. (*ich*) *schreibe*, (*ich*) *komme*, *Gasse*) '(I) write, (I) come, street' occurred in the relevant source dialects of German pre-Jewish contact, and is not part of the internal phonological history of Yiddish.

A full vowel may be preserved in post-tonic position after an intervening morpheme boundary: after a strong boundary, as in: /frájnt#ʃaft/, 'friendship', /ʃéjn#kajt/ 'beauty', as well as after a weak boundary: /jid/ 'Jew' + /iʃ/ (adjective-forming suffix) → /jídiʃ/ 'Jewish'. There is a tendency in some dialects toward vowel reduction after weak boundary, thus: [jídiʃ] ~ [jídəʃ], [ʃéjd-im] ~ [ʃéjd-əm] 'ghost-s'. Again, non-alternating schwa in suffixes is synchronically underlying in Yiddish (e.g., in the adjective inflection /-ə/, in the feminine suffix /-kə/ (< Slav. /ka/), *-ə* (< HA /-ɔ:/), or in the abstract noun suffix /-əs/ (< HA /-u:θ/)).

Consonants

The Standard Yiddish consonant system is given in Table 12.2. There is very little variation in the phonemic consonantal system across the Yiddish

Table 12.2 Standard Yiddish consonants

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Oral stops	p		t		k	
	b		d		g	
Nasal stops	m		n	nʲ		
Fricatives		f	s	ʃ	x	h
		v	z	ʒ	—*	
Affricates			ts	tʃ		
				ʤ		
Liquids			l	lʲ		
				r**		

Notes: *In some regions /r/ = [ɣ]; **Front /r/ = trill.

dialects. Many regional features (such as the confusion/collapse of hushing/hissing distinctions (in Northeastern Yiddish) called *sabesdiker losn* 'Sabbath speech' < /*ʃabəs/ 'Sabbath', /*lɔːʃn/ 'tongue, language', or regional /h/-dropping: /ant/ < /hant/ 'hand' and non-organic /h/-insertion: /harbət/ < /arbət/ 'work') have largely disappeared under the pressure of standardization since the late nineteenth century.

Synchronically, Yiddish has a richer consonantism than Standard German, in terms of its (phonemic and allophonic) inventory and permissible consonant clusters. In the obstruents, there is fuller exploitation of the voicing distinction, including word-finally /zog/ '(I) say' – /zok/ 'sock'). In the affricates, Yiddish lacks /pf/ (StYid. /ferd/, /kop/, StGer. *Pferd*, *Kopf* 'horse', 'head'), but has /ts/, /tʃ/, /ʤ/.

The question of palatalized consonants (acquired largely through contact with Slavic) is problematic. In Standard Yiddish, the dentals (/t, d, s, z, n, l/) all have 'soft' (= palatalized) variants. However, only the distinctions /l – lʲ/ and /n – nʲ/ have been universally phonemicized in Eastern Yiddish (and hence, Standard Yiddish): /mol/ 'time' – /molʲ/ 'moth', /manʲə/ 'f. anthroponym' – /manjə/ 'mania'. Some Eastern Yiddish dialects have phonemicized /tʲ/, /dʲ/, and /sʲ/ as well. Allophonic palatalization of dentals and velars before a front vowel occurs regionally in varieties of Northeastern Yiddish and Southeastern Yiddish: /tir/ → [tʃir] 'door'. Standard Yiddish does not show – in Slavic loans – the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' palato-alveolar fricatives and affricates; thus, Slavic /ʃ – ɕ/, /ʒ – ʑ/, /tʃ – tɕ/, and /ʤ – dʑ/ are realized in Standard Yiddish only with /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /ʤ/, respectively. Standard Yiddish does not have final devoicing of obstruents. Like Standard German, Standard Yiddish, does not have geminate consonants.

Voiceless oral stops /p, t, k/ are unaspirated in Standard Yiddish. The

phonemes /t, d, n/ are realized regionally as either dental or alveolar in their basic form.

Yiddish has a much fuller set of contrasts in the fricatives than does German. To a great extent this is due to the incorporation of lexical items of Hebrew/Aramaic and Slavic origin, which contributed more fricatives in more environments than are found in the German component. For example, Yiddish has initial /x/ in words of Hebrew/Aramaic, and Slavic origin, but not in German-component words (a possible exception: /xojzək/ 'fun; mockery' < Low German source); cf. /xojv/ 'debt' < HA vs /hojf/ 'courtyard' < German-component. Thus, when both Yiddish and German have borrowed a Slavic word with initial /x/, this /x/ was integrated into fundamentally different patterns; compare the incorporation of Slavic loan #/xr-/ in Yiddish /xrejn/ 'horseradish', German dialectal /kren/ (cf. Polish *chrzan*).

A discussion of Old High German */s/ in word-initial position is particularly instructive concerning the role of fricatives in Yiddish. Diachronically, in the relevant source dialects of German, word-initial /s-/ developed in two ways: /s/ > [z] /# ____ V (**sagan* > [za:gən] 'say'); /s/ > [ʃ] / # ____ C (**sla:fan* > [ʃla:fən] 'to sleep'). Thus, in Standard German, both /z/ and /ʃ/ occur word-initially (Modern German initial /ʃ/ before a vowel < */sk/; *scheinen* 'shine, appear' < /*ski:nan/); /s/ does not (natively). In contrast, Yiddish shows a full four-way opposition word-initially:

Word-initial Sybillant Oppositions

	Before a vowel	*Before a consonant*
s	/sojnə/ 'enemy'	/slup/ 'pole'
z	/zojnə/ 'prostitute'	/zlatə/ 'fem. anthroponym'
ʃ	/ʃabəs/ 'Sabbath'	/ʃlofn/ 'sleep'
ʒ	/ʒabəs/ 'frogs'	/ʒlob/ 'yokel, hick, boor'

Yiddish inherited a three-way (word-initial) contrast (/s/, /z/, and /ʃ/) from its Hebrew/Aramaic substrate. The German component only conributed words with initial /z/ or /ʃ/. Positional [ʒ] is found in Hebrew and Aramaic words ([xeʒbm̩] < /ħeʃbo:n/ 'account'); however, the full phonemic status of /ʒ/ owes to Slavic-component input (/ʒabəs/ 'frogs').

The fullness of the set of fricative contrasts in Yiddish has also led to a richness in permissible consonant clusters beyond those found in the source languages, as illustrated, for example, by contrasting initial /sl-, zl-, ʃl-, ʒl-, str-, xr-/, etc. This richness is not limited to the fricatives, however; other non-Germanic initial clusters include, e.g. /dl-, tl-/, etc.

Eastern Yiddish dialects (as well as colonial German dialects) generally have an /l/ that is darker than in Standard German; Eastern Yiddish [l] is probably due to Slavic influence. Hard [ɬ] contrasts with soft [lʲ] in many Eastern Yiddish areas (with the exception of Northeastern Yiddish); thus:

/haltn/ 'to hold' – /palʲtn/ 'overcoat'. The distinction is marginally phonemic, but often allophonic ([lʲ] before stressed front vowels). There is a general association, however, of /lʲ/ and /nʲ/ with Slavicness', and Weinreich (1958) notes the creation of 'phonological pseudo-Slavicisms' with distinct semantic functions: /laxn/ 'to laugh' (< German component) vs /lʲaxn/ 'to guffaw', /knakər/ 'big shot' vs /knʲakər/ 'big shot' (more conceited than /knakər/). Thus, while /lʲ/ and /nʲ/ are recognized as phonemes in Standard Yiddish, they have a marginal status which merits special discussion.

Standard Yiddish /r/ may be realized as either front (apical) or back (uvular); these are the major variants found in Yiddish dialects.

Standard Yiddish has three nasal consonant phonemes: /n/, /m/, and (marginally) /nʲ/. /n/ → [ŋ] before a velar consonant; unlike English or Standard German, Standish Yiddish does not delete the [g] in /-ng-/ clusters: Eng. *long* [ŋ], StGer. *lang* [ŋ], StYid. /lang/ [ŋg]. The assimilation of /n/ to place of articulation of the adjacent consonant is general: /lip-n/ [m] 'lips', /lax-n/ [ŋ] 'to laugh'. Palatal /nʲ/ does not assimilate: /bankét/ [ŋk] 'banquet' vs /banʲkəs/ [nʲk] 'cupping glasses'.

Voicing Assimilation

In Northeastern Yiddish there is general anticipatory obstruent voicing assimilation (including across word boundaries). Thus: /(ix) ʃik bixər/ → [. . . g # b . . .] '(I) send books', /(ix) lejg tfiləɲ/ → [. . . k # t . . .] '(I) put on phylacteries'. Central Yiddish generally lacks this assimilation, except in limited fashion in close juncture and rapid speech. Standard Yiddish has a limited form of anticipatory voicing assimilation. It is obligatory for devoicing: /ʃrajb/ + /st/ – > [ʃrajpst] 'you write', /ʃrajb/ # /tiʃ/ 'desk (= writing table)' → [ʃrajptiʃ]. It is mostly optional for voicing: /arojs + gejn/ – > [arojsgejn] ~ [arojzgejn] 'to go out'.

Syllable Types: Historical Development

Yiddish shows the results of two similar – yet historically and structurally distinct – processes of standardization of syllable quantity. Both processes occurred – independently – in pre-Yiddish times, and are reflected in the Hebrew/Aramaic, and German components of Yiddish, respectively. Both had the effect of making all stressed syllables *long*. However, what constituted *long* in the source languages differed. In the Hebrew and Aramaic component (as part of substratal pre-Yiddish Jewish vernacular), [+long] was defined as a single branching rime. Thus, original Hebrew and Aramaic long vowels in Pre-Yiddish were kept long in open syllables (HA /prɔ: $ ṭí:m/ 'details' > Pre-Yid. */prɔ́: $ tim/; StYid. /prótəm/ 'details'), shortened in (singly) closed syllables (HA /prɔ:ṭ/ > Pre-Yid. */prat/; StYid. /prat/ 'detail'). Original short vowels remained short in closed syllables, e.g. HA /mas $ qí:m/ > Pre-Yid. */más $ kim/; StYid. /máskəm + zajn/ ('be') 'agree', and lengthened in open syllables

(HA /tá $ ħaθ/ > Pre-Yid. */tɔ́ː $ xas/; StYid. /tóxəs/ 'buttocks, rump').

In the German process, short vowels were likewise lengthened in stressed open syllables (before underlying voiced consonants) /ta $ ga/ > /taː $ ge/ 'days'. However, there are two important deviations from the standardization of quantity found in the Jewish-vernacular substrate. First, long vowels were not shortened in (singly) closed syllables (Ger. /broːt/ 'bread' did not shorten). Second, in German there later occurred a paradigm-based analogical vowel lengthening; thus, [taːk] 'day' based on paradigm forms, e.g., [taːge], [taːgen], [taːges]. This analogical lengthening is not found in the Hebrew/Aramaic component; cf. StYid. /tog/ 'day' (< *long vowel), but /prat/ vs /protəm/ 'detail-s', with no analogical lengthening. As a result of these independent processes, Yiddish has a number of morphophonemic vowel alternations which are typically limited to the Hebrew/Aramaic component: (StYid.) /oj – o/, /ej – e/, /a – o/, as well as full vowel or diphthong–with schwa (see Stress shift, below, pp. 397–8). Consonant degemination (found in all components of Yiddish) blurred many of the original environments for lengthening and shortening; thus, synchronically, Yiddish has all types of stressed syllable: short, long and overlong.

Prosodic Phonology

Stress

In its dominant German component, Yiddish shows the Germanic fixed stress on initial root syllables: /léb-n/, 'to live', /léb-ə-dik/ 'lively', /léb-ə-dik-ə/ 'lively' (inflected), /ba-léb-n/ 'to animate'. Two exceptions to initial root-syllable stress are: (a) 'Semitic-type' compounding (see below); and (b) stress on verb complements in verbs and nouns derived therefrom: /ojs/ (a perfectivizer) + /fregn/ 'to ask' – > /ójsfregn/ 'to interrogate', /er fregt ójs/ 'he interrogates'; noun: /(der) ójsfreg/ '(the) quiz'. The case for claiming initial root-syllable stress is further weakened by data from the Hebrew/Aramaic, and Slavic components, as well as recent internationalisms. Gernerally, however – with one important exception – whether stress is 'initial', penultimate, or otherwise classified, it is almost always fixed throughout paradigms.

The exception concerns a large number of words of Hebrew/Aramaic origin which exhibit movable stress in Yiddish. These are almost exclusively nouns paired either by number (singular – plural), or gender (masculine – feminine); for example, StYid. /gánəf/ 'thief' – /ganóvəm/ 'thieves', /xílək/ 'difference' – /xilúkəm/ 'differences', /tálməd/ '(male) pupil' – /talmídəm/ '(male) pupils', as well as /tálməd/ 'pupil' – /talmídə/ '(female) pupil'. A common claim is that Hebrew/Aramaic origin words in Yiddish reflect a shift from original ultimate stress (in Hebrew and/or Judeo-Aramaic) to penultimate stress, possibly as a partial adaptation to the Germanic pattern of (essentially) initial stress. More recently, a metrical analysis of the problem

has suggested that there was a shift from the earlier Semitic stress pattern ŵs ('weak–strong') to a 'Germanic-like' pattern ŝw ('strong–weak'). The movable stress in related items like /tálməd/ – /talmídəm/ arose due to differences in embedded metrical structure (in pre-Yiddish times; these differences were the result of a pre-Yiddish linear retraction of stress based on vowel length). Additionally, in a number of derived adjectives and nouns consisting of a Hebrew/Aramaic origin noun plus a Germanic derivational affix the stress falls on the (original Hebrew) second syllable; thus: /gánəf/ 'thief' – /ganóvəm/ 'thieves', /ganéjviʃ/ 'thievish'; /tálməd/ 'Talmud' – /talmúdiʃ/ 'Talmudic', /kórəv/ 'relative' – /krójvəm/ 'relatives', /krójviʃ/ 'related, kindred', /krójviʃaft/ 'kinship'; but derivations also occur which are based on singular nouns: /xávər/ 'friend' – /xavéjrəm/ 'friends', /xávəriʃ/ 'friendly', /xávərʃaft/ 'comradeship'.

Synchronically, this inherited (< Pre-Yiddish, not Hebrew) movable stress shows a mild productivity in Yiddish. Under highly stipulated conditions, some non-Hebrew/Aramaic origin nouns are attracted into the paradigm with movable stress. Typically, these nouns are bisyllabic, monomorphemic, end in a consonant, and have stress on the first syllable. They thus resemble the Hebrew/Aramaic origin nouns of type /gánəf/ 'thief', /tálməd/ 'pupil', etc. Thus: /dóktər/ 'doctor' – /doktójrəm/ 'doctors' (< source?), /kúndəs/ 'urchin' – /kundéjsəm/ 'urchins' (< Slavic). The movable-stress paradigm is not an option if stress is not originally on the first syllable; thus, /kontákt/ 'contact (noun)' has plural /kontákt-n/, not /*kontákt-əm/.

Disrupting the general ŝw pattern are certain suffixes which require main word stress (usually internationalisms): /-al/, /-el/, /-ant/, etc.; e.g. *aspiránt* 'research student'.

A rhythmically determined secondary stress occurs two syllables before a main stress; thus, the unstressed /mə/ in /məʃúməd/ 'apostate' receives rhythmic secondary stress in the plural /məʃumódəm/. In this sense, rhythmic stress is related to foot formation rules, and the basic Yiddish foot ŝw.

Generally, Yiddish is a stress-timed language. Very little work has been done on Yiddish intonation; noteworthy is Weinreich (1956) on the 'rise-fall' intonation contour used in specific functions. In this rise-fall intonation, pitch goes from low to high, followed by a sharp fall (L–H–L). The initial L– must begin on the last primary stress of a construction. The realization of the subsequent H–L appears to be based on considerations of foot structure. The functions of the rise-fall intonation include: dramatic (semantic) transition between phrases, signalling of an incredulous question, and echo questions. The rise-fall intonation possibly may be traced back to pre-Ashkenazic Talmudic chant. It is not found in an identical form in languages co-territorial with Yiddish. The rise-fall contour in the above-mentioned functions has receded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, during the period of 'westernization'.

Word Boundaries

In words which begin with a vowel, Yiddish has a glottal stop which is much weaker than its Standard German counterpart. It readily disappears in context: StYid. /an epl/ – > [anepl] 'an apple'; cf. StGer. *ein Apfel* [ʔain ʔapfəl]. The weak Yiddish [ʔ] may be part of a general tendency in Yiddish to weaken word-boundary distinctions, linked with other boundary-associated phenomena (e.g. no initial aspiration of /p, t, k/; widespread loss of final obstruent devoicing) (King 1990). Nevertheless, morpheme and word boundaries are evident in a number of phonological rules in Yiddish, e.g. post-tonic reduction and compound-stress rules.

Compounding

Yiddish has compounds with the 'Germanic-type' stress pattern ś̂w : /tógbùx/ 'diary' (< /tog/ [modifier] 'day' + /bux/ [head] 'book'), as well as with Hebrew/Aramaic-type' ẃŝ : /sèjfər-tójrə/ 'Torah scroll (lit. scroll of Torah)'. The latter type show Hebrew/Aramaic order of elements head–modifier. When two Hebrew/Aramaic origin words are compounded in Yiddish in modifier–head order, the stress pattern ś̂w obtains: StYid. /jəʃívə-bòxər/ 'Yeshiva lad' (vs HA /bɔ:hù:r-jəʃi:βɔ́:/) is fully integrated into the dominant Germanic compounding pattern. The Hebrew/Aramaic-type compounds like /sèjfər-tójrə/ show partial, phonologically based, morphological integration into the Germanic pattern: gender and number are determined by the final element (as opposed to the head) in both source languages, Hebrew and German (Jacobs 1991).

Relation to orthography

Yiddish is written in a modified form of the Aramaic alphabet used in the writing of all Jewish languages (including Hebrew) since approximately the middle of the first millennium BCE. It is written from right to left. Yiddish orthography is often called 'phonetic' – except for words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin, which are written in their traditional (Hebrew or Aramaic) spelling. The development of modern Yiddish orthography has entailed a number of innovations in the use of an alphabet used for writing Semitic languages (based on consonantal roots) for writing a Germanic language where vowels are part of the root. Thus, vowels (and diphthongs) are represented as an integral part of the line of the written word (rather than with diacritics, in Semitic fashion). The modern Yiddish independent vowel symbols are innovations based on the Hebrew symbols for glides [j] and [w], and two consonants which were lost (as consonants) in the pronunciation of Ashkenazic Hebrew: ע (ayin; historically, *pharyngeal fricative /ʕ/) and א (alef; historically, *glottal stop /ʔ/). By orthographic convention (reflecting earlier Semitic orthography), Yiddish words which begin with a vowel are written with initial silent alef, or by a vowel letter based on alef: אַ /a/, and אָ /o/ – except for initial /e/, written with ע. (ע is also used to represent the

Table 12.3 The Yiddish alphabet

Letter	IPA	Romanization	Letter	IPA	Romanization
א	—	—	ײַ	[aj]	ay
אַ	[a]	a	כ	[k]	k
אָ	[o]	o	כ (ך)	[x]	kh
ב	[b]	b	ל	[l]	l
ב	[v]	v	מ (ם)	[m]	m
ג	[g]	g	נ (ן)	[n]	n
ד	[d]	d	ס	[s]	s
ה	[h]	h	ע	[e], [ə]	e
ו	[u]	u	פ	[p]	p
וו	[v]	v	פ (ף)	[f]	f
וי	[oj]	oy	צ (ץ)	[ts]	ts
ז	[z]	z	ק	[k]	k
זש	[ʒ]	zh	ר	[r]	r
ח	[x]	kh	ש	[ʃ]	sh
ט	[t]	t	ש	[s]	s
י	[i], [j]	i, y	ת	[t]	t
יי	[ej]	ey	ת	[s]	s

Note: Word-final forms given in parentheses.

unstressed vowel, [ə]. The Yiddish alphabet is given in Table 12.3.

The current century has seen the emergence of two main standardized orthographic systems: that of the YIVO (and the CYSHO (Central Jewish School Organization) of Poland), presented in 1936, and the Soviet orthography, developed after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The two systems are similar; the main difference is that Soviet orthography eliminated etymological spelling for words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin as part of a de-hebraization movement. Thus, Yid. /ʃojmər/ 'guard' is spelled traditionally in the YIVO orthography: שומר, and phonetically in the Soviet orthography: שוימער. (Less successful was the Soviet attempt to do away with the traditional convention of using the word-final variants of five consonants: פ – ף (/f/); צ – ץ (/ts/); כ – ך (/x/); מ – ם (/m/); נ – ן (/n/). These have been largely reintroduced in recent decades.) In the case of /xojzək/ 'fun, mocking', false etymology has led to 'Hebrew' spelling: חוזק, based on the common model in, e.g. /ʃojmər/: שומר. Conversely, Hebrew/Aramaic origin words no longer identified as such are spelled phonetically: מעקן /mekn/ 'to erase' (cf. Hebrew root מחק √mḥq). The rest of this discussion will be based on the YIVO orthography.

Six letters of the Hebrew alphabet are only used with Hebrew and Aramaic

origin words: ת ת ש ב ח ב In each case, there has been phonetic merger with other sounds: מ ם ק כ ו. (The latter are used generally, as the basic representations in Yiddish.) Thus, Yiddish /sojnə/ 'enemy' is written in the YIVO system: שׂונא, while in the Soviet system it is written: בוינע

Yiddish consonant phonemes lacking an adequate corresponding single Hebrew letter are created through innovative combinations. Thus, the Yiddish affricate /c/ is represented by a single letter: צ, which was an affricate in Ashkenazic Hebrew (though fricative /ṣ/ in earlier Hebrew); Yid. /tʃ/ by טש (/t/ + /ʃ/), /ʒ/ by זש (/z + ʃ/), /ʤ/ by דזש (/d/ + /ʒ/).

In the YIVO system, the syllabicness of י when adjacent to another vowel is indicated by a dot underneath; thus: רוּיִק /ru $ ik/ 'peaceful' vs רויך /rojx/ 'smoke'. Sequences of ו (/v/) and ו (/u/) are disambiguated by a dot mid-level to the left of the vowel ו; thus וּוו /vu/ 'where', פּרוּוון /pruvn/ 'to attempt'.

The marginal phonemes palatalized /l^{j}/ and /n^{j}/ are not systematically indicated in Standard Yiddish orthography (though they are sometimes represented by לי, ני); thus: שפּילקע /ʃpil^{j}kə/ 'pin', באַנקע /ban^{j}kə/ 'cupping glass'.

The so-called 'phoneticness' of Standard Yiddish orthography is more a mixed (phonemic and morphophonemic) system. Morphophonemic voicing assimilations are not indicated: in /zog/ + /t/ 'say-s', /g/ – > [k] /____t, but is written זאָגט; similarly, /red/ + /t/ 'speak-s' is written רעדט. Consonant degemination (in non-compounds) is indicated: /hejs/ + /st/ – > הייסט '[you] are called' (= /hejs/ + /t/ – > הייסט 's/he is called'); thus also: /loz/ + /st/ – > לאָזט '[you] let', /zic/ + /st/ – > זיצט '[you] sit'.

In what follows, Yiddish forms will be referred to by means of the romanizations of Table 12.3.

12.3 Morphology

The Nominal Group

The Noun

Like German, Yiddish has a three-gender and two-number system. Gender is partially predictable from either the semantics or the ending of the noun. Thus words denoting males and females tend to be masculine (*rebe* 'rabbi'), feminine (*rebetsn* 'rabbi's wife'), respectively, and *-er* is associated with masculine (*fentster* 'window'), *-ik* with feminine (*gramatik* 'grammar'), and the diminutive suffixes *-l* and *-ele* with neuter (*hezl* < *hoz* 'hare'). In some cases the semantics and the ending may yield the same prediction, as with the feminizing suffix *-in* (*lererin* 'female teacher'), but they may be in conflict too, as with *meydl* 'girl' (diminutive from *moyd* 'maid'), which can be feminine or neuter. Gender differences between German and Yiddish cognates may result from variation in the ancestor Germanic dialects; Slavic

or Baltic influence (Yid. *klimat* (m.) 'climate' vs Ger. *Klima* (n.) but Pol. *klimat* (m.)); a different weighing of the semantics (Ger. *Mitglied* 'member' retains the neuter gender of *Glied* 'limb', but Yiddish *mitglid* has become masculine, even though it retained the neuter *glid*) or of the ending (Yid. *fentster* 'window' or *tsimer* 'room', both ending in *-er* and masculine, but Ger. *Fenster* and *Zimmer*, both neuter); or a syncretism between adjectival paradigms of different genders. The latter factor has been judged to be at work in the Northeastern dialects, where the loss of neuter gave rise to a complex two-gender system, with a feminine gender subdivided into three subgenders according to declensional differences in the adjectives and determiners.

Most Yiddish nouns can be singular or plural, much as in German, but with some small differences (e.g. Yiddish, different from German but like Polish, can pluralize *shney* 'snow' to refer to a large quantity of snow). There are two types of plural formation, Germanic vs Semitic. Germanic patterns involve the endings *-er* (*lider* 'songs') or *-(e)n* (*yorn* 'years'), vowel change (umlaut) (*tekhter* 'daughters' from *tokhter*), the combination of vowel change and *-er* (*beymer* 'trees' from *boym*), and in a few cases singular and plural are identical (*fraynt* 'friend(s)'). German and Yiddish do not always obey the same pluralization rule, primarily because Yiddish virtually lacks the *-e* plural (Ger. *Sohn-Söhne* 'sun(s)' vs Yid. *zun-zin*). There is also a Semitic-origin suffixation of *-im*, with or without other changes (*guf-gufim* 'body-bodies', *khaver* 'friend' – *khaveyrim* 'friends', *benyokhed* 'only son' – *bneyyekhidim* 'only sons'). Germanic patterns apply to many non-Germanic words, both Semitic (*sho* 'hour' – *shoen* 'hours') and Slavic (*sod-seder* – with umlaut – 'orchards'), and to a small extent Semitic *-im* is found on non-Semitic words (Yid. *nar-naronim* 'fool' vs Ger. *Narr-en*), sometimes with a pejorative ring (pejorative *profesoyrim* 'professors' next to neutral *profesorn* < *profesor*). Another Semitic plural ending is *-(e)s*. When written as ים, it only occurs on Semitic words (*khasene-s* 'wedding-s'), in which case there may be a vowel change as well (*dor* 'generation' – *doyres* 'generations'). But it can also be spelled as ס(ע) and then it attaches to Germanic words (*entfer-s* 'answers') as well as non-Semitic loans (*bobe-s* 'grandmother' < Slavic). The ס(ע) plural was often assumed to come from Romance, but is more plausibly seen as an extension of the ים plural to non-Semitic words. Though the plural is not phonologically predictable, regularities exist (nouns that end in *-er* and denote nationalities have a zero plural; feminine Semitic loans ending on ה get ות) and most productive are the suffixes *-(e)n* and *-(e)s*. A side effect of the synchronic productivity of the *-(e)s* rule is that English loans currently intruding in American Yiddish can keep their plurals (*sneks* 'snacks', *muvis* 'movies').

Yiddish has four cases: nominative, genitive, dative and accusative. They function more or less as in German, the biggest difference being that nearly all prepositions take the dative (except for *vi/mayse/betoyres* 'as' requiring the nominative). For the noun, case is of marginal relevance. Only

nouns referring to people that are intimate or familiar to the speaker, like one's father, aunt or rabbi, have any case endings, and then only in the singular. The ending is *-(e)n* for the dative and the accusative and *-(e)s* (exceptionally *-ns*) for the genitive, irrespective of gender. Singular proper names too, when familiar, attract these inflexions.

Diminutives are formed by adding the suffixes *-l* or *-ele* to either the stem as such (*tish/tishele* from *tish* 'table') or a variation of it (umlaut as in *gesl/gesele* from *gas* 'street', epenthetic *-kh-* as in *maylkhl/maylkhele* from *moyl* 'mouth'). The plural suffix is *-ekh*, added to the diminutivizer (*tishlekh/tishelekh*), occasionally also used for non-diminutives ending on *-l* (*shlislekh* from *shlisl* 'key'). In the case of nouns that pluralize with *-im* and in a few nouns with *-er* plurals, the plural diminutive contains both the ordinary pluralizer and the diminutive one, separated by the diminutivizer (*khokhem* 'smart person' – *khakhomim* 'smart persons', *khokheml* – *khakhomimlekh*). From Slavic, Yiddish has borrowed the diminutivizers *-inke*, *-shi*, and *-nju*, mostly used on proper names, kinship and body terms (*fusinke* from *fus* 'foot', *mamenju* from *mame* 'mama'). This borrowing of Slavic suffixes is a more general phenomenon. Thus at least some speakers employ the Slavic augmentative-pejorative suffixes *-atsh*, *-ak*, *-un*, *-uk*, and *-ets* (*yungatsh* 'rascal') or feminizers *-ke*, *-she*, and *-nitse* (*shnayderke* 'female tailor'). Compounds are generally made in Germanic attribute-head fashion (*folkslid* 'folk-song'), but Yiddish also exhibits compounds of Semitic type, with head-attribute order (*skhar-limed* 'tuition fee' lit. 'fee-tuition').

Pronouns

The paradigm of the personal pronoun (Table 12.4) is similar to that of German, except that, whereas German has a dative-accusative syncretism only for the first- and second-person plural, Yiddish has it for the third-

Table 12.4 Personal pronouns

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative
1 sg.	ikh	mikh	mir
2 sg. fam.	du	dikh	dir
2 sg. pol.	ir	aykh	aykh
3 sg. m.	er	im	im
f.	zi	zi	ir
n.	es	es	im*
1 pl.	mir	undz	undz
2 pl.	ir	aykh	aykh
3 pl.	zey	zey	zey

Note: *Whether this form actually occurs is doubtful.

Table 12.5 Other pronouns

	Nominative	Accusative	Genitive	Dative
Demonstrative				
Distal, sg. m.	yener	yenem	yenems	yenem
f.	yene	yene	yeners	yener
n.	yen(t)s	yen(t)s	——	yenem
pl.	yene	yene	——	yene
Interrogative, human ('who')	ver	vemen	vemens	vemen
Indefinite, human ('someone')	emetser	emetsn	emetsns	emetsn
'everyone', m.	yederer	yedern	yederns	yedern
f.	yedere	yedere	yederers	yederer
'no one'	keyner	keynem	keynems	keynem

person masculine singular and third-person plural too, and in the Northeastern dialects this syncretism, with the dative form spreading to accusative use, is found for all the pronouns. As in some German dialects the nominative of the first-person plural is the same as the dative of the first-person singular.

The forms *ikh* 'I', *du* 'you', and *es* 'it' may cliticize to preceding or following verbs, sometimes reflected in the orthography, as in *hostu im gezen* 'have you seen him' and *s'ken zayn* 'maybe' (lit. 'it can be'). Intensification of the type 'I myself' is done by adding the invariable *aleyn* 'alone', yielding *ikh aleyn*.

Other frequent inflecting pronouns are listed in Table 12.5. Nominative, dative and accusative endings are the same as those for articles and adjectives (see below, pp. 405–6), while the genitive *-s* is shared with the genitive of the nouns. As with the personal pronouns, Yiddish has more dative-accusative syncretism than German; for the masculine forms the syncretism is complete. In contrast to this general morphological simplicity of Yiddish *vis-à-vis* German, however, the complexity of the 'double *-er*-form' *yederer*, unparalleled in German, is remarkable.

The proximal demonstrative has the same paradigm as the definite article (see below, pp. 405–6) – except for an additional genitive in *-s* – but apart from the neuter forms, it does not seem to be used often, and when it is used it is generally (perhaps always) understood as 'that' rather than 'this'. As in German, the words for 'what' (*vos*), 'something' (*epes*) and 'nothing' (*gornit*) are invariable. There is no separate relative pronoun; one uses forms of the interrogative pronoun *ver*, the originally adjectival *velkher* 'which', or the invariable *vos* with or without a resumptive personal pronoun or possessive determiner. The reflexive pronoun only has the form *zikh*. Pronominal adverbs exist with *der* (*derunter* 'under it').

Table 12.6 Determiners and adjectives

		Masculine 'the good pupil'	*Feminine* 'the good door'	*Neuter* 'the good book'
Singular				
Nom.	Yid.	der guter shiler	di gute tir	dos gute bukh
	Ger.	der gute Schüler	die gute Tür	das gute Buch
Acc.	Yid.	dem gutn shiler	di gute tir	dos gute bukh
	Ger.	den guten Schüler	die gute Tür	das gute Buch
Dat.	Yid.	dem gutn shiler	der guter tir	dem gutn bukh
	Ger.	dem guten Schüler	der guten Tür	dem guten Buch
Plural				
Nom./Acc.	Yid.	di gute shilers/tirn/bikher		
	Ger.	die guten Schüler/Türen/Bücher		
Dat.	Yid.	di gute shilers/tirn/bikher		
	Ger.	den guten Schülern/Türen/Bücher		

Determiners and Adjectives

The types of endings found with determiners and adjectives are the same as those found with pronouns. The biggest difference is that none of the former has any separate genitive form; for that function the dative has to be used (*dem altn yidns bukh* lit. 'the (dat.) old (dat.) Jew (gen.) book (= 'the book of the old Jew')). Table 12.6 illustrates the definite article and the adjective, and it contrasts them with German.

The definite article is unstressed. When stressed it acquires a proximal demonstrative meaning 'this', which may be made explicit by adding the Slavic particles *ot* or *ot o* in front of the article or the adjective *dozik-* also meaning 'this' or clitic *-o* following it. Allomorphs for the adjectival dative-accusative *-n* are *-en*, for adjectives ending on a stressed vowel or diphthong, or *-em*, for adjectives ending on *-n* (cf. also the *-em* and *-en* in the pronominal *yenem*, *vemen*, and *keynem* in Table 12.5). In post-prepositional position, *dem* usually cliticizes to the preposition (*nokhn* < *nokh dem* 'after the', *inem* < *in dem* 'in the'), a reduction process which can lead to a zero article in the case of a preposition ending in *-n* (*in park* 'in the park') and which in the Northeastern dialects can affect the feminine *der* (*oyfn* < *oyf der*).

In the case of the definite article, Yiddish is again distinguished from German by the greater degree of syncretism (which is complete in the plural and in the dative and accusative masculine singular). As to the differences in adjectival inflection, from the German perspective the Yiddish adjectival paradigm is a mixture of so-called 'strong' endings (nom. m. sg. and dat. f. sg. *-er* and pl. *-e*), 'weak' endings (nom./acc. n. sg. *-e*) and endings which fit either system. If it were not for the nominative/accusative neuter singular *-e* and the greater syncretism, one could say that Yiddish has generalized the strong inflection. Interestingly, a strong neuter ending (in *-s*) is possible too,

but only when the adjective is predicative and preceded by the invariable indefinite article *a* (or *an* before a vowel), as in *dos bukh iz a guts* 'the book is a good (one)'. The neuter offers yet a third possibility: when the adjective following the indefinite article is used attributively, it either does not have any ending (nom./acc.) (*a gut bukh*) or the ending is optional (dat.) (*a gut(n) bukh*).

Both the inflection-diminishing effect of the indefinite article and the inflection extension of the predicative use are more general phenomena. Thus the determiner *ander* is sensitive to case and gender when preceded by the definite article: *der anderer shatkhn* 'the other matchmaker'. When preceded by the indefinite article, it is insensitive to case and gender e.g. *an ander shatkhn*, unless it is used predicatively: *er iz an anderer* 'he is another one'. The possessive determiners *mayn* 'my', *dayn* 'your', *zayn* 'his', *ir* 'her', *zayn* 'its', *undzer* 'our', *ayer* 'your', and *zeyer* 'their' are normally also insensitive to case and gender (*mayn/undzer shatkhn*), but not when used predicatively (*er iz mayner/undzerer*).

In the case of the possessives, there are two further uses that trigger inflection: (a) the attributive possessive is separated from the following noun by an indefinite article, as in *mayne a shvester*, yielding the special meaning 'a sister of mine'; and (b) the attributive possessive follows the noun, as in *der bankrot zeyerer* 'their bankruptcy'.

The synthetic comparative and superlative add *-er* and *-st*, respectively, to the stem or its umlaut version (*orem – oremer – oremst* 'poor'), but one also finds analytic forms with *mer* 'more' and Slavic *same* 'very'. Adjectives also have diminutive-like forms in *-lekh: kaltlekh* 'a little cold' from *kalt* 'cold'; and *-ink*, the latter conveying affection: *sheynink* 'lovingly pretty' from *sheyn* 'pretty'. Many adjectives can function as adverbs (*gut* 'well') or may turn into adverbs by the suffixes – *-erheyt* (*shtilerheyt* 'quietly'). Adverbs may also be formed from nouns, with the suffix *-vayz*, e.g. *masnvayz* 'massively', and there exist diminutive adverbs in *-lekh*: *shpetlekh* 'a bit late'.

The Verbal Group

Yiddish lacks the preterite and the subjunctive. Thus Yiddish verbs only have one synthetic paradigm, namely, the present indicative (*redn* 'speak': *red, redst, redt, redn, redt, redn*). There is little morphophonemic variation (as when the stem ends in *-s* and the second-person singular does not then add *-st* but only *-t*) and Yiddish has lost the distinction between strong and weak verbs as well as the distinction between singular modal verbs and their plurals and infinitives (Ger. *ich kann – wir können < können* 'can'; but Yid. *ikh ken – mir kenen < kenen*). Nearly all verbs are regular, exceptions being *zayn* 'be' and *hobn* 'have' and the *-t*-less third-person singular of the verbs *darfn* 'have to', *kenen* 'can, know', *megn* 'may', *muzn* 'must', *nit torn* 'not be permitted to', *zoln* 'should', as well as *veln* 'want' – *veln* is also used as the future auxiliary, but then it does have *-t* and it retains its vowel: *vil – vilst – vil – viln*

'want' vs *vel – vest – vet – veln* future auxiliary. Stems and second-person plurals also service the imperative.

As to non-finite forms, Yiddish has infinitives and both present and past participles. The infinitive is nearly always identical to the first- and third-person plural, with the exception of *gebn* 'give', *veln* 'want', *ton* 'do', *visn* 'know', whose present forms have different vowels (in all persons) (*ikh gib, du vilst, er tut, mir veysn*), and *geyn* 'go', *shteyn* 'stand', *zen* 'see', *zayn* 'be' (*mir geyen/shteyen/zeen/zaynen*). In the 'topicalization' construction (see section 12.4, Syntax), the infinitive has the shape of the finite verb stem followed by a syllabic *-n*. This is normally an ordinary infinitive, but we also find infinitives like *bin-en* and *izn*, both 'be'. The present participle is formed by adding *-ndik* to the stem, e.g. *shlofndik* 'sleeping'; though irregular infinitives have irregular present participles, e.g. *visndik* 'knowing'. The past participle is formed by prefixing the stem with *ge-* and suffixing it with *-t* (*geshikt* 'sent' < *shikn*), though many Germanic strong verbs follow the *ge-*stem-*(e)n* pattern, often with a vowel change (*gekumen* 'come' < *kumen*; *gekrogn* 'received' < *krign*). *ge-* is absent when the stem starts with an unstressed prefix (*gefunen* 'found' < *gefinen*) or ends with a stressed *-ir* suffix (*pasirt* 'happened' < *pasirn*).

The past tense is formed by *hobn* or *zayn* and the past participle, with *zayn* reserved for some intransitive *-(e)n* participles (*er hot geshribn* 'he wrote', *mir zaynen geblibn* 'we remained') and one also finds pluperfect with the participle of the main verb preceded by both a finite form of *hobn* or *zayn* and *gehat*, e.g. *er hot gehat geshribn* 'he had written'. The passive is formed by the auxiliary *vern* 'become' and the past participle; the future by the auxiliary *veln* and the infinitive; and the conditional takes the auxiliary *voltn* followed by either the past participle or (less often) the infinitive.

As in German, Yiddish verbs may contain prefixes, which if stressed and if the verb is finite, occur as separate words (particles) following the finite verb, e.g. *ikh heyb on* 'I start', *ikh vil onheybn* 'I want to start'. Under the influence of contiguous Slavic languages, which abound in verbal prefixes and assign them a central role in their verbal aspect systems, many of the Germanic prefixes of Yiddish greatly extended and changed their uses: thus *on-*, though the cognate of German *an-*, is the analogue of Slavic *na-*, in that it can express that the object of the verb is made in larger quantities, e.g. *onbakn* 'bake an accumulation of'.

12.4 Syntax

(Eastern) Yiddish syntax differs in a number of interesting respects from the syntax of other Germanic languages. Due to limitations of space, we shall discuss primarily those aspects where there is a significant difference, especially between Yiddish and its closest relative, German.

The Nominal Group

The [NP NP] Construction

One noteworthy feature of the nominal group is that adjectival modifiers, which may occur prenominally (*a sheyn meydl* 'a pretty girl', *di grine oygn* 'the green eyes', *mayn mishpokhe* 'my family') may also occur postnominally in an NP–NP structure: *a meydl a sheyne, di oygn di grine, di mishpokhe mayne*. (Interestingly, Semitic has such a construction.)

Not surprisingly, any noun phrase may in fact occur in second position, whether it includes an adjective or not, so long as it can be understood predicatively: *eyner a yid* 'one (who is) a Jew/guy', *a yid a melamed* 'a Jew/guy (who is) a teacher', *a melamed a kabstn* 'a teacher (who is) a pauper'. Note that the noun phrases may be iterated: *eyner a yid a melamed* 'one (who is a) Jew/guy (who is) a teacher'.

Anaphora

In Yiddish, noun phrases representing salient entities may sometimes be deleted/suppressed, although the exact discourse conditions are not entirely clear. Note that the suppression of subjects ('Subject pro-drop') behaves differently from the suppression of objects ('Object pro-drop').

Subject Pro-drop

In colloquial Standard Yiddish, salient main clause initial subjects can be deleted: Q: *vu iz der mentsh?* A: *Ø iz in shtub* 'where is the person? (he) is in the house'. Far less common, but equally grammatical, is the deletion of salient non-initial subjects and of salient subordinate clause subjects: *Efsher volst Ø mir gekent layen a finf rubl* 'maybe (you) could loan me about five roubles' and *shpring nit, vorem Ø vest araynfaln un Ø vest zikh tsebrekhn ruk un hent* 'don't jump, because (you) will fall in and (you) will break your neck', respectively. Note that the trace of the deleted initial subject suffices to fill Initial field (see below, p. 412).

Object Pro-drop

In contrast, all varieties of Standard Yiddish, formal as well as colloquial, manifest Object pro-drop. The inferred object may have specific reference: *hot er aroysgenumen fun keshene naynhundert nayn un nayntsik rubl un hot avekgevorfn Ø oyf der erd* 'so he took out 999 rubles from his pocket and threw (them) away on the ground'. Object pro-drop occurs freely in subordinate clauses: *zogt der politsmeyster, az, ven der rov farshteyt daytsh, vet er oykh farshteyn Ø* 'so the police sergeant says that, if the rabbi understands German, he'll also understand (it)'. Finally, both Subject pro-drop and Object pro-drop may occur in a single clause: *'ikh hob im oysgegebn, vos zol ikh ton?' Vert er in kas: 'Ø Host oysgegebn Ø? In eyn tog a gantsn rubl?'* '"I've spent it, what should I do?" So he gets angry: "(You) spent [it]? In a single day a whole ruble?"'

The Verbal Group

Tense

Yiddish, like Slavic, lacks sequence of tenses. That is, just as the reference time of the main clause is the time of the utterance, the reference time of a subordinate clause is the time of the clause in which it is embedded, with no sequence of tense modifications: *an oyrekh iz amol gezesn ban a balebos un hot gevart, biz me vet derlangen esn* 'a guest once sat in a gentleman's house and waited until they served (lit. will serve) the food'.

Periphrastic Verbs

Yiddish has a productive means for forming periphrastic verbs: a semantically weak auxiliary verb plus a nominal complement. In one type, the nominal is a nominalized verb, the standard nominalization being the zero affix on the verb stem; such periphrastic verbs are markedly perfective in meaning: *a kuk gebn* 'look', *a loz ton* 'let', *a freg ton* 'ask'. In the other major type, the nominal is a Semitic borrowing (often a passive form of the Hebrew verb) and the auxiliary verb is typically, though not necessarily, *zayn* 'be': *mekane zayn* 'envy', *khasene makhn* 'marry off', *nifter vern* 'die'.

Interestingly, in many dialects, if the periphrastic verb is transitive, it is conjugated in the present perfect with *hobn* 'have' even if its auxiliary verb is *zayn* 'be', which otherwise would be conjugated with *zayn*: *me hot im mekaber geven* 'one (has) buried him'. The syntax of periphrastic verbs is basically that of the verb + separable prefix.

Zayn-*deletion in Vos*-clauses

Finite forms of *zayn* 'be' may be gapped in all types of *vos*-clauses: *der doyerkayt, vos efsher Ø zey bashert* 'the posterity that (is) perhaps destined to them'; *vos Ø geven iz geven* 'what was (lit. been) was'.

Grammatical Relations: The Passive and Related Constructions

Yiddish lacks the 'impersonal passive' of German, often using instead an active form with *men* 'one' as subject: *ven men darf hobn moyekh, helft nit keyn koyekh* 'when brains are needed, brawn won't help', or else an active form of the verb with a reflexive pronoun and with the Patient as subject: *es brot zikh a katshke* 'a duck is being roasted'.

Unmarked Word Order

Yiddish is generally taken to be SVO, like English and the Scandinavian languages, with the added constraint that the finite verb is in second position in the clause (V2), as in all other Germanic languages except English. More unusual is the fact that, in Yiddish, verb-second applies categorically in subordinate as well as in main clauses. We shall look more closely at these generalizations by considering separately the different clause-types of Yiddish–declarative, imperative, and interrogative.

Declaratives

Declarative clauses include some main clauses and basically all subordinate clauses and are the most straightforward examples of both SVO word order and verb-second. On the surface, however, Yiddish appears to have two types of declaratives, those with clear SVO word order and verb-second and those that appear to be VSO without verb-second. We shall consider each of them and try to show that all may be subsumed under SVO with verb-second.

That Yiddish is SVO is shown in: *ikh hob gezen mitvokh, az ikh vel nit kenen kumen donershtik* 'I saw on Wednesday that I wouldn't be able to come on Thursday'; that it obeys verb-second in both main and subordinate clauses can be seen in: *mitvokh hob ikh gezen, az donershtik vel ikh nit kenen kumen* 'on Wednesday I saw that on Thursday I wouldn't be able to come', cf. **Mitvokh ikh hob ...*, **... az donershtik ikh vel ...*

In addition to such canonical declaratives, Yiddish has 'Consecutive' declaratives, with an apparent VSO word order: *az a moyz falt arayn in a top milkh, varft men arayn in top a kats, un di kats frest op di moyz, ratevet men di milkh* 'when a mouse falls into a pot of milk, you throw a cat into the pot and the cat eats up the mouse, so one saves the milk'; *a telegram darf men shraybn kurts un sharf. Ot gib a kuk, ikh vel shraybn, vest du zen* 'a telegram you have to write short and to the point. Look here, I'll write it, so you'll see'. Such clauses necessarily follow some other clause and convey the understanding that the proposition they represent somehow follows from or is caused by the proposition represented by the preceding clause. They may not occur in subordinate clauses, nor may they be preceded by a conjunction: **ikh vel shraybn, ikh meyn (az) vest du zen* (lit.) 'I will write, I think (that) will you see'; **Ikh vel shraybn un vest du zen* (lit.) 'I will write and will you see'.

One way to account for the syntactic facts that such clauses may not be discourse-initial and may neither be embedded nor follow a conjunction is to say that these clauses are in fact SVO and verb-second, Initial field being filled, at some level, by the preceding clause. This would also account for the fact that Consecutive declaratives may undergo VP-deletion but not Gapping. Consider: *zi geyt arayn un er (geyt) aroys* 'she goes in and he goes out' (as two independent events); *zi geyt arayn, *(geyt) er aroys* 'she goes in, so he goes out'. In the first, we have a conjunction of two canonical clauses with the same verb and with the understanding of two independent events, and Gapping is possible. In the second, however, the second clause is a Consecutive clause, with the understanding that the event in this clause follows from, or is caused by, the event in the first clause, and with this understanding, Gapping is not possible. Likewise, Gapping is impossible where there is an initial subordinate clause: *az zi geyt arayn, *(geyt) er aroys* 'when she goes in, he *(goes) out'. If we say that the clause preceding a Consecutive declarative is in initial position, then the facts in the case of Consecutive declaratives are the same as the facts of this last example.

Similarly, consider: *zi geyt arayn un er vil (arayngeyn) oykh* (as two

independent states) 'she goes in and he wants to (go in) also', where we have two conjoined clauses with the same verb phrase and where VP-deletion is possible. Likewise, where we have a Consecutive declarative following a clause with the same verb phrase, VP-deletion is also possible: *zi geyt arayn, vil er* (*arayngeyn*) *oykh* (as cause–effect) 'she goes in, so he wants to (go in) also'. Now consider: *az zi geyt arayn, vil er* (*arayngeyn*) *oykh* 'when she goes in, he wants to (go in) also', where we see that VP-deletion is also possible in a main clause when there is an identical verb phrase in an initial subordinate clause.

OV Relics

While basically SVO, Yiddish shows significant relics of an earlier SOV order: the syntax of the passive, of periphrastic verbs, and of separable prefixes, and clitic floating/climbing.

In the passive, the past participle of the main verb categorically precedes the past participle of the auxiliary verb: *di shtub iz opgebrent gevorn/*gevorn opgebrent* 'the house was burned down'.

Likewise, periphrastic verbs tend to have OV order, categorically when the verb-complement semantics is not transparent: *ven ikh hob khasene gehat/ *?gehat khasene, hob ikh gehat a groyse khasene* 'when I got married, I had a big wedding', *er vet maskim zayn/*zayn maskim* 'he will agree'.

Similarly, separable prefixes precede their verb, unless of course the verb has been moved to second position by verb-second: *er hot zikh ongeton/ *geton on* 'he got dressed'; *ir darft mikh oyfvekn/*vekn oyf* 'you must wake me up'.

Finally, Floating and Climbing are possible relics of an earlier OV order. In Floating, constituents in the verb phrase may cliticize on to the finite verb; in Climbing, constituents in an embedded infinitival clause may cliticize on to the (matrix) finite verb. In both cases, the displaced constituents may of course wind up preceding the verb which governs them. They may be pronouns: *mayn shviger hot **zikh** okorsht oyfgehongen* 'my mother-in-law just hanged **herself**' (Floating); prepositional phrases containing pronouns: *ir megt zikh **oyf mir** farlozn* 'you can depend **on me**' (Climbing); full noun phrases: *ober dos hot **dem rebn zaynem** shtark fardrosn* 'but this annoyed **his rabbi** a lot' (Floating); prepositional phrases containing full noun phrases: *eynmol iz **tsum rebn** gekumen a yidene* 'once an old bag came **to the rabbi**' (Floating); adverbials: *zey zenen **dortn** geleygn ban im in shtub* 'they were lying **there** in his house' (Floating); and miscellaneous particles: *me ken **dokh nokh, khas vesholem,** trefn imetsn in oyg!* '**After all**, one could, **God forbid**, hit someone in the eye' (Climbing). Note that such Climbing may occur not only out of bare infinitival phrases, as above, but also out of infinitival *tsu*-clauses: *ikh hob **aykh** fargesn tsu zogn* 'I forgot to tell **you**', and infinitival *wh*-clauses: *vos iz **zikh** do faran far vos tsu shemen?* 'what is there here to be ashamed of?' (lit. '... for which to shame **oneself**?').

Initial Field: Further Comments

Given an analysis whereby Consecutive declaratives have the preceding clause in Initial field, we can make the generalization that all declarative clauses in Yiddish are SVO and verb-second, at some level at least, and that Initial field is obligatorily filled. The default filler is the subject, whether it originates here or not, but just about any constituent may be moved into Initial Field by topicalization, to be discussed below.

If neither the subject nor a topicalized constituent occupies Initial field, then expletive *es* 'it' fills it. This expletive is merely a place-holder and not a dummy subject: *es iz mir kalt un nas* 'I'm cold and wet', *mir iz* (**es*) *kalt un nas*; *es regnt shoyn a gantsn tog, iz* (**es*) *mir kalt un nas* 'It's been raining all day so far, so I'm cold and wet'. Here we have a subjectless predicate, where the experiencer occurs in the dative case. In the first example, a canonical declarative where nothing has been topicalized, an expletive fills Initial field. In the second, the dative noun phrase has been topicalized and no expletive is possible. Likewise, in the third, a Consecutive declarative, the preceding clause fills Initial field (at some level) and no expletive is possible. We find the same expletive in canonical declaratives where the subject has been postposed and nothing has been topicalized: *es iz faran a goldshmid Roznblat in Moskve, ober ba undz in Varshe iz* (**es*) *faran a goldshmid Roznstsvayg* 'there's a goldsmith Rosenblatt in Moscow, but at home in Warsaw there's a goldsmith Rosenzweig'.

Imperatives

Imperatives are, not surprisingly, verb-initial clauses: *gib mir epes tsum esn* 'give me something to eat', *lozt aykh got helfn* 'let God help you'. The imperative verb occurs in first position, Initial field being empty or non-existent, with no subject expressed, and with the same sort of floating/climbing found in declarative clauses. Thus it seems that, whatever position the finite verb moves to (or occurs in, regardless of how it got there) in declarative clauses, it moves to (or occurs in) the same position in imperatives, the only difference being the lack of an Initial field. However, the subject *may* be expressed, especially when it is contrastive: *gey du arayn, un ikh vel vartn* 'go in and I'll wait' (= 'You go in and I'll wait'), *der zogt: 'Nemt ir, Reb Yankl,' un yener zogt: 'Nemt ir, Reb Yitskhok'* 'one says, "You take [it], Mr Jake", and the other says, "You take (it), Mr Isaac"'.

It should be noted that, in spite of what has just been said, we do find apparent verb-second imperatives, that is, imperatives with a filled Initial field. This position may be filled by the subject: *du nem un loyf, un ikh vel mir geyn pamelekh* 'you start running and I'll walk slowly'; by a topicalized constituent: *dernokh gey dervayz, az du bist nit keyn ber!* 'then go and prove that you're not a bear!'; or by a particle: *to kush mikh nit in kop* 'then don't kiss me on the head'. Note that, as in the case of the expressed post-verbal subjects above, the initial material in such imperatives is often, though not

necessarily, contrastive. In any event, one must acknowledge that there does appear to be a possible Initial field in imperatives. However, as we shall see in the case of interrogatives, this position may be outside the clause entirely, in which case all imperatives would be verb-initial.

In addition, Yiddish has a double imperative, where one imperative immediately follows the other and is its complement. The first imperative is typically a verb of coming or going: *gey red tsun im* 'go talk to him'; *kumt est* 'come eat'.

Finally, Yiddish has a letive construction etymologically related to *lozn* 'let', but with the frozen form *lomir* 'let us', followed by the infinitive. Like other imperatives, it is canonically verb-initial: *lomir shmusn* 'let's chat', triggers climbing: *lomir zikh eyn eyntsikn mol iberton di kleyder* 'let's just once exchange clothing', and can be preceded by particles: *ot lomir prubirn a freg ton dem ershtn yidn vos mir veln trefn* 'let's just try to ask the first guy we meet'.

Interrogatives

Interrogatives can occur, in somewhat different forms, in main clauses, i.e. as direct questions; and in subordinate clauses, i.e. as indirect questions. We shall discuss only main-clause interrogatives in this section and deal with subordinate clause interrogatives when we deal with subordination below (pp. 415–7).

Yiddish main-clause interrogatives (i.e. direct questions) are generally, as would be expected, verb-initial clauses (on the assumption that the initial question word is in the complementizer position rather than in the clause proper): *bist du meshuge?* 'are you crazy?'; *vu-zhe iz di tsveyte polke?* 'where on earth is the second drumstick?' As is the case with imperatives, interrogatives may be preceded by a topicalized element or a particle. However, if an interrogative complementizer is present, the topicalized element or particle precedes it, indicating that the clause is in fact verb-initial: *to far vos geyst du on hoyzn?* 'so why are you walking around without pants?, **far vos to geyst du on hoyzn?* On the whole, *wh*-Movement is possible out of subordinate clauses, sometimes with a verb-initial word order resulting in the subordinate clause: *vos meynt ir hot men derlangt tsum tish?* 'what do you think they served?' (lit. '... have they ...').

One noteworthy feature is that Yiddish has an optional overt complementizer for main clause yes/no interrogatives, *tsi* 'if, whether; or': *tsi zogst du mir ersht itst?* 'are you telling me now for the first time?' A minor point, which may be lexical rather than syntactic, is the occurrence of *vos* 'what' for *tsu vos* 'why; for what purpose'; *vos darf ikh a vayb?* 'what do I need a wife (for)?', *vos zol ikh dir plutsim gebn tsen kopikes?* 'what should I give you ten kopeks (for) all of a sudden?'

In addition, note that Yiddish has a *vos–far* split, analogous to German: *vos far a yontev iz dos?/vos iz dos far a yontev?* 'what kind of holiday is this?'

Finally, like many languages of Eastern Europe, Yiddish has multiple *wh*-fronting, about which very little is known: *hot zi nit gekent farshteyn ver mit vemen es shlogt zikh* 'so she couldn't understand who was fighting with whom'.

Marked Word Orders

Topicalization

Topicalization is very frequent in Yiddish, with just about any constituent being topicalizable, island effects aside. (By *island effects*, I mean the well-known effects of the constraints against moving constituents out of certain complex configurations, e.g. sentential subjects, relative clauses, however those constraints and effects are to be described.) One particularly noteworthy construction is Finite Verb Topicalization, where the stem of the finite verb is copied into Initial field with an infinitive ending affixed: *izn iz er a soykher un handlen handlt er mit tvue* 'as for what he is (lit. 'is' + inf.), he's a merchant, and, as for what he deals in (lit. 'deal' + inf.), he deals in grain'.

Subject Postposing

As noted above, subjects occur in Initial field (canonically) or in Middle field if Initial field is occupied by some other constituent or if the clause is a Consecutive declarative or verb-initial. In addition, subjects may be post-posed to the end of the verb phrase, Final field. If the clause is verb-second and if nothing is topicalized, dummy *es* occupies Initial field: *es iz geshtorbn a raykher goy* 'a rich gentile died', *es hobn breges oykh di yamen* '(even) the seas have their shorelines/limits'. The dummy noun phrase does not occur if the clause is (real or apparent) verb-initial: *der reboyney-shel-oylem hot derhert azelkhe diburim fun Moyshen, iz* (**es*) *im ayngefaln dos harts* 'the Lord heard such words from Moses, his heart sank'; or if something is topicalized: *er zol oysrufn, az ba im iz* (**es*) *farfaln gevorn a tsig* 'he should announce that a goat of his got lost'.

Prepositional phrases may and clauses must be extraposed beyond the postposed subject: *amol iz gekumen a yid fun a yor zibetsik tsum rov* 'once a guy of about 70 came to the rabbi', *tsum shenstn balebos fun shtot iz gekumen a shadkhn, redn a shidekh dem balebos' tokhter* 'to the finest gentleman in town came a matchmaker to arrange a marriage for the gentleman's daughter'.

Note that this construction is limited neither to 'presentational' verbs nor to indefinite subjects nor to intransitives, its felicitous occurrence constrained only by the discourse condition that the subject does not represent an entity already salient in the discourse model.

Existential Sentences

Canonical existential sentences consist of expletive *es* 'it' in Initial field, some

form of the verb *zayn* 'be', the particle *do* (lit.) 'here' or *faran* (lit.) 'available' in Middle field, and the subject postposed to Final field: *es zenen faran oyf der velt gazlonim* 'there are robbers in the world', *es iz do nokh a kleyner khesorn* 'there's one more little flaw'. Of course, if the clause is a Consecutive declarative or if something is topicalized to Initial field, the expletive does not occur: *keyn gresere aveyre iz* (**es*) *gor nito* (< *nit do* lit.'not here') 'there is no bigger sin'; *in di vagones tsveyte klas zenen* (**es*) *dortn do shpiglen* 'in second-class trains there are mirrors there'. Notice, in this last example, that the occurrence of *dortn* 'there' shows that *do* truly lacks its literal sense 'here' in this construction. Finally, if the sentence is in the past tense, *do/faran* do not occur: *in a shtetl iz* (**faran*) *geven a gvir* 'in a village there was a rich man'.

Dos-*sentences*
Yiddish has a construction wherein Initial field is filled by the expletive *dos* 'this', the subject occurring in Middle Field, and the understanding being that of the English *it*-cleft: *dos hot a folk tsvishn falndike vent dos lid gezungen mit naganes in di hent* 'it's a people between crumbling walls that sang this song with revolvers in their hand'.

Subordination

Verb Complements
Other than with modals or aspectuals, Yiddish has very few infinitival complements and no Raising: *dakht zikh, az du host khatoim nit veyniker fun andere!* 'you seem to have no fewer sins than the others' (lit. (It) seems (that) you . . .'). The usual complementizer for finite verb complements is *az* 'that', which may be deleted; however, factives typically take *vos* (lit.) 'what': *iz der zun shoyn gevorn gor in kas, vos er darf altsding tsvey mol iberzogn* 'so the son got angry that he had to repeat everything twice'.

wh-*clauses*
There are the usual types of subordinate *wh*-clauses: indirect questions, free relatives and headed relatives. There is no preposition stranding, regardless of the type of clause or the complementizer used, all prepositions being fronted with their object noun phrases.

Indirect Questions/Free Relatives

Indirect questions/free relatives are syntactically identical; both are SVO clauses: *zol ikh nit visn fun beyz, vi ikh veys, fun vos di gvirim hobn aza hanoe!* 'I'll be damned if I know what rich men have such pleasure from!'; *git a kuk, vos di ganovim hobn gemakht* 'take a look at what the thieves have done'.

Like other subordinate clauses, indirect questions/free relatives are also verb-second, the finite verb being in second position even when some constituent other than the subject has been topicalized into initial position: *ir veyst efsher, avu do voynt Roznblat der goldshmid?* (lit.) 'you know perhaps where here lives Rosenblatt the goldsmith?'; *der yid zet, vi nokh dem oyrekh shlept zikh nokh a yungerman* 'the guy sees how behind the guest another young man has tagged along'.

Interestingly, when the subject has been extracted and when nothing has been topicalized, the dummy place-holder *es* 'it' must fill Initial field: *fregt der strazhnik dem yidn, ver es/*Ø iz mit im geven in tsimer* 'so the police officer asks the Jew who was with him in the room'; *ver es/*Ø vet trefn dem ber zol im hargenen* 'whoever finds the bear should kill it'.

Finally, Yiddish has infinitival indirect questions: *me hot nit gevust, vos tsu makhn* 'they didn't know what to do'. However, in contrast to English, Yiddish has infinitival free relatives as well: *zi hot nit vos tsu esn* 'she doesn't have anything (lit. what) to eat'.

Headed Relatives

Headed relative clauses are of two types, the expected gap-containing variety and those containing resumptive pronouns. The former are largely unexceptional within Germanic, except that they of course obey verb-second, as do all declarative clauses in Yiddish. They may have inflected relative pronouns: *arum 800 etiopishe yidn, velkhe zaynen geblibn shtekn in Sudan* 'about 800 Ethiopian Jews who (pl.) have remained in the Sudan'; *dem zelbikn hunderter, velkhn er git im* 'the same hundred dollar bill which (acc. m. sg.) he gives him'. Or they may have a more or less invariant complementizer: *yidn, vos shpiln in kortn* 'Jews (m. pl.) that play cards'; *di mayse, vos ikh vel aykh dertseyln* 'the story (f. sg.) that I'll tell you'. Note that, if a subject is relativized with nothing topicalized, we find a gap rather than a dummy noun phrase in Initial field, in contrast to the situation in free relatives/indirect questions.

Resumptive pronoun relative clauses are fully grammatical in Standard Yiddish (though those with a relativized subject predominate in the colloquial language). They occur only with the invariant complementizer *vos*, and the resumptive pronoun may occur in any position: *a yidene, vos zi/Ø hot geheysn Yente* 'an old hag that (she/Ø) was named Yenta'; *a melamed, vos es iz im/*?Ø zeyer shlekht gegangen* 'a teacher that (he/*?Ø) was very bad off'; *a shmole kladke, vos me hot kam gekent geyn oyf ir* 'a narrow footbridge that you could barely walk on (lit.)'. In fact, resumptive pronouns are strongly preferred to

gaps when the relativized item is the dative Experiencer, as in the second example, and they are at least as frequent as gaps when the relativized item is the object of a preposition, as in the last example. In environments where a gap is as grammatical as a resumptive pronoun, the resumptive pronoun tends to occur either in non-restrictive relatives or, if in restrictives, where the head noun is indefinite, i.e. when the discourse entity evoked by the whole noun phrase is evoked by the noun phrase alone, the relative clause serving merely to predicate additional properties of that entity.

Negation

Yiddish has, like Bavarian German and Slavic, Negative Concord, whereby all non-referring arguments in a negative clause are negated: *keyner darf zikh keynmol nit ayln* 'no one should ever hurry' (lit. 'no one shouldn't ever not hurry'). Thus, an ambiguity that obtains in English, for example, with respect to specific vs non-specific indefinites does not obtain in Yiddish negative clauses: *er vil nit khasene hobn mit a/keyn norveger* 'he doesn't want to marry a certain/any Norwegian'. Note that negative concord distinguishes true arguments from complements of periphrastic verbs: *er hot nit khasene gehat* 'he didn't get married'; *er hot nit keyn khasene gehat* 'he didn't have a wedding'; *er hot khasene gehat, ober er hot nit gehat keyn (emese) khasene* 'he got married but he didn't have a (real) wedding'.

12.5 Lexis

The lexicon of modern Yiddish is predominantly Germanic, secondarily Semitic, and then Slavic, with percentage estimates going from 70–20–10 per cent to 85–12–3 per cent. Some Yiddishists insist on the importance of a Romance component, as in *leyenen* 'read' (Lat. *legere*) or *bentshn* 'bless' (Lat. *benedicere*), as a reflection of the fact that some Jews that settled in Germany must have spoken a form of Romance, but this component is minimal. For any piece of discourse, the actual proportion of Germanic, Semitic and Slavic depends in part on the topic of the discourse, with some matters of religion and Jewish culture being associated with a more heavily Semiticized Yiddish. The other factor is the provenance and background of the speaker. Thus Slavicisms tend to occur more in the speech of Slavic–Yiddish bilinguals. For many words with a Hebrew or Slavic origin, there is no obvious reason why it supplanted the native Germanic word (thus 'sea' is *yam* < HA and 'lake' is *ozere* < Slav. and neither Ger. *See* nor *Meer* have a Yiddish cognate). Despite the overall Germanic nature of the vocabulary, many of the common words are non-Germanic, e.g. the family names *tate* 'father', *zeyde* 'grandfather', and *bobe* 'grandmother', all from Slavic; and function words such as *tsi* 'whether' or *khotsh* 'although' from Slavic, and *tomer* 'if', *efsher* 'possibly', *afile* 'even', and *beys* 'while' from Semitic. Though the Germanic component of Yiddish is largely comprehensible by

speakers of German, identifying a word as Germanic does not always mean that it has a German cognate or meaning. Sometimes Yiddish continues older Germanic words or meanings, e.g. *haint* 'today' < OHG *hînaht*, vs Ger. *heute*; *feter* retains the old 'uncle' meaning, different from Ger. *Vetter* 'cousin'; or makes new ones, e.g. *Ratnfarband* 'Soviet Union' vs Ger. *Sowjet union*, Yid. *yortsayt* developed the meaning 'anniversary of death', vs Ger. *Jahreszeit* 'season'. Words may furthermore 'look' Germanic but be Yiddishized borrowings ('loanblends'): *hargenen* 'kill' < Hebrew; or loan translations (calques): *oysgehaltn* 'consistent', cf. Russian *vyderžannyj* lit. 'out-held'. When one concept can be expressed by two words of different stocks, there is often a nuance of the Semitic stock word pertaining more exclusively to Jews; thus Germanic stock *aroysred* means 'pronunciation', but for the pronunciation of Hebrew Semitic stock *havore* is used.

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