LANGUAGE PROFILE 13

Akkadian

13.1 Historical background

Akkadian is a Semitic language that is no longer spoken, but which is related to the living Semitic languages Arabic, Amharic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Akkadian is one of the earliest attested languages, surpassed in this respect only by Sumerian and Ancient Egyptian. It was spoken in ancient Mesopotamia (a term which refers to the land "between the rivers," or between the Euphrates and the Tigris), in an area roughly corresponding to today's Iraq.

The first written records in Akkadian date from around 2500 BC, and the language continued to be spoken until around 500 BC, when it was displaced by Aramaic. Nevertheless, texts in Akkadian continued to be written for several more centuries. The Akkadian language thus has a written history spanning more than two thousand years, almost twice as long as that of English. During this period, the language underwent considerable changes. However, some of the basic traits of its grammar, such as the remarkable root-and-template architecture of the verbal system, which we shall explore in more detail below, have characterized Akkadian throughout its history.

The name of the language derives from the city of *Akkade* which was founded in the twenty-third century BC as the imperial capital of the first "world conqueror," King Sargon. After 2000 BC, Akkadian diverged into two main varieties: Babylonian, which was spoken in the south of Mesopotamia in an area dominated by the city of Babylon (today south of Baghdad), and Assyrian, which was spoken in the north. The Babylonians and Assyrians dominated the political and cultural horizon of the Ancient Near East up until the sixth century BC. Their political dominance may have waxed and waned, but for a good part of 2,000 years, Mesopotamian emperors would rule over "the four corners" (of the earth). From Sargon in the third millennium BC to Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar in the first, these emperors would lay claim to the title "King of the Universe." More stable than the power of the sword, however, was the cultural hegemony of Mesopotamia over the whole region. The Akkadian language shaped the dominant canon for much of the Near East in terms of religion, the arts, science, and

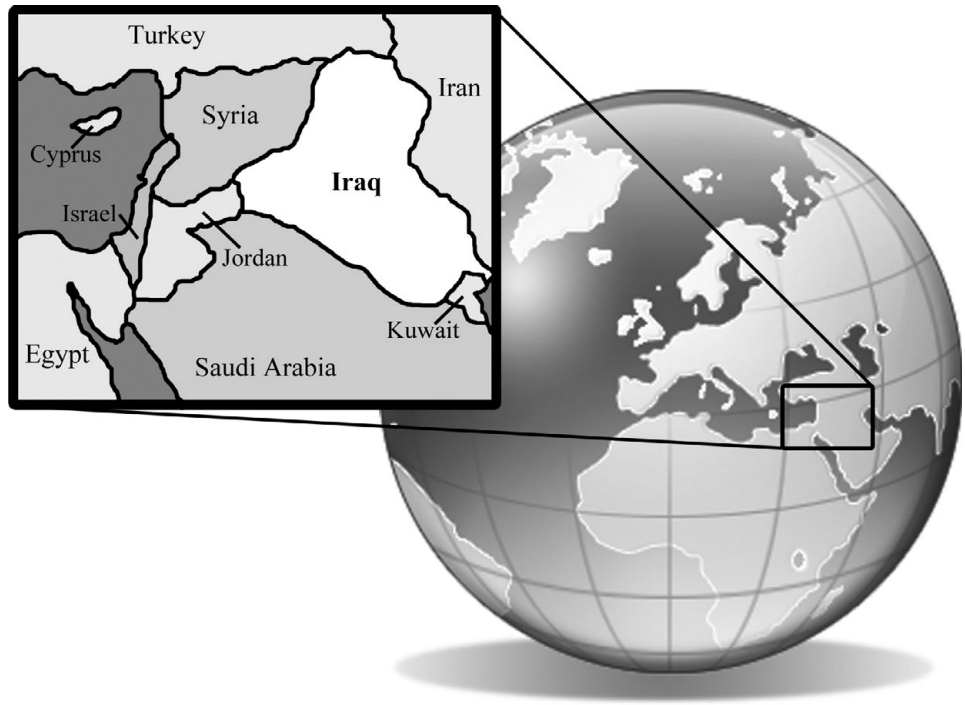


Figure LP13.1 Map of Mesopotamia

law. And the **cuneiform** ('wedge-shaped') writing system, which Akkadian speakers had originally borrowed from their Sumerian neighbors, was exported far and wide, and adapted as the script of many diverse languages, from Hittite to Elamite, and from Hurrian to Ancient Persian. Akkadian itself was used as a **lingua franca** throughout the Near East, and was the means of diplomatic correspondence. Languages across the Near East also borrowed many scientific and cultural terms from Akkadian, a few of which may even be recognized by English speakers today. For instance, the first word in the Jewish expression *mazel tov* ('luck good' in Hebrew) is a borrowing from the Akkadian astrological term *mazzaltu*, which meant the position of a star in the sky.

After millennia of cultural supremacy, however, Assyria was defeated and Babylon soon followed suit, finally finished off by the Persians. The sixth century BC ushered in an age of rapid decline, so that within a few centuries both the Akkadian language and its writing system fell into oblivion. Hundreds of thousands of clay tablets, the product of 2,000 years of civilization, lay forgotten in the desert sands for two more millennia, to be rediscovered and deciphered only in the nineteenth century. Since then, an incredible wealth of texts has been recovered from the soil of Iraq and neighboring countries and has opened up a unique perspective into one of history's greatest civilizations. The texts encompass many genres, including poetry (such as the Epic of Gilgamesh), legal documents (such as the Code of Hammurabi), religious incantations, royal

inscriptions of heroic deeds, diplomatic correspondence, everyday letters between individuals, monolingual and multilingual dictionaries, mathematical and astronomical texts, medical treatises, school exercises, and a seemingly endless quantity of administrative documents, from real estate contracts to lists of workers' food rations. One reason for such an abundance of surviving materials is that the texts were written not on paper, but on wet clay tablets, using a triangular shaped wedge. And clay, once dried, is highly durable; thus, there are hundreds of thousands of tablets that have been recovered, and thousands more yet to be unearthed.

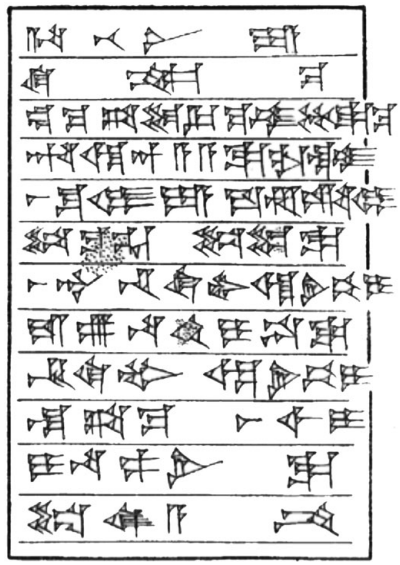
13.2 The writing system

The **cuneiform** writing system was developed toward the end of the fourth millennium BC by the Sumerians, the earlier inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia. In the middle of the third millennium BC, Akkadian speakers borrowed the script and adapted it to write their own language. Figure LP13.2 is a hand copy of a clay tablet from the British Museum, which contains a letter from around 1800 BC. The letter begins, "Tell my lord, this is what your maid Tatūr-mātum said: May (the gods) Šamaš and the bride Aya keep you well forever for my sake. Concerning the fish and the locusts that I told you about, don't forget them. Bring them with you."

The cuneiform script is rather complex, because it used both **syllabograms** (phonetic signs that represent syllables or parts of syllables, represented in modern transliterations by small letters, e.g., *ma*, *an*, *nam*, etc.) and **logograms** (whole-word signs, represented in modern transliterations by capitals, e.g., GÉME – 'maid'). In the first line of the text in Figure LP13.2, for example, all the signs are to be read phonetically (see Textbox LP13.1 for a transcription note). But in line 3, the third sign from the right is the logogram GÉME. Since the logograms were borrowed from Sumerian, modern transliterations represent these logograms according to their Sumerian rather than Akkadian pronunciations. The Akkadian pronunciation of the word 'maid' was actually *amat*, so the word transliterated as GÉME-*ka-ma* was actually pronounced *amatkama* 'your maid.' A further complication is that some logograms were not meant to be

TEXTBOX LP13.1 **TRANSCRIPTION NOTES**

- The symbol š represents a voiceless palato-alveolar fricative, IPA [ʃ].
- The symbol ṭ illustrates a voiceless retroflex stop, typically pronounced with contact between the bottom of the tongue and the postalveolar region.
- Vowels with a macron (horizontal line) over the top are phonetically lengthened.
- There are two **pharyngeal** consonants made by retracting the tongue root towards the back of the **pharynx**. The symbol ḫ represents a voiceless pharyngeal fricative, while ʕ represents a voiced pharyngeal fricative or approximant.



1. a-na be-lí-ia
2. qí-bí-ma
3. um-ma ta-tu-ur-ma-tum GÉME-ka-ma
4. (DINGIR)UTU ù (DINGER)A.A ka-al-la-tum
5. aš-šu-mi-ia da-ri-iš u_4-mi
6. li-ba-al-li-ṭú-ka
7. aš-šum en-ke-tim ù er-bi-i
8. ša ú-na-aḫ-i-du-ka
9. en-ke-tim ù er-bi-i
10. la ta-ma-aš-ši-i
11. i-na pa-ni-ka
12. li-qí-a-am

Figure LP13.2 Clay tablet from the British Museum: letter, circa 1800 BC

pronounced at all, but were 'determinatives' that specified which type of noun followed them. The first sign in line 4 (DINGIR) is a logogram for 'god,' showing that a god's name is to follow (in this case the Sun god, called *Utu* in Sumerian and *Šamaš* in Akkadian).

In (1) through (8), you can see how to "decode" the first few lines of the letter in Figure LP13.2. Each line is given in sign-for-sign transliteration, as well as a normalization, which attempts to reproduce what the Akkadian actually sounded like (how this was determined is an interesting but complicated story beyond the scope of the current chapter), followed by both a gloss and a translation:

(1) a-na be-lí-ia
ana *bēli-ya*
to lord-POSS.1SG
'to my lord

(2) qí-bí-ma
qibī-ma
say.IMP-FOC
say:

(3) um-ma ta-tu-ur-ma-tum GÉME-ka-ma
umma *tatūr-mātum* *amat-ka-ma*
QUOT Tatūr-mātum maid-POSS.2SG-FOC
(this is what) your maid Tatūr-mātum said:

(4) ^{d}UTU ù ^{d}A.A ka-al-la-tum
šamaš u Aya kallātum
Šamaš and Aya bride
Šamaš and the bride Aya

(5) aš-šu-mi-ia da-ri-iš u_4-mi
aššum-iya dāriš ūmī
sake-POSS.1SG eternity.GEN day.PL
forever for my sake

(6) li-ba-al-li-ṭú-ka
liballiṭ-ū-ka
COND.keep.alive-3PL-2SG
may keep you well

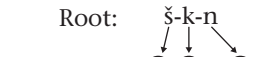
(7) aš-šum en-ke-tim ù er-bi-i
aššum enkētim u erbī
concerning fish and locusts
concerning the fish and the locusts

(8) ša ú-na-aḫ-i-du-ka
ša una'idu-ka
which 1SG.instruct.PST-2SG
that I instructed you (about)'

13.3 The consonantal roots of Akkadian (and other Semitic languages)

In Chapter 4, we saw that morphemes do not always have to be pieces of words such as prefixes or suffixes. In the English nouns *man/men* and *goose/geese*, for example, plurality is not marked by a suffix but rather by a change of vowel inside the word itself. Similarly, English verbs such as *drink/drank* mark the past tense not by a suffix *-ed,* but by an internal vowel change. In English, such marking of grammatical categories in this way is restricted to a few odd nouns and a few irregular verbs. (There are also some relics of a causative pattern marked by an internal vowel alternation, e.g., *fall–fell* 'make fall,' *sit–set* 'make sit,' *rise–raise*, etc.) But there are languages where such internal vowel alterations are far more widespread and far more systematic. The Semitic verb offers one of the most elaborate and sophisticated examples of such vowel alterations among the world's languages. The vowels change so much, in fact, that they are not deemed to be a part of the verbal root at all. The verbal root in the Semitic languages is generally described as consisting only of consonants. The Akkadian root for 'to put' or 'to place' is š-k-n, and the root for 'to cut' or 'to block' is p-r-s. This consonantal root is an abstract notion, of course, because it is not pronounceable

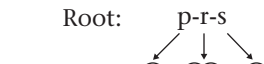
as such, and never appears in this way in practice. The consonantal root comes to life only when it is superimposed on a **template**, which is a pattern of vowels (and sometimes additional consonants) that has three empty slots for the three consonants of the root. To take one example, the Akkadian template *i*○○*u*○ denotes the past tense in the third-person masculine, so if we insert the root š-k-n into the template, we get:



(past tense, third-person masculine)

i (š) (k) u (n) ('he placed')

A different template *i*○*a*○○*a*○ forms the present tense. Here, in addition to the vowels that appear between the root consonants, the second root consonant is also doubled, or **geminated**. So if we insert the root p-r-s into the template, we get:



(present tense, third-person masculine)

i (p) a (r) (r) a (s) ('he blocks')

There are a very large number of such templates in Akkadian (and in other Semitic languages), and they are used to mark all manners of verbal distinctions. For example, different templates denote the different tenses, aspects, moods, and other inflectional categories of the verb. Here are a few examples of templates:

Template	Function	meaning
i○○u○	PST.3SG.M	he X-ed
i○a○○a○	PRS/FUT.3SG.M	he X-s/will X
i○ta○a○	PRF.3SG.M	he has X-ed
○u○u○	IMP.2SG.M	X!
○ā○i○um	PTCP.3SG.M	someone who X-s
○a○○um	VERBAL.ADJ.3SG.M	(an) X-ed (thing)
○a○ā○um	INF	to X

Notice that in addition to different vowels between the root consonants and gemination (doubling of a consonant, as in the present-tense template above), sometimes there are consonants which are included as part of the templates themselves. The perfect tense, for instance, has a *t* infix as part of the template.

This algebraic-seeming template system is not just an artifice of our description. Experiments have shown that both the consonantal roots and the templates have psychological reality for speakers of Semitic languages. To put it simply, while to English ears, forms which have no vowels in common, such as *parsum* (verbal adjective), *iprus* (past), or *iparras* (future) all sound quite dissimilar, for speakers of Semitic

TABLE LP13.1 Partial network of possible Akkadian 3-consonant templates

	PAST	PRESENT	PERFECT	INFINITIVE	IMPERATIVE
BASIC	i○○u○	i○a○○a○	i○ta○a○	○a○ā○um	○u○u○
ITERATIVE	i○ta○○a○	i○tana○○a○	i○tata○○a○	○ita○○u○um	○ita○○a○
PASSIVE	i○○a○i○	i○○a○○a○	itta○○a○	na○○u○um	na○○i○
CAUSATIVE	uša○○i○	uša○○a○	ušta○○i○	šu○○u○um	šu○○i○

languages, such forms are perceived as closely related variations on a theme: the consonants p-r-s.

The template system is far richer than what has been presented so far, because in addition to the basic distinctions of tense, mood, and aspect presented above, different templates are also used to mark other nuances of the action such as passive, causative, reflexive, intensive, iterative (repeated or habitual action). Here are several examples of these:

This dimension of variation is perpendicular to the tense-mood-aspect templates.

i○ta○○a○	ITR.PST.3SG.M	he continually X-ed
i○○a○i○	PASS.PST.3SG.M	he was X-ed
uša○○i○	CAUS.PST.3SG.M	he caused to X

For example, there are separate passive templates for the past, the present, the perfect, and so on, resulting in a complex two-dimensional network of templates. Several of these are shown in Table LP13.1, but in reality there are nearly a hundred such templates.

As if this weren't enough, the two-dimensional mesh in Table LP13.1. needs to be combined with yet another dimension: subject agreement, or the different persons that are also marked on the verb. However, these markings for person are not indicated by further internal vowel alterations, but rather in a somewhat more typical fashion, using prefixes and suffixes. Here are a few examples for the simple past tense:

I blocked	a-ⓟⓡuⓢ
you (male singular) blocked	ta-ⓟⓡuⓢ
you (female singular) blocked	ta-ⓟⓡuⓢ-ī
you (plural) blocked	ta-ⓟⓡuⓢ-ā
he/she cuts	i-ⓟⓡuⓢ

Finally, in addition to subject agreement, there are also suffixes that mark pronominal direct and indirect objects. So, for instance, *aṭrud* means 'I sent,' and *aṭrud-akkuš-šu* 'I sent him to you,' where *-akkuš* means 'to you' and *-šu* means 'him.'

13.4 Messiness due to sound changes

The system as presented so far may seem to be the paragon of regular perfection, but in reality, there are many exceptions that make the situation on the ground look much less neat. In the third millennium BC, Akkadian underwent several drastic sound changes as a result of intense contact with Sumerian, a non-Semitic language. This is one major source of untidiness in the language's verbal system. Sumerian speakers evidently had difficulty with the many glottal and **pharyngeal** consonants of the Semitic languages (sounds that can still be heard in Arabic today), and during the centuries of intense contact with Sumerian, Akkadian lost most of these "difficult" consonants. However, since many three-consonantal roots originally contained such consonants, the drastic sound changes in Akkadian often obscured the three-consonantal nature of the roots. For instance, the original Semitic root ʕ-r-b ('enter') had as the first root consonant the pharyngeal fricative ʕ. When inserted into the template for the simple past, iⓅⓇuⓈ, it originally resulted in the form *iʕrub* 'he entered.' But by the end of the third millennium, the pharyngeal had disappeared, so the sequence *iʕ* was reduced to a long vowel *ī*, to give the form *īrub*, where the three-consonantal pattern is no longer so apparent.

While these irregularities, which developed in Akkadian due to contact-induced sound changes, are of fairly late origin, there are other exceptions in the system which are in fact far older, and which, as we shall see in a moment, are actually relics of very early stages in the evolution of the Semitic verbal system.

13.5 Historical development

How can a system like that of the Semitic verb have come into being? Research on **grammaticalization** has shone much light on the origin of affixes, even on the emergence of complex paradigms of affixes. At first sight, the abstract idea of a purely consonantal root and the algebraic template system seem to defy historical explanation through the blind mechanisms of change, as they appear to have been designed on the table of a gifted architect. In Deutscher (2005: chapter 6), however, I tried to show how such a system could nevertheless have emerged through entirely normal diachronic processes, in particular, through cycles of sound change and **analogy**. While a full presentation of the detailed argument goes beyond the scope of this chapter, the following discussion presents some of the basic principles of this claim. Interestingly, the clues for understanding how the notion of a consonantal root system could have emerged are all found in various types of exceptions in the verbal system.

The most important of these exceptions can be called the "quirk vowel" (in traditional grammars it is called the "root vowel"). I explained above that vowels are not part of the root and only determine the grammatical nuance. While this is true in general, two of the simplest templates (simple past and simple imperative) flout this rule, since they have an arbitrary vowel between the last two root consonants, that is, an unmotivated vowel which depends on each root itself. Thus, while some roots, like p-r-s, adhere to the

template i○○u○ in the simple past (*iprus* 'he cut'), other roots, such as p-t-l 'twist,' have a different vowel between the last root consonants. The past form of p-t-l is not *ipt**u**l* but *ipt**i**l*. The difference in the vowel does not play any grammatical role. Rather, when you learn the language, you simply have to memorize the "quirk vowel" of each root just as you have to memorize the vowels of every English verb.

While the quirk vowel seems like an unmotivated irregularity from the synchronic perspective of the mature Semitic system, there are various indications that this quirk vowel is in fact an extremely old feature, a relic from the time *before* the root-and-template system had started to develop. The simple past tense thus points to a period when the ancestor language still had more "normal" roots, like *prus* or *ptil*, that consisted of both vowels and consonants.

There are further revealing exceptions in the verbal system that suggest how such normal roots were transformed into the purely consonantal design. The first step seems to have been the development of a single internal vowel alteration that came to mark a distinction in tense, a situation rather similar to English verbs such as *sit–sat* or *drink–drank*. I mentioned earlier that the future tense is formed with the template i○a○○a○. This is true of regular verbs, but there are some verbs that disobey this rule. They are called "hollow," because they have only two consonants in their root instead of three (e.g., m-t 'die,' *imūt* 'he died'). The hollow verbs don't follow the regular future-tense template, and instead simply change their vowel to *a*: *imūt – imât* 'he died' – 'he will die.' In the attested stages of Akkadian, such hollow verbs amount to only a few exceptions, but various factors indicate that there were many more of them in earlier stages of the language. Indeed, it seems that the pattern shown by hollow verbs – a single internal vowel mutation – was the earlier pattern that marked the future tense of *all* verbs. So originally the corresponding future form to the past tense *iprus* ('he blocked') would have been just *ipras* (see Textbox LP13.2).

TEXTBOX LP13.2

It is not difficult to imagine how an internal vowel mutation (*iprus – ipras*) could have emerged, because there are parallel developments in other languages, from more recent times. The most famous is the *i*-mutation of Germanic, which is responsible for the vowel alteration between English nouns such as *man – men*, as well as causative English verbs such as *to fall – to fell*. The original plural of *mann* in Germanic would have been formed regularly, with a suffix *-iz*: **mann-iz*. But by a process of assimilation (specifically vowel harmony), the vowel *i* of the suffix colored the preceding *a* to *e*, resulting in *menn-iz*. The final *-iz* was later reduced, leaving only *men*.

Similarly, the causative form 'to fell' goes back to a Proto-Germanic suffix *-ian* (originally from a Proto-Indo-European verb *yo 'make'). **fall-ian* 'fall-make' originally became **fell-ian* because of the *i* of the suffix, with the ending entirely eroding later on, leaving only *fell*. The Semitic vowel alteration to *a* would not have developed through an assimilation to an *-i* suffix, of course, but perhaps through the effect of a laryngeal. At any rate, the basic principles could have been fairly similar.

The earlier stage of the verbal system which we have so far reconstructed had only one internal vowel alteration to mark tense (*iprus-ipras*), had "normal" roots with both consonants and vowels, and was not even dominated by roots with three consonants. How could this system have metamorphosed into the mature Semitic system, with purely consonantal roots of predominantly three consonants? A relatively easy part of the question is how more three-consonant roots emerged. There are various indications that one of the main paths for this process involved cycles such as the English ones below, where verbs become longer through piling up of word-class-changing affixes:

VERB	>	NOUN	>	ADJECTIVE	>	VERB
(to) tail (=cut)		tailor				(to) tailor
(to) profess		profess-ion		profess-ion-al		(to) profess ion-al-ize

In the Semitic languages, such augmentations mainly involved prefixes rather than suffixes. So a root that started out with two consonants, e.g., *kun* 'to be firm,' was turned into an adjective *ša-kun* 'firm/durable,' and then (through functional shift) back to a verb *šakun* 'to place, to establish.' At some stage, as more and more such augmented verbs emerged, roots with three consonants came to dominate the scene.

The trickier question is to understand how one simple vowel alteration (*iprus–ipras*) could have led to the idea of a purely consonantal root. The details are complex, but in order to understand the consonantal root, we actually only need to investigate how one further vowel alteration emerged, this time between the first two root consonants. There are two possible places for internal vowels between three consonants: $\bigcirc v_1 \bigcirc v_2 \bigcirc$, or Position 1 and Position 2, for short. The vowel alteration in Position 1 could have emerged through a combination of sound change and analogical **back-formation**. The following discussion roughly describes the process. Augmented verbs (verbs like *šakun*, which had acquired their third consonant through a prefix) had a vowel in Position 1 (the vowel of the original augment prefix). But at some stage, a regular type of sound change deleted this vowel in *some* phonetic environments. In particular, this sound change (called **syncope**) deleted the middle vowel from any sequence of three short vowels in a row. In verbal forms with prefixes, like the past-tense *i-šakun,* the middle short vowel was in Position 1: *i-šakun* > *i-škun*. But in verbal forms with suffixes, like the verbal adjective *šakun-um,* the middle vowel of the three was in Position 2: *šakun-um* > *šakn-um*. This is illustrated in Figure LP13.3.

This process was a "blind" sound change, conditioned only by the phonetic environment, not by meaning. But the result of this purely phonetic change created a pattern in which one verbal form (*šakn-um*) had a vowel in Position 1, whereas another form (*i-škun*) had none (with the situation reversed in Position 2). For speakers in later generations, who were no longer familiar with the phonetic motivation for the sound change, this pattern could have come to be perceived as a bearer of a meaningful grammatical distinction. And once it was perceived as such, it could have been

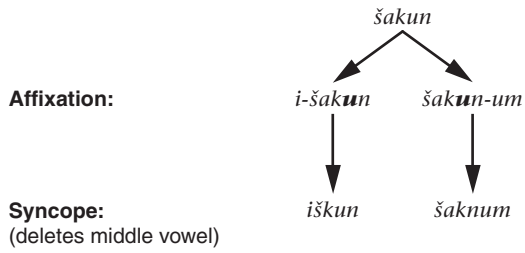


Figure LP13.3 The effects of syncope on forms with prefixes (left) and suffixes (right)

extended by analogical back-formation to roots like *prus* (which never had an augmented prefix to begin with), to produce a verbal adjective *pars-um,* effectively inserting a vowel into Position 1 that had never originally been there.

Once this pattern had been generalized to all verbs, it resulted in a system where the different verbal forms no longer shared any vowels: *iprus* ('he blocked'), *ipras* ('he will block'), *pars-um* ('blocked'). The root's original vowel (the *u* in Position 2) appeared in only one verbal form, so it no longer seemed to be the "default" vowel, but rather merely the vowel of one particular tense. Moreover, vowels were not shared between all verbal forms in either position, so both positions were seen to participate in the variation according to grammatical function.

For a new generation of speakers, all that remained as a uniting factor between the different verbal forms were the three consonants, or the consonantal root. For example, what now bears the core meaning 'to block' is no longer a pronounceable chunk *prus*, but the three consonants p-r-s. So the consonantal root system is simply based on the emergence of verbal forms that share the same consonants, but no longer share any vowels, and where both vowel positions are grammatically variable. The templates such as i○○u○, i○○a○, ○a○○um, are really just a way of representing this pattern, whereby the internal vowels are primarily determined by the grammatical nuance, and not by the whim of the root.

The system we have arrived at through this description of prehistoric changes is still very simple, and is worlds away from the dozens of templates in the attested stages of the language. Deutscher (2000) shows how some of the more elaborate templates could have emerged (such as passive, causative, reflexive, intensive) through relatively straightforward paths of grammaticalization. Once a few such templates begin to emerge, speakers can start forming higher-level analogies, by superimposing existing templates onto one another (e.g., if a passive template emerged in the past tense, it could have been superimposed on the future tense, to give a future passive template). Thus, the complexity of the system is a self-amplifying process, in which the templates can interact by analogy in a grid-like way. A small number of templates might therefore have proven enough of a "critical mass" to trigger an explosion in the number of new templates, leading to the breathtaking sophistication of the attested system.

TEXTBOX LP13.3 GLOSSING CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS LANGUAGE PROFILE

Convention	Meaning	Convention	Meaning
1	first person	M	masculine
2	second person	PASS	passive
3	third person	PL	plural
CAUS	causative	POSS	possessive
COND	conditional	PRF	perfect aspect
FOC	focus	PRS	present
FUT	future tense	PST	past tense
GEN	genitive	PTCP	participle
IMP	imperative	QUOT	quotative
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
ITR	iterative	VERBAL.ADJ	verbal adjective

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Benett, Patrick. 1998. *Comparative Semitic linguistics*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns.

This is a useful introduction to Semitic linguistics aimed at beginning students.

Deutscher, G. 2005. *The unfolding of language*. New York: Henry Holt.

Chapter 6 of this book gives a fuller account of the diachronic development outlined above.

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This book is an advanced magisterial history of the Akkadian and Semitic verbal system.

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This book is an introduction to the history and culture of Mesopotamia.

Web resource: http://knp.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/cuneiformrevealed/

An introduction to the world of Akkadian and the cuneiform writing system, as well as many other useful links.

EXERCISES

1. Based on the information about different templates given in the chapter, and using the root š-ṭ-r, which means 'write' or 'inscribe,' find out how to say in Akkadian: *you (pl.) wrote*, *he writes*, *write!* (imperative or command form), *he made (someone) write*, *(something) is written*.

Figure LP13.4 Word Written in Cuneiform Script (for Exercise 4)

2. The verb *liballiṭ* is a precative form (i.e., a wish form) of the root b-l-ṭ 'be well/healthy,' and means 'may he make (someone) well.' Can you identify the template on which the root was superimposed? In the letter quoted at the beginning of the chapter, there is a form *liballiṭūka*. What elements have been added to the form and how do they change the meaning?
3. The form *iztanammar* means 'he keeps singing.' Based on the templates in the chapter, can you identify the consonants of the Akkadian root 'sing'?
4. In the following word written in the cuneiform script, the first sign stands for *ḫa,* the third for *mu,* the fourth for *ra.* You can discover what the second and the fifth signs stand for based on the transcription of the letter in Figure LP13.2. Can you figure out what name is written here?

GLOSSARY

absolutive: denotes both a case and a grammatical relation based on morphosyntactic behavior where the less agentive core argument of a transitive verb (the P) shares grammatical behavior with the single core argument of an intransitive verb (the S); opposed to ergative.

abstraction: a shift in meaning from more concrete to more abstract, e.g., the English adverb *besides* was used earlier for concrete spatial location, but is now used with the more abstract meaning 'in addition, moreover.'

accent: the phonological characteristics of a speaker's variety.

accessible activation state: an idea that is not currently actively focused on in a discourse, but which has been mentioned earlier and/or is in the periphery of the addressee's consciousness.

accusative: a grammatical **case** that marks noun phrases that occur as objects of clauses.

acoustic phonetics: the study of the physical characteristics of speech sounds, such as duration, frequency, and intensity.

activation state: an assumption that a particular referent or idea is **given**, **new**, or **accessible** in the mind of the interlocutor.

active articulator: an articulator which moves in the production of a sound; contrasts with **passive articulator**.

active (voice): a construction in which the semantic agent of a transitive verb is the grammatical subject; contrasts with **passive (voice)**.

adaptation: the replacement of a foreign phoneme in a loanword with the nearest phonetic equivalent in the native language.

addressee: the person to whom an utterance is addressed (i.e., the person one is speaking to); sometimes referred to as "the hearer."

adjective: a word class whose members can occur either modifying a noun in a noun phrase or within a predicate; adjectives specify attributes of the referent of the associated noun.

adposition: a word class that occurs with a noun phrase and that indicates the grammatical, spatial, temporal, or logical relationship of the noun phrase to another element of the clause; may be a preposition (which occurs before the noun) or a postposition (which occurs after the noun); adpositions are typically **particles**.

adpositional phrase: a syntactic constituent headed by an adposition; includes prepositional phrases and postpositional phrases.