

Tel Aviv University
School of Philosophy, Linguistics and Science Studies,
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THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 27/11/2025

16:15-17:45

Webb 103

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Prefixhood as a Postsyntactic Requirement: Evidence from South Caucasian

The coexistence of suffixation and prefixation in a single language ostensibly challenges Baker's (1985) generalization that morpheme order largely reflects the order of syntactic projections. In the pre-Nanosyntax literature, prefixation has been accounted for either by positing narrow syntax-internal diacritics related to head movement (e.g., Harley 2011 building upon Speas 1991; or Bye & Svenonius 2012), or by overtly specifying a given affix as a prefix or suffix (Ackema & Neeleman 2004; 2005; Wolf 2008, a.o.). The Nanosyntactic literature, on the other hand, argues in favor of syntax-internal derivation of prefixes that does not make recourse to affix-specific diacritic at any stage of derivation (Starke 2018; Vanden Wyngaerd et al. 2022, a.o.).

I address the derivation of ordinals in three South Caucasian languages – Georgian, Megrelian, and Svan. I show that linearization of ordinal-deriving prefixes in these languages necessarily involves displacement that violates syntactic constituency and the Coordinate Structure Constraint. Accordingly, this displacement must be postsyntactic, contrary to the premises of Nanosyntax. Moreover, on the assumption that Head Movement obeys island constraints, the diacritic that triggers the displacement must be active at the postsyntactic stage, pace Harley 2011.

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