Yiddish grammar

Structure of the Yiddish language

Yiddish grammar is the system of principles which govern the structure of the Yiddish language. This article describes the standard form laid out by YIVO while noting differences in significant dialects such as that of many contemporary Hasidim. As a Germanic language descended from Middle High German, Yiddish grammar is very similar to that of German, though it also has numerous linguistic innovations as well as grammatical features influenced by or borrowed from Hebrew, Aramaic, and various Slavic languages.

Nouns

Gender

Yiddish nouns are classified into one of three grammatical genders: masculine (זכר *zokher*), feminine (נקבֿה *nekeyve*) and neuter (נייטראַל *neytral*). To a large extent, the gender of a noun is unpredictable, though there are some regular patterns:

- nouns denoting specifically male humans and animals are usually masculine, and nouns denoting specifically female humans and animals are usually feminine
- nouns ending in an unstressed schwa are usually feminine
- nouns built on most of the common abstract noun suffixes, such as ונג- *-ung* and הייט- *-hayt*, are feminine
- diminutive nouns with the suffix *-l* are neuter in the standard language
- loanwords are generally assigned masculine gender by default unless they end in a schwa, in which case they are usually feminine.

Gender assignment for new words and sporadic realignments of older ones are examples of the dynamic tendency observable for nouns that do not reflect an inherent sex. It designates nouns with vowel endings as feminine and those with consonant endings as masculine.[1]

Case

There are three grammatical cases in Yiddish: nominative, accusative and dative. The nominative case generally is used for the subject, the accusative for the direct object and the dative for an indirect object or object of a preposition. Nouns are normally not inflected for case, and case is indicated by the inflection of a related definite article or adjective. However, a handful of nouns do have inflectional endings to indicate the accusative and/or dative cases, which may be optional or obligatory, depending on the specific lexical item and dialect; examples of nouns that take obligatory case endings include certain kinship terms (טאַטע *tate* 'father', מאַמע *mame* 'mother') and the words ייִד *yid* 'Jew' and האַרץ *harts* 'heart'. In those cases, masculine nouns take the ending ן- *-n* in the accusative and dative singular, i.e. טאַטן *tatn* 'father', רבין *rebn* 'rabbi' or 'teacher'; feminine and neuter nouns take ן- *-n* only in the dative singular, where, for example, מאַמע *mame* becomes מאַמען *mamen*.

Yiddish does not have a genitive case. However, when the possessor is a human or occasionally other living beings, possession may be indicated with a suffixed ס- *-s* (like English possessive *-'s*). Otherwise, possession is normally indicated by the preposition פֿון *fun* 'of'.

Another genitive-like construction, the quantitative, is used to describe quantities of objects: אַ פֿול גלאָז הייסע טיי *a ful gloz heyse tey* (a full cup of hot tea); אַ גרופע יונגע מענטשן *a grupe yunge mentshn* (a group of young people). The noun phrase representing the quantity is simply followed by noun representing the object described. This construction may not be used if the object has a definite article: אַ פֿול גלאָז פֿון דער הייסער טיי *a ful gloz fun der heyser tey* (a full cup of the hot tea).

Plural

There are two regular plural suffixes. For nouns ending in an unstressed vowel, the plural is regularly formed with the suffix *-s*; e.g., the plural of גרופע *grupe* 'group' is גרופעס *grupes*. For nouns ending in a consonant, the plural is regularly formed with *-n*; the plural of טיש *tish* 'table' is טישן *tishn*.

A very large number of nouns use irregular plural forms, including *-es* (these are usually nouns of Slavic origin), and *-er* with umlaut (e.g., מאַן *man* 'man' → מענער *mener* 'men'; קינד *kind* 'child' → קינדער *kinder* 'children'), or umlaut alone (e.g., האַנט *hant* 'hand' → הענט *hent* 'hands'). Some words do not change in the plural (e.g., פֿיש *fish* 'fish'). Nouns built on the diminutive suffixes *-l* and *-ele* form the plural in *-ekh* (e.g., מיידל *meydl* 'girl' → מיידלעך *meydlekh* 'girls').

Most words of Hebrew origin use the Hebrew plural suffixes, either *-im* (e.g., ספֿר *seyfer* 'holy book' → ספֿרים *sforim* 'holy books') or *-es* (e.g., סוד *sod* 'secret' → סודות *soydes* 'secrets'). As these examples show, many plurals of Hebrew origin involve stem mutation in addition to the suffix, as in the original Hebrew. Not all words of Hebrew origin form their plurals in the same way they do in Hebrew: in particular, Hebrew feminine nouns ending in ת- tend to become masculine in Yiddish, and take the *-im* plural suffix, avoiding the uneuphonic ending **-ses*: e.g. שבת *shabes* 'sabbath' → Hebrew שבתות *shaboses*, Yiddish שבתים *shabosim*.[2] This tendency extends also to cases when the Hebrew plural ends in *-yes* rather than *-ses*: e.g. תכלית *takhles* 'purpose' → Hebrew תכליות *takhliyes*, Yiddish תכליתים *takhleysim*. Other words of Hebrew origin form a Germanic plural, e.g., קול *kol* 'voice' has the plural קולער *keler*, formed with the Germanic *-er* suffix and umlaut. Finally, there are a few words of non-Hebrew origin that take Hebrew plural suffixes, such as דאָקטער *dokter* 'doctor' → דאָקטוירים *doktoyrim*, פּויער *poyer* 'farmer' → פּויערים *poyerim*.[2]

Articles

The definite article agrees in gender, number and case with the noun it is used with.

Yiddish definite article

Definite article ("The")	Singular			Plural
	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	
Nominative	דער der	דאָס dos	די di	די di
Accusative	דעם dem			
Dative		דעם dem	דער der	

The indefinite article is אַ *a*, which becomes אַן *an* before a word beginning with a vowel sound. Yiddish, like English, does not have a plural indefinite article.

Adjectives

Attributive adjectives—that is, those that directly modify a noun—are inflected to agree with the gender, number and case of the noun they modify, while predicate adjectives remain uninflected. For example, one says דער גוטער מאַן *der guter man* 'the good man', but דער מאַן איז גוט *Der man iz gut* 'The man is good'. When an adjective is used absolutively—that is, to stand as the head of a noun phrase as if it were itself a noun—it is inflected as if it were followed by a noun: דער מאַן איז אַ גוטער *Der man iz a guter* 'The man is a good [one]'. Neuter singular adjectives are in some respects exceptional; in attributive position, they have no case ending unless their noun phrase is introduced by the definite article; in absolutive position, they use the distinctive suffix *-s* in the nominative and accusative cases.

Yiddish adjective declension

גוט Gut "good"	Singular					Plural
	Masculine	Neuter			Feminine	
		Indefinite	Definite	Absolutive		
Nominative	גוטער guter (ער- -er)	גוט gut (-_)	גוטע gute (ע- -e)	גוטס guts (ס- -s)	גוטע gute (ע- -e)	גוטע gute (ע- -e)
Accusative	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטע gute	גוטע gute
Dative	גוטן gutn	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטן gutn (ן- -n)	גוטער guter (ער- -er)	גוטע gute

The ending *-n* becomes *-en* after an *m*, or a stressed vowel or diphthong; it becomes *-em* after *n* and, as an exception, in the adjective *nay* (new).[3] Yiddish is slightly simpler than German in that German *-m* and *-n* are both *-n* in Yiddish (or, in the case of the definite article, *dem*), and Yiddish does not have a genitive case. The "definite" and "absolutive" versions of the neuter gender are a relic of the strong vs. weak adjective endings of German (*das gute Bier* vs. *gutes Bier*).

A class of pronominal adjectives, including איין *eyn* 'one', קיין *keyn* 'none', and possessive pronouns such as מיין *mayn* 'my, mine' and זיין *zayn* 'his', display behavior opposite to that of ordinary adjectives: they are inflected for gender, number and case when used predicatively but not when used attributively. (Absolutively, they behave as normal adjectives).

Adjectives normally precede the nouns, but they may follow the nouns as an absolute construction for stylistic purposes: אַ שײנע פֿרױ *a sheyne froy* or אַ פֿרױ אַ שײנע *a froy a sheyne* ('a beautiful woman').

Pronouns

<div align="center">Yiddish personal pronouns</div>

Personal pronouns	1st person		2nd person			3rd person			
	Singular	Plural	Singular/ informal	Singular formal/ Plural	Plural informal	Singular			Plural
				Standard	Polish[4]	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	
Nominative	איך ikh	מיר mir	דו du	איר ir	עטס ets	ער er	עס es	זי zi	זײ zey
Accusative	מיך mikh	אונדז undz	דיך dikh	אײַך aykh	ענק enk	אים im			
Dative	מיר mir		דיר dir				אים im	איר ir	

Third person pronouns agree in gender with the noun they refer to. Thus even inanimate objects are sometimes referred to as *er* or *zi* if they are masculine or feminine respectively. Neuter nouns receive *es*.

Younger people typically use the second person singular pronoun forms. [1][*clarification needed*]

The dative forms of the single personal pronouns are used by a minority of speakers of the Northeastern dialect of Yiddish.[1]

Verbs

Verb inflection

Yiddish verbs are conjugated for person (first, second, and third) and number (singular and plural) in the present tense. In the imperative, they conjugate only for number. Nonfinite verb forms are the infinitive and the past participle.

The infinitive of a verb is formed with the suffix ן- *-n* (which takes the form ען- *-en* in certain phonological contexts).[1] The imperative uses the base form of the verb with no affixes in the singular, and takes the suffix ט- *-t* in the plural. In the present tense, the first-person singular takes the base form of the verb; the other person/number combinations are regularly inflected according to the following table:

Yiddish present tense		
person	singular	plural
1st	–	ן- *-n*
2nd	סט- *-st*	ט- *-t*
3rd	ט- *-t*	ן- *-n*

A present participle, functioning as a derived adjective or adverb, is regularly constructed by adding the suffix דיק- *-dik* to the infinitive.

Past participle

The past participle is used extensively in Yiddish. The majority of verbs (weak verbs) form the past participle by adding the prefix -גע *ge-* and the suffix ט- *-t* to the stem, e.g. געקויפֿט *gekoyft* 'bought'. However, strong verbs form the past participle with -גע *ge-* and ן- *-n*, usually accompanied by a vowel change, e. g. געהאָלפֿן *geholfn* 'helped' from the stem -העלפֿ *helf-* 'help'. The vowel change is unpredictable, and there is no way to tell from the infinitive whether a verb is weak or strong.

The prefix -גע *ge-* is omitted in past participles of verbs whose first syllable does not bear primary stress. There are two classes of verbs for which this happens: verbs with one of several unstressed stem prefixes, such as -פֿאַר *far-* or -באַ *ba-*; and verbs built on the stressed suffix יר- *-ir*, usually used for loanwords. Thus the past participles of פֿאַרקויפֿן *farkoyfn* 'to sell' and אַבאָנירן *abonirn* 'to subscribe' are, respectively, merely פֿאַרקויפֿט *farkoyft* and אַבאָנירט *abonirt*.

Some participles vary between dialects and registers; for example, געווען *geven* is the usual past participle of זײַן *zayn* 'be', but געוועזן *gevezn* (normally an adjective meaning 'former') may be used as the past participle in a "Daytshmerish" (Standard German–imitating) register.[*citation needed*]

Examples of conjugation

The table below shows the inflection of various Yiddish verbs. Most verbs are generally regular, with irregularities occurring predominantly in the past participle.

Verb inflection			Regular verbs		Irregular verbs						
			קויפֿן Koyfn		געבן Gebn	האָבן Hobn	טאָן Ton	וועלן Veln		וויסן Visn	זײַן Zayn
			to buy		to give	to have	to do	to want	*future tense*	to know	to be
Infinitive			קויפֿן koyfn	‑ן -n	געבן gebn	האָבן hobn	טאָן ton	וועלן veln		וויסן visn	זײַן zayn
Present Participle			קויפֿנדיק koyfndik	‑נדיק -ndik	געבנדיק gebndik	האָבדיק hobndik	טועֶנדיק tuendik	וועלנדיק velndik		וויסנדיק visndik	זײַעֶנדיק zayendik
Past Participle			געקויפֿט gekoyft	גע‑ ‑ט ge‑t	געגעבן gegebn	געהאַט gehat	געטאָן geton	געוואָלט gevolt		געוווּסט gevust	געווען geven
Present	Singular	1st person	קויף koyf	‑_	גיב gib	האָב hob	טו tu	וויל vil	וועל vel	וווייס veys	בין bin
		2nd person	קויפֿסט koyfst	‑סט -st	גיסט gist	האָסט host	טוסט tust	ווילסט vilst	וועסט vest	ווייסט veyst	ביסט bist
		3rd person	קויפֿט koyft	‑ט -t	גיט git	האָט hot	טוט tut	וויל vil	וועל vel	וווייס veys	איז iz
	Plural	1st person	קויפֿן koyfn	‑ן -n	גיבן gibn	האָבן hobn	טוען tuen	ווילן viln	וועלן veln	ווייסן veysn	זענען zenen
		2nd person	Standard	קויפֿט koyft	‑ט -t	גיט git	האָט hot	טוט tut	ווילט vilt	וועט vet	ווייסט veyst	זענט zent
			Polish[5]	קויפֿטס koyfts	‑טס -ts	גיטס gits	האָטס hots	טוטס tuts	ווילטס vilts	וועטס vets	ווייסטס veysts	זענטס zents
		3rd person	קויפֿן koyfn	‑ן -n	גיבן gibn	האָבן hobn	טוען tuen	ווילן viln	וועלן veln	ווייסן veysn	זענען zenen
Imperative	Singular		קויף koyf	‑_	גיב gib	האָב hob	טו tu				זײַ zay
	Plural	Standard	קויפֿט koyft	‑ט -t	גיט git	האָט hot	טוט tut				זײַט zayt
		Polish	קויפֿטס koyfts	‑טס -ts	גיטס gits	האָטס hots	טוטס tuts				זײַטס zayts

The following table shows some additional irregular past participles:

Yiddish irregular past participles

Verb		Past participle		Notes
Word	**Meaning**	**Word**	**Meaning**	
בלײַבן **Blaybn**	to continue; to stay, remain	געבליבן geblibn	continued, remaining	
ברעכן **Brekhn**	to break; to wring; to vomit	געבראָכן gebrokhn	broken	
ברענגען **Brengen**	to bring	געבראַכט gebrakht	brought	Regular weak form געברענגט gebrengt also in use
עסן **Esn**	to eat	געגעסן gegesn	eaten	
געלינגען **Gelingen**	to succeed	געלונגען gelungen	succeeded	Goes with the dative
געווינען **Gevinen**	to win	געוווּנען gevunen	won	געוואָנען is also used.
גיין **Geyn**	to go, walk	געגאַנגען gegangen	gone	
הייבן **Heybn**	to lift, raise	געהויבן gehoybn	lifted	
קלײַבן **Klaybn**	to choose; to gather	געקליבן geklibn	chosen, gathered	
לויפֿן **Loyfn**	to run, hurry	געלאָפֿן gelofn	ran, hurried	
נעמען בײַ **Nemen bay**	to get, take	גענומען genumen	taken, gotten	
ניסן **Nisn**	to sneeze	גענאָסן genosn	sneezed	
רײַסן **Raysn**	to rip, tear	געריסן gerisn	torn, ripped	
שענקען **Shenken**	to give, grant	געשאָנקען geshonken	given, granted	
שערן **Shern**	to cut, shear	געשוירן geshoyrn, געשאָרן geshorn	shorn	
שיסן **Shisn**	to shoot	געשאָסן geshosn	shot	
שלײַפֿן **Shlayfn**	to hone, sharpen	געשליפֿען geshlifen	honed, sharpened	
שליסן **Shlisn**	to close, lock	געשלאָסן geshlosn	closed, locked	
שמײַסן **Shmaysn**	to whip, flog	געשמיסן geshmisn	whipped	
שמעלצן **Shmeltzn**	to melt	געשמאָלצן geshmoltzn	melted, molten	
שפֿײַען **Shpayen**	to spit, spew	געשפֿיגן geshpign	spitten, spewn	
שרײַבן **Shraybn**	to write	געשריבן geshribn	written	
שטאַרבן **Shtarbn**	to die	געשטאָרבן geshtorbn	dead	

Shtarbn				
שטײן Shteyn	to stand	געשטאַנען geshtanen	stood	
שווימען Shvimen	to swim	געשוווּמען geshvumen	swum	
טרײַבן Traybn	to drive	געטריבן getribn	driven	
ציִען Tzien	to pull	געצויגן getzoygn	pulled	
ווערן Vern	to become	געוואָרן gevorn	became	
זינגען Zingen	to sing	געזונגען gezungen	sang	
זיצן Zitzn	to sit	געזעסן gezesn	sat	געזעצן gezetzn is also used.

Separable verbs

Like German, Yiddish has a family of separable verbs. These are verb stems co-occurring with a particle that sometimes occurs as a prefix attached to the verb stem and sometimes as a separate word. The particle appears separate from the verb in the present tense, but is attached as a prefix in the infinitive and participle. For example, in אויסזאָגן *oyszogn* 'to reveal', the particle אויס *oys* is attached to the verb; but in the present tense זאָגט אויס *zogt oys* 'reveals', the particle appears as a separate word. In the past participle, the particle appears before the prefix *ge-*, as in אויסגעזאָגט *oysgezogt* 'revealed'.

The same grammatical structure of separable verbs is used for a class called "periphrastic verbs". In these, the uninflected particle, often a loanword from Hebrew, carries the main meaning, and it is accompanied by an inflected light verb. For example, in תשובה טאָן *tshuve ton* 'repent', the word תשובה *tshuve* is a Hebrew loanword meaning 'repentance', acting grammatically as a particle accompanying the verb טאָן *ton* 'do'.

The periphrastic-verb construction mechanism allows Yiddish to borrow many Hebrew verbs and verbal constructions. Present-participle forms of active Hebrew verbs are used as particles accompanying the light verb זײַן (*zayn* 'be'), while present participles of passive Hebrew verbs accompany the light verb ווערן (*vern* 'become'):

- מסכים זײַן (*maskem zayn* 'to agree')
- קונה-שם זײַן (*koyne-shem zayn* 'to gain popularity')

- נעלם ווערן (*nelm vern* 'to disappear')
- זיך נתגלגל ווערן (*zikh nisgalgl vern* 'to reincarnate')

The Hebrew verb paradigm *nispoel* (standard Hebrew *nitpael*), marginalized in Modern Hebrew due to its overlap with *hitpael*, is much more common in Yiddish.[6] Hence the word for "to be impressed" is נתפעל ווערן *nispoel vern*, as opposed to מתפעל ווערן as a Modern Hebrew speaker might expect.

Auxilary-verb constructions

Like other varieties of High German and unlike literary German, Yiddish does not have the inflected past tense (preterite). Instead, the auxiliary verbs האָבן *hobn* 'to have' or זיַן *zayn* 'to be' are used with the past participle of the verb to construct the past tense. Most verbs take האָבן *hobn*; for example, the past tense of איך קויף *ikh koyf* 'I buy' is איך האָב געקויפֿט *ikh hob gekoyft* 'I bought'. About 30 intransitive verbs of motion or status and some of their derivatives take זיַן *zayn*; e.g., the past tense of איך קום *ikh kum* 'I come' is איך בין געקומען *ikh bin gekumen* 'I came'. Transitive derivatives of these exceptional verbs usually take האָבן *hobn*: e.g., זיַן *zayn* is used with the intransitive גיין *geyn* 'go', but האָבן *hobn* is used with the derived transitive separable verb איבערגיין *ibergeyn* 'go across'.

The future tense in Yiddish is formed with a special auxiliary verb וועלן *veln* followed by the infinitive. As shown in the table above, its inflection is irregular.

The pluperfect is formed by adding the modifier געהאַט *gehat* (the past participle of האָבן *hobn* 'have') to the past tense: איך האָב געהאַט געזאָגט *ikh hob gehat gezogt* ('I had said'); איר זענט געהאַט געגאַנגען *ir zent gehat gegangen* (you had gone). The Future perfect tense is formed with the future tense auxiliary followed by the auxiliary verb האָבן and the participle of the verb: איך וועל האָבן געזאָגט *ikh vel hobn gezogt* (I will have said). These tenses are both very infrequent, especially in the spoken language. When the context makes the previousness of action clear, the ordinary past or future is used instead, and usually with an adverb such as שוין *shoyn* (already) or פֿריִער *friër* (earlier).

The auxiliary verb פֿלעגן (*flegn*), in combination with the infinitive (or participle, in some dialects), is used to form a habitual past aspect: for example, איך פֿלעג קומען *ikh fleg kumen* (I used to come).

The auxiliary וואָלט (*volt*), accompanying the past participle, is used to form a conditional mood: איך וואָלט געגאַנגען *ikh volt gegangen* 'I would have gone'.

Other aspectual constructions

A "momental" aspect, expressing a one-time action, may be formed by the light verbs טאָן (*ton*, 'do') or געבן (*gebn*, 'give') followed by an indefinite article and a verbal noun, similar to such English expressions as 'have a look'. The verbal noun may be modified by adjectives, as in 'have a good look' in English. The form with געבן is more emphatic and requires the dative[*clarification needed*] for the verbal noun. If the verb is separable, the particle usually stands between the auxiliary and the noun.

Unlike English, such forms in Yiddish are highly systematic and may be used with virtually any verb. The nouns used sometimes appear only in the context of the verbal aspect. For example, אַ שרײַב געבן *a shrayb gebn*, meaning 'hurriedly or suddenly write', contains a noun שרײַב *shrayb* which would not normally be used independently, and which may be translated as 'an act of writing'.

Examples: זי האָט אים געטאָן אַ כאַפּ אָן *zi hot im geton a khap on* ('she gave him a grab on'); מיר גיבן אַ שרײַ אויס *mir gibn a shray oys* ('we give a scream out').

The perfective aspect—indicating a completed action in the past or one whose completion is contemplated in the future—can be formed by adding a prefix or separable particle to many verbs. For example, the verb לייענען *leyenen* 'read' may be made perfective with the separable particle איבער *iber* or דורך *durkh*. Thus איך האָב געלייענט *ikh hob geleyent* means 'I read', 'I was reading'; while איך האָב דורכגעלייענט or איבערגעלייענט *ikh hob ibergeleyent / ikh hob durkhgeleyent* means 'I read entirely', 'I read through'. Further examples:

- ער וועט שרײַבן *er vet shraybn* 'he will write', 'he will do some writing'
  ער וועט אָנשרײַבן *er vet onshraybn* 'he will write completely', 'he will write up', 'he will get (something) written'
- מיר לערנען זיך פֿראַנצייזיש *mir lernen zikh frantseyzish* 'we are studying French', 'we are taking French'
  מיר ווילן זיך אויסלערנען פֿראַנצייזיש *mir viln zikh oyslernen frantseyzish* 'we want to learn French thoroughly'

The most common perfectivizing elements are the particles דורך ,איבער ,אָן ,אָפ ,אויס (*oys*, *op*, *on*, *iber*, *durkh*) and the prefixes ־דער and ־צו (*der-*, *tsu-*), but there are no definitive rules for determining which of these are used with which verbs.

Various other aspects, generally paralleling the complex aspect system of the Slavic languages, are formed by auxiliary verbs or prefixes, sometimes combined with the reflexive particle זיך (*zikh*). Different aspects may be combined, if the logic of the sentence allows for it. Examples: איך פֿלעג געבן אַ שרײַב אָן *ikh fleg gebn a shrayb on* (I used to suddenly start and complete writing); זיי נעמען זיך צעלאַכן *zey nemen zikh tselakhn* (they start bursting into laughter).[7]

Negation

The negators are ניט *nit* and נישט *nisht*, which are only stressed when the emphasis is required.[3]

Under the scope of negation, indefinite noun phrases, singular or plural, use the negative article קיין *keyn* instead of the indefinite article אַ *a* or אַן *an*. Definite noun phrases under negation use the definite article as usual.

Yiddish allows and often requires double negation: קיינער איז דאָרטן נישט געווען *keyner iz dortn nisht geven* (literally: 'No one was not there') or איך האָב קיינעם נישט געזען *ikh hob keynem nisht gezen* (literally: 'I didn't see no one'). In colloquial speech even triple and multiple negations may occasionally be used: איך האָב נישט געוווּסט קיין גאָרנישט נישט *ikh hob nisht gevust keyn gornisht nisht* (literally: 'I did not know no nothing not').

Diminutive and emphatic forms

Yiddish is rich in various emphatic and emotional forms, including several general diminutive, affectionate and emphatic suffixes may be added to Yiddish nouns and adjectives. Many other emotional suffixes are mainly used for personal names and for particular classes of nouns. Emphatic expression are also formed by reduplication of verbs, composite adjectives, various 'mood' particles and interjections.

Yiddish has two diminutive degrees.[8] The first degree is the regular diminutive. The second degree is a stronger, more affectionate diminutive. The second degree is also known as the iminutive.[9]

In order to form any diminutive, there sometimes needs to be a vowel shift (i-mutation/ i-umlaut).[8]

Yiddish i-mutation					
Stem vowel		Word			Meaning
Normal	Umlaut	Base	Diminutive	Iminutive	
אַ a	ע e	קאַץ katz	קעצל ketzl	קעצעלע ketzele	Cat (kitten)
אָ o	ע e	לאָמפ lomp	לעמפל lempl	לעמפעלע lempele	Lamp
ו u	י i	בוך bukh	ביכל bikhl	ביכעלע bikhele	Book(let)
וי oy	יַי ay	הויז hoyz	הייזל hayzl	הייזעלע hayzele	House
וי oy	יי ey	מויד moyd	מיידל meydl	מיידעלע meydele	Girl

There are certain instances where only the plural can get any diminutive.

קינדער, kinder (children) → קינדערלעך, kinderlekh[10] (children, diminutive).

Besides the addition of -el and -ele, there are more ways to make a word be in the diminutive.[11] One way is by adding the ending טשיק-, or the Polish -czyk.

יונגערמאַן, yingerman (young man) → יונגערמאַנטשיק, yingermanchik.[11]

Numerals

Cardinal numbers

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
0	נול, זעראָ	nul, zero	null
1	איינס	eyns	eins
2	צוויי	tsvey	zwei
3	דרייַ	dray	drei
4	פיר	fir	vier
5	פינף	finf	fünf
6	זעקס	zeks	sechs
7	זיבן	zibn	sieben
8	אַכט	akht	acht
9	נייַן	nayn	neun

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
10	צען	tsen	zehn
11	עלף, עלעף	elf, elef	elf
12	צוועלף, צוועלעף	tsvelf, tsvelef	zwölf
13	דרייַצן	draytsn	dreizehn
14	פערצן	fertsn	vierzehn
15	פופצן	fuftsen	fünfzehn
16	זעכצן	zekhtsn	sechzehn
17	זיבעצן	zibetsn	siebzehn
18	אַכצן	akhtsn	achtzehn
19	נייַנצן	nayntsn	neunzehn

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
20	צוואָנציק, צוואַנציק	tsvontsik, tsvantsik	zwanzig
21	איין און צוואָנציק	eyn un tsvontsik	einundzwanzig
22	צוויי און צוואָנציק	tsvey un tsvontsik	zweiundzwanzig
30	דרייַסיק	draysik	dreißig
40	פערציק	fertsik	vierzig
50	פופציק	fuftsik	fünfzig
60	זעכציק	zekhtsik	sechzig
70	זיבעציק	zibetsik	siebzig
80	אַכציק	akhtsik	achtzig
90	נייַנציק	nayntsik	neunzig

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
12	טוץ	tuts	dutzend
144	גראָס	gros	gros
100	הונדערט	hundert	hundert
200	צוויי הונדערט	tsvey hundert	zweihundert
Tsd.	טויזנט	toyznt	tausend
Mio.	מיליאָן	milyon	Million

Ordinal numbers

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
1st	ערשט	ersht	erst
2nd	צווייט	tsveyt	zweit
3rd	דריט	drit	dritt
4th	פערט	fert, ferd	viert
5th	פיפט	fift	fünft
6th	זעקסט	zekst	sechst
7th	זיבעט	zibet	siebt
8th	אַכט	akht	acht
9th	ניַינט	naynt	neunt
10th	צענט	tsent, tseynt	zehnt

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
11th	עלעפט, עלפט	eleft, elft	elft
12th	צוועלעפט, צוועלפט	tsveleft, tsvelft	zwölft
13th	דריַיצנט, דריַיצעט	draytsnt, draytset	dreizehnt
14th	פערצנט, פערצעט	fertsnt, fertset	vierzehnt
15th	פופצנט, פופצעט	fuftsnt, fuftset	fünfzehnt
16th	זעכצנט, זעכצעט	zekhtsnt, zekhtset	sechzehnt
17th	זיבעצנט, זיבעצעט	zibetsnt, zibetset	siebzehnt
18th	אַכטצנט, אַכטצעט	akhtsnt, akhtset	achtzehnt
19th	ניַינצנט, ניַינצעט	nayntsnt, nayntset	neunzehnt
20th	צוואָנציקסט, צוואַנציקסט	tsvotsinkst, tsvantsikst	zwanzigst

Number	Yiddish	YIVO	German
21st	אײן־און־צוואָנסיקסט	eyn un tsvontsikst	einundzwanzigst
30th	דרייַסיקסט	draysikst	dreißigst
40th	פערציקסט	fertsikst	vierzigst
50th	פופציקסט	fuftsikst	fünfzigst
60th	זעכציקסט	zekhtsikst	sechzigst
70th	זיבעציקסט	zibetsikst	siebzigst
80th	אַכציקסט	akhtsikst	achzigst
90th	נייַנציקסט	nayntsikst	neunzigst
100th	הונדערטסט	hundertst	hundertst
1000th	טויזנטסט	toyzntst	tausendst

The ordinals are adjectives, and as such are inflected to agree with the nouns they modify. For example: 'the first lady' is די ערשטע דאַמע (*di ershte dame*: since דאַמע *dame* 'lady' is feminine, the ordinal ערשט *ersht* takes the suffix -*e* to agree with it.

Syntax

Like most Germanic languages, Yiddish generally follows the V2 word order: the second constituent of any clause is a finite verb, regardless of whether the first constituent is the subject, an adverb, or another topicalized element. The V2 grammar of Yiddish differs from that of German and other closely related languages, however: Yiddish uses V2 word order in subordinate clauses as well as main clauses, while in German only main clauses exhibit V2.[12]

However, verb-initial word order may be used to indicate a causal or other close contextual relationship between consecutive sentences, with a meaning similar to English *so*.[13]

It is customary to use freer word order in Yiddish poetry.[*citation needed*]

Clitics

Optional contractions are commonly used in both spoken and literary Yiddish. Some auxiliary verbs and personal pronouns are often contracted, especially in colloquial speech. For example, the phrase ער האָט מיר געזאָגט *er hot mir gezogt* (he told me) may be contracted to עריט מיר געזאָגט *er't mir gezogt* or ריהאָט מיר געזאָגט *r'hot mir gezogt* with the auxiliary almost disappearing, while זאָלן מיר אים דערצײַלן דאָס געהיימע וואָרט *zoln mir im dertseyln dos geheyme vort* (let's tell him the secret word) may be contracted to זאָלימירין דערצײַלן סיגעהיימע וואָרט *zol'mir'n dertseyln s'geheyme vort*. The last phrase is more characteristic for the Central (Polish) dialect.

Dialectal differences

The Northern or so-called Lithuanian dialect of Yiddish from the Baltic countries and Belarus is notable, among a number of other peculiarities, for its lack of the neuter gender and the simplified case system. Substantives which are neuter in standard literary Yiddish appear as masculine or feminine. Only two cases, nominative and accusative or oblique, exist in the Northern Yiddish, except for a few isolated remnants of the dative. The auxiliary verb האָבן *hobn* ('to have') may be used with any verb in the Northern Yiddish, including the cases when the literary Yiddish and other dialects require זײַן *zayn* ('to be').

Other primary differences between the dialects are in the stressed vowels within the dialect, the differences in their morphology and grammar as well as the northern dialects are more conservative as mentioned above while southern dialects have preserved vowel distinctions.

The realization of stressed vowels is where the main phonetic distinctions across the different dialects are found. Long and short vowels are not separated in Yiddish. Stressed vowels are about the same length. Compared to their English equivalents, they are located closer to the peripheral locations of the cardinal vowels in the vocal tract.[3]

Contemporary Hasidic Yiddish

Spoken Yiddish within contemporary Hasidic communities has seen the emergence of a new set of demonstrative determiners, *de, deys*, and *deye*. *Deye (determiner)* and *deys* (pronoun) are both used in the singular. They roughly correspond to the English word 'This'. For example, one may hear *deye yingl iz groys* 'This boy is big', but for the pronoun form it would be *Deys iz groys* 'This is big'. *Deys*, like *dos* (from which it is likely derived, and blended with *di*) when functioning as a pronoun, is used only for non-human subject nouns. Finally, *deye* 'these' is used for plural and can also function as a pronoun. Curiously, *dey*, *deys*, and *deye* do not appear in Hasidic Yiddish in written form, reflecting the wide divergence between spoken and written forms among Hasidic Yiddish speakers.

A common belief, especially among non-native or academically-trained Yiddish speakers, is that the case and gender system is disappearing from Hasidic Yiddish, though this has been found to be a misapprehension.

In casual usage of Hasidic Yiddish, especially in spoken form, the definite articles *der*, *di*, and *dos* often appear to have shifted to a more general single definite article *de* in the nominative, accusative, and dative cases, for both singular and plural, complemented by the demonstrative determiners *de, deys*, and *deye*.

However, more recent studies of Hasidic Yiddish publications show that a definite case and gender system exists in written Hasidic Yiddish, albeit in a modified, and in some cases, more relaxed, form. *Der* is widely used for masculine nouns, but never for feminine, even as the use of *di* has crept beyond the feminine and the plural. In the accusative and dative cases, Hasidic Yiddish uses the definite article *dem* and its corresponding inflected nouns for the masculine case, and, to a lesser degree, to the dative feminine, where applicable. However, the usage of *der* for the accusative feminine is more relaxed, and is often replaced by *di*.

On the whole, written Hasidic Yiddish appears largely dependent on an individual writer's knowledge of Yiddish grammar and specific editorial style guides. More established publications, such as *Der Yid*, *Di Tzeitung*, and *Maales* adhere to the case and gender system more closely (as, in the case of the first two, is reflected in their publication names). The same is true for much of what published in Israel, such as the works of the popular children's book author Menachem Mendel. *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, published for many decades by Agudath Israel of America until 2013 and whose many issues are still widely read in Hasidic communities, adhered meticulously to the usual standards, as did the Jerusalem-based *Dos Yiddishe Licht*, and its present incarnation, *Balaychtungen*. *Maales*, in particular, has since its inception in the 1990s placed strong emphasis on standards and consistency for both grammar and orthography.

Newer Hasidic Yiddish publications show greater variance among their writers, some of whom show adherence to standard Yiddish orthographic styles and conventions, while others do not, suggesting that editorial guidelines focus largely on content and article structure, and don't have strong style preferences. This is seen not only for case and gender, but also on matters of spelling, punctuation, and the use and styling of English words in transliteration.

A more accurate observation is that Hasidic communities show less concern for grammatical rules — neither for Yiddish nor for the widely-used scholastic Hebrew (nor, for that matter, for English). This could be due to a vestigial aversion to the study of grammar, or *dikduk*, within ordinary educational curricula, originally a reaction to the 19th century Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, which sought to increase grammatical knowledge and standards for both Yiddish and Hebrew. Another possible cause for grammatical standards that differ somewhat from conventional academic Yiddish is the tendency among Hasidim towards autodidactism in adulthood, as the educational emphasis for children and adolescents is largely on religious studies, especially for boys, who tend to be more Yiddish-speaking than girls. Despite these, however, Hasidic Yiddish is nonetheless still highly standardized, suggesting that standards are learned as first principles directly from the language as it is used, and simply lack deference to standards-creating institutions who have ignored more nuanced linguistic developments in post-World War II Yiddish-speaking communities.

[14][15]

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