A héber nyelv története

History of the Hebrew language

BMA-HEBD-201

Tamás Biró

Introduction:
descriptive linguistics, historical linguistics and the history of a language

February 9, 2022

Practical issues:

- Website of the course: http://birot.web.elte.hu/courses/2022-nyelvt/

    Password?

- Tamás Biró: biro.tamas@btk.elte.hu

    http://birot.web.elte.hu/, http://www.birot.hu/

- Office hours: by appointment (email)

- (Possibly extra meetings, should meetings be cancelled).

Aims and aspects of the course:

1. <u>History of the Hebrew language</u>   *— as a narrative*
   - Linguistic history   → *in order to support other courses*
   - Social and cultural history   ← *topics of other courses, new perspective*

2. <u>Descriptive and historical linguistics</u>   *— as a discipline*
   (introduction and capita selecta; comprehensiveness not being a goal)

3. <u>Chapters in linguistics</u> *(i. e., general linguistics)* for scholars of Hebrew:
   - main subfields   and their basic concepts
   - schools, paradigms, perspectives   and their research questions, methodologies
   - fascinating, possibly still open and "hot" issues

Aims and aspects of the course (cont'd):

4. a.   Revision of <u>Biblical</u> and <u>modern</u> Hebrew grammar:
    – Language learning   = acquiring language skills. *As opposed to:*
    – Descriptive grammar = conscious reflection upon acquired skills.
   b.   <u>Rabbinical</u> and <u>medieval</u> Hebrew: systematizing your experiences.

5. **Skills to acquire** (partially in this semester, and partially later, based on what we'll discuss here):
   ✓ When analyzing texts, sensitivity to linguistic (nyelvi & nyelvészeti) details.
   ✓ Linguistic (nyelvi & nyelvészeti) details help you, whatever you do with a text.
   ✓ Formulating sound research questions and finding the adequate methodology.
      Rejecting illegitimate research questions, flawed methodologies and pseudo-scientific answers.

Structure of the course:

1. A narrative about the history of the language.
2. Methods in historical linguistics.

Topics in pairs

1. Lecture   +   including your questions and critical comments!

2. Assignments, e.g., analyzing a text from a linguistic perspective.

Requirements

Grading:

- Assignments during the semester (10 × 5% = 50%).

- Take-home exam (50%) during the exam period.

  Topics covered in class, "supported" by literature.

1. Defining basic concepts, characterizing certain historical periods, essays, the history of a certain linguistic phenomenon, etc.

2. Application of the acquired skills and knowledge: analyzing samples texts.

Literature

- <u>As a textbook</u>:
  - Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–75, 112–129, 161–272.
  - Dobos Károly, *Sém fiai. A sémi nyelvek és a sémi írásrendszerek története* (Budapest: Pázmány Egyetem eKiadó és Szent István Társulat, 2012), pp. 23–64, 119–245.
  - Kálmán László, „Történeti nyelvészet", in: *Bevezetés a nyelvtudományba*, 2. bővített kiadás (Budapest: Tinta Kiadó, 2007), pp. 105-120. http://budling.hu/~kalman/course/bevezetes/kalmanTron.pdf.
  - Chaim Rabin: *A Short History of the Hebrew Language*. Orot publication, 1973. http://www.adath-shalom.ca/rabin_he.htm.
- Possibly further literature on the website (username, password) / in Teams.

To read by the exam (is there a master copy in the library?)

By the exam

Can be ordered

Read it today!

Read it during the semester.

Preliminary program — nutshell of a nutshell

Periods of the Hebrew language:

0. *Semitic > "*Proto-Hebrew"
1. Biblical Hebrew (BH)
2. Rabbinical/Mishnaic Hbrw (RH)
3. Medieval Hebrew (MedH)
4. Modern / Israeli Hebrew (IH)

"Levels" of language:

- Phonology (and phonetics)
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Semantics and pragmatics
- Lexicon

"Aspects" of language:

- Historical linguistics
- Sociolinguistics
- Psycholinguistics

Előzetes tematika

1. Bevezetés: leíró nyelvészet, történeti nyelvészet és nyelvtörténet (BT)

2. A proto-hébertől a klasszikus bibliai héberig; epigrafikus emlékek (KK)

3. Történeti-összehasonlító nyelvészet 1 (családfamodell) és fonológia (BT)

4. A klasszikus bibliai hébertől Qumránig; a szamaritánus héber (KK)

5. Dialektológiai kitekintés: nyelvjárások a Héber Bibliában? (KK)

6. Történeti nyelvészet 2 (hullámmodell) és morfológia (BT)

7. Misnai/rabbinikus héber (KK)

8. Szociolingvisztika 1 (diglosszia), a lexikon és szemantika (BT)

…

Előzetes tematika

...

9. Középkori héber és az ún. zsidó nyelvek. Szociolingvisztika 2 (pidzsin és kreol).

A héber grammatika fejlődése a középkorban (BT)

10. A pijjutok és a középkori költészet nyelve (KK)

11. A héber nyelvújítás (KK)

12. Szintaxis, strukturalista és generatív nyelvészet, pszicholingvisztika (BT)

+1. Összefoglalás gyanánt vita: vajon sémi nyelv-e a modern héber?

Kenesei István (szerk.):
A nyelv és a nyelvek
(sok kiadás)

Kálmán László – Trón Viktor:
Bevezetés a nyelvtudományba.
(2., bővített kiadás, Tinta Kiadó, Budapest, 2007)
http://budling.hu/~kalman/course/bevezetes/kalmanTron.pdf

Introduction to linguistics (1)

Language = tool for communication?

- „The language of music / arts / rituals"

- Jacques Derrida and others: everything is a "text" – hence, has "language".
  Semiotics = the science of signs.

- But not for the linguists!
  Linguistics = science of linguistic signs (signals in *verbal* communication).

- *Double articulation* (aka. *duality of patterning*) of the linguistic sign:
  1. Sounds without meaning → morphemes, words with atomic meaning.
  2. Words with atomic meaning → sentences with complex meaning.
  => Open **system**, with infinite (≠ unbounded) expressive force.

- The **linguistic sign** is (1) arbitrary, therefore (2) based on convention, which
  (3) must be acquired, and (4) changes in time and varies across speech communities.

Levels of self-organization in a linguistic sign

sign **=**

form   **+**   **meaning**

Changes in morphology

Morphology:

dog + s
dog[z]

🐕 + *pluralis*
🐕 🐕 🐕

Word order and agreement

Syntax:

big + dogs

big dogs / *The dogs are big*

↕ + 🐕 🐕 🐕
🐕 🐕 🐕

Semantics:
What are the "atomic" meanings (e. g., 'book', 'big', plural)? How do they get combined?

Levels of language

	Sign	**=**	**Form**	**+**	**Meaning**

- Sounds   segments, stress, intonation…   ---
  syllable, phonological word, intonational phrase…

  Phonetics: *how sounds are produced, spread, perceived*

  Phonology: *the system of the sounds in a language, and their systematic behavior*

- Words   morphemes → words   atomic meanings
  Morphology: the grammar of words   word meanings

- Sentences   words → phrases   phrase meanings
  phrases → sentences   sentence meanings

  Syntax:

- Texts

The linguistic signal embedded

- "Primary" structure of the linguistic sing:

  Sound → morpheme → word → phrase → sentence → text

  + stress, intonation, etc.

- Non-verbal signs (e. g., head and hand movements) added on top of ling. sign.

  Non-verbal signs do not have double structure and might be more iconic.

- The linguistic sign   in its communicative context: *pragmatics*

- The linguistics sign   in its social context: *sociolinguistics*

  Examples: varieties of a language *(what counts as one language?)* as a function of social structure (and geography → dialectology), linguistic expressions of identity (class, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation…), of social relations and politeness (e. g., greetings, *tu / Du* vs. *vous / Sie* forms)…

Introduction to linguistics (2)

There are many ways of writing the history of a language. One is to describe in detail the changes throughout its existence which affected its sounds, script and spelling, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Another is to relate the history of its literature and to characterize the language of the most important works in each period. Or we may follow the contacts the language had with other languages, be it those of geographical neighbours or languages of civilization or religion, and note the influence each of these exerted upon the language with which we deal. Contrariwise, we could observe how our language influenced others, the interest it aroused, and enumerate the outstanding scholars who studied it and the results of their researches. The Hebrew language has been treated, though not exhaustively, in all the ways mentioned.

This little book adopts a different way. It endeavours to outline the links and relations between the Hebrew language and the Jewish people at various periods and to estimate the influence of changes in Jewish social life upon the use and character of the language and the services which it performed for the people in varying circumstances. The tendency of this

Rabin: *A Short History…1973:5.*

Points to note:
- „historiography"
- linguistic levels: phonology, morphology, syntax
- vocabulary
- writing, spelling
- language of sources
- language contacts
- history of the people
- history of the discipline

Why? questions in linguistics

Given a linguistic observation: <u>why</u> is it so?

- <u>Because</u> this way it has developed:
    historical explanations.

- <u>Because</u> this is the way it is coded in the human brain:
    cognitive explanations.

- <u>Because</u> this is the way it fulfills its (social) functions (namely: communication): *functional explanations.*

- <u>Because</u> what the child can learn *(learnability).*

- …

- <u>Because</u> it happened to developed this way:
    be not afraid of this answer!

<u>Example:</u>
Why V2 word order in IH?

- Because it developed
    BH *VSO* > IH *V2 (why?)*

- Because the human brain, hence, the languages of the world only allow a few possible word orders.

- Because V2 makes information structure easy to decode.

- Because V2 is easy to learn.

- …

- Csak!   Why not?

An over-simplified history of linguistics

		Linguistics is a tool to…	Language belongs to…
Middle Ages	*"Philological" linguistics*	…analyze (holy) texts.	… a text or author.

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1st half of 20th century	*Structuralist linguistics*	… studying human signs.	… a society, population.
2nd half of 20th century	*Generative linguistics*	… studying human brain.	… a brain or a species.

Why interested in linguistics?

- Tool for:
  - philosophy
  - exegesis:

    religious or literary
  - history
  - sociology
  - semiotics
  - biology, psychology, brain science
  - language technology
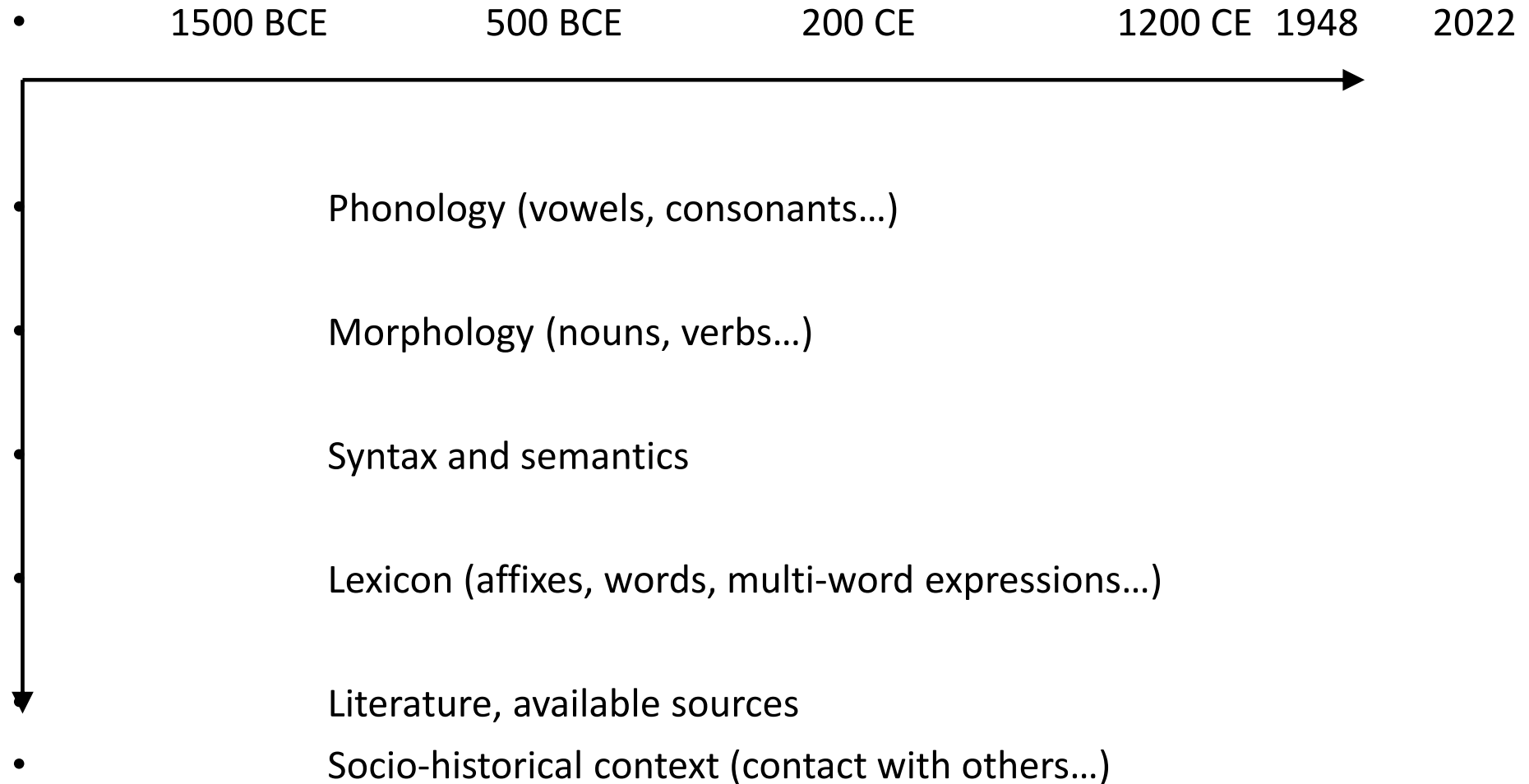 - language teaching

- Aim in itself:

understand language as a system

- expressing thought
- changing in time
- of signs (socially agreed)
- reflecting social facts
- implemented in the brain
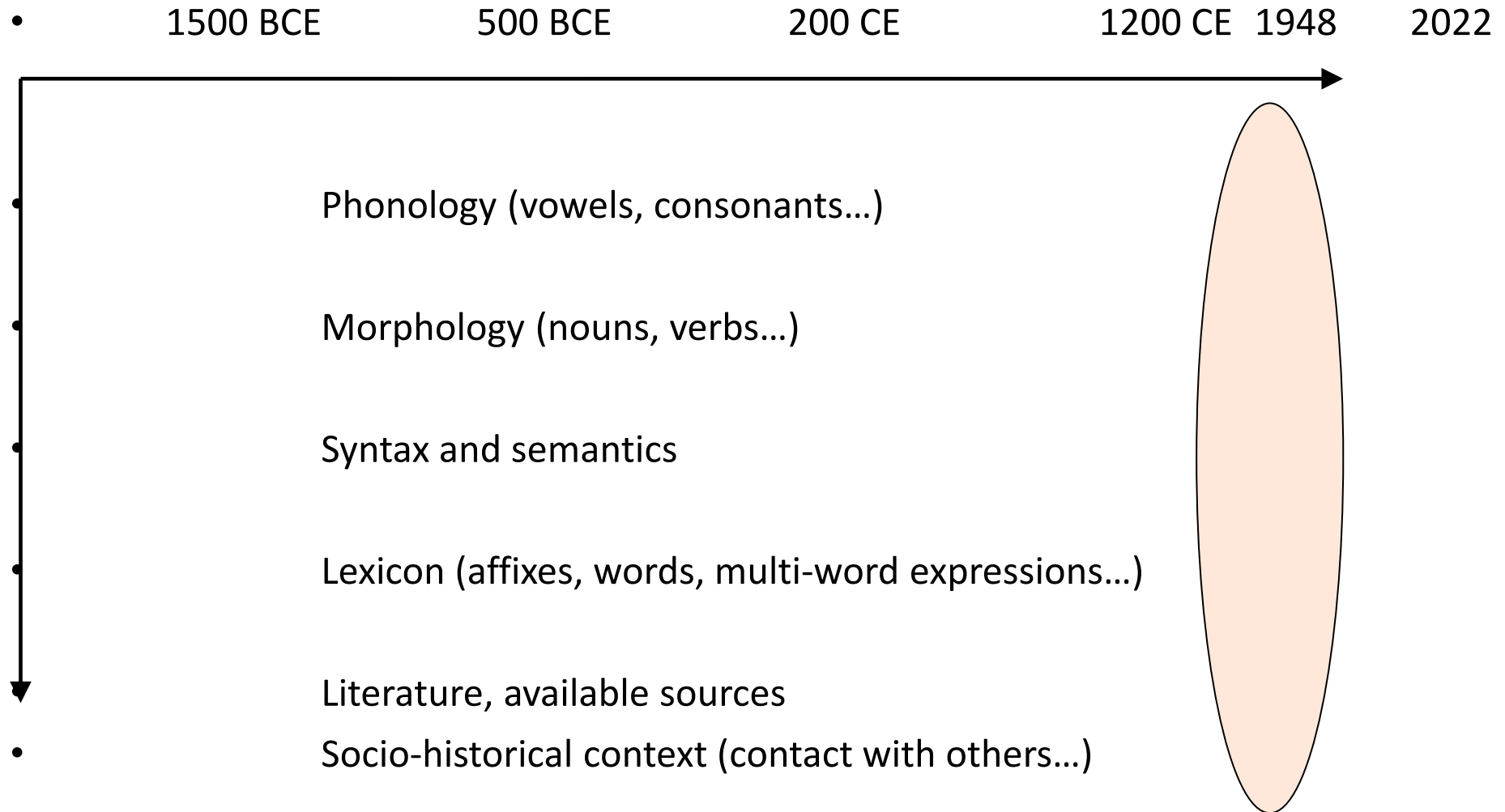- encoding information
- learned/acquired without effort

Two dimensions:
synchrony (one state) *vs. diachrony* (change)
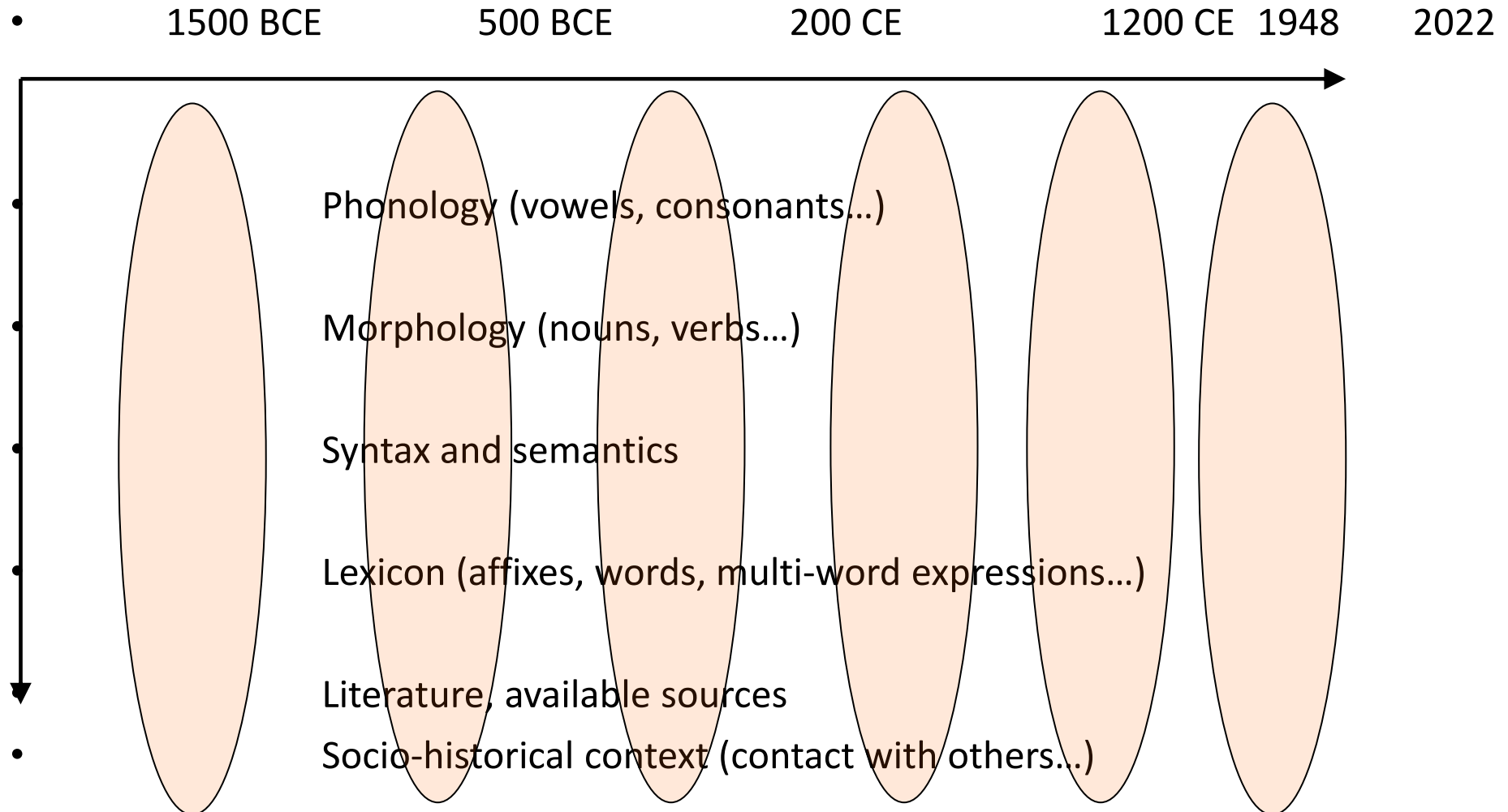
Language as a complex dynamic system

1500 BCE   500 BCE   200 CE   1200 CE 1948   2022

- Phonology (vowels, consonants…)

- Morphology (nouns, verbs…)

- Syntax and semantics

- Lexicon (affixes, words, multi-word expressions…)

- Literature, available sources
- Socio-historical context (contact with others…)

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Two dimensions:
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State in a specific time

| 1500 BCE | 500 BCE | 200 CE | 1200 CE | 1948 | 2022 |

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Hebrew: (1+) 4 big periods and sub-periods

0. *Proto-Semitic > *proto-northwest-Semitic > *proto-Canaanite > *<u>proto-Hebrew</u>.   *"Family try: *hypothesized ancestors és relatives"*

1. <u>Biblical Hebrew</u> (BH):   *"Did King David speak the language of the Bible?"*
   Pre-classical (PCBH), classical (CBH), late (LBH)   + Qumran (QH)
   Historical Hebrew ↔   Masoretic Hebrew = Tiberias Hebrew (TH)

2. <u>Mishnaic/Rabbinic Hebrew</u> (RH): tanaitic and amoraic
   "A spoken language written"

3. <u>Medieval Hebrew</u> (MedH):   *"Dead or alive? The blooming dead"*

4. <u>Modern</u> Hebrew, Israel Hebrew, the Israeli language: haskala, language revival, contemporary IH   *"Is the language of Israel evidently Hebrew?"*

Further relevant languages

- Aramaic
  - Old Aramaic; Imperial Aramaic; Biblical Aramaic
  - Middle Aramaic; Eastern and Western Late Aramaic(s)
  - Talmudim and certain midrashim; Zohar; liturgy, Haggada etc.

- Judeo-languages / Jewish languages
  - Judeo-Aramaic: from Biblical Aramaic, to Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish Aramaic, to modern Judeo-Aramaic languages.
  - Judeo-Greek: from Hellenism to *Yevanit* (Judeo-modern Greek).
  - Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, Yiddish, Judesmo/Ladino/Judeo-Spanish…
  - … and many more Judeo-languages…   including the *Karaim* language.

If time permits

When learning for the exam, give it some thought.

Introduction to linguistics (3)

The cycle of scientific research *(in theory)*

1. Data collection
2. Comparison and analysis of the collected data
3. Interpreting and/or explaining the data
4. Theory construction / interpretive framework
5. Prediction based on theory
6. Testing the prediction: collecting new data
7. Rejection (falsification), corroboration ("it is plausible") or refining the theory
8. New predictions… new data… etc.

Research question

↓

Methodology

↓

Answer
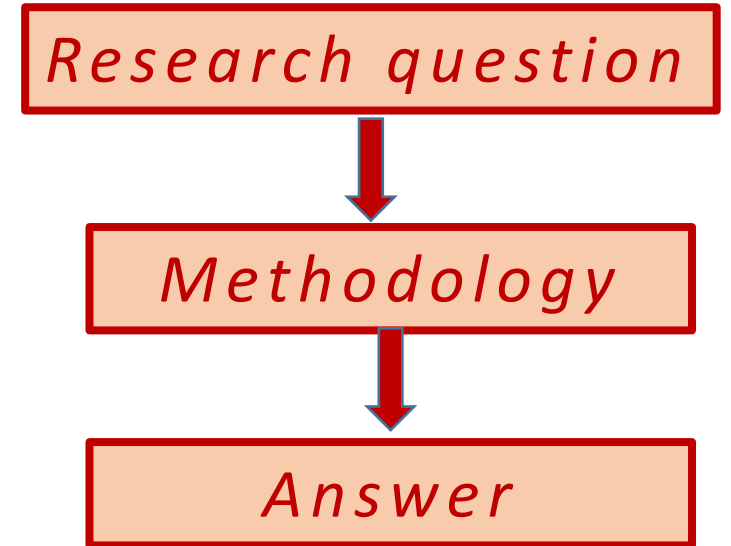
Can it be applied to linguistics?

Sources of linguistics

(**Pre**scriptive linguistics [**elő**író]: "academic lg")   vs.   **de**scriptive linguistics [**le**író]

- Contemporary languages:
  - Whatever the <u>native speaker</u> utters / deems correct.
  - Observations and controlled experiments.
  - Adults, children, L2 learners… observed.

- Languages of the past:
  - Only written data. No sound recording. No chance to ask questions or to run experiments.
  - Differences in oral and written modalities. Oral traditions + later redactions? Errors by copyists?
  - Universals: true for all human languages; hence, for past languages, as well?
  - Comparison to related languages (<u>cognates</u>), in our case, to Semitic languages.
  - <u>Inner reconstruction</u>: irregularities originating from regular behavior in the past?

Comparing languages: *connected or not connected?*

Possible causes of similarities between two languages:

- Common ancestor

   Proto-Semitic *šalām > Hebrew šalōm ~ Arabic salām*

- Contact linguistics, areal and cultural factors (<u>borrowing</u>:

   Hebrew שק ~ English *sack* ~ Hungarian *zsák*; Hb. טלוויזיה ~ Eng. *television*)

- Linguistic universals: [t] in Hebrew, Hungarian, English, etc.

- Language typology: two linguistic genders in Hebrew and French.

- Randomness: Suffix *–i* added to geographic names:

                                  Hebrew ישראלי ~ Hungarian *izraeli*.

NB: <u>notational conventions</u>: [t], ~, *example* 'meaning', *, >

Possible causes of language change

- External factors:
  - Borrowing from neighboring languages[s], such as
    - words (lexical items) borrowed,
    - sounds, semantics distinctions, syntactic structures borrowed.

- External or internal changes:
  - Emergence of a standard / literary / written / official... language.
  - A feature of a dialect, sociolect or other language variety spread in the language.

    [*What is a language?*   Language, language variety, idiolect   ]

Possible causes of language change (cont'd)

- Inner changes:
  - Word formation, onomatopoeia, linguistic creativity…

    _____

  - „Optimization" of a system: minimal effort AND maximal expressivity.
  - „Optimization" of a system: systematicity, analogy, „what is logical?", etc.
  - Unfaithful language acquisition by next generation of learners:

    e.g., grammaticalization,   e.g., reanalysis of linguistic structures.

- The interaction of inner and external factors:
  - A borrowing triggers an internal change:

    e.g., new words → a new sound → restructuring of the phoneme system.

At all times, keep in mind the truth about comparative linguistics, indeed about all of linguistics. Nothing is real except the raw facts of the language, the words people say, the scratching on the rock. All linguistic analysis is fiction or educated guess; all linguistic description is a more-or-less simplified and distorted mapping of the complexities of speech on a sheet of paper. When drawing a conclusion that is elegant and innovative, one should not fall in love with it. Remember, with honesty and humility, that one new fact can reshuffle the cards and force a totally different (but equally elegant) analysis.
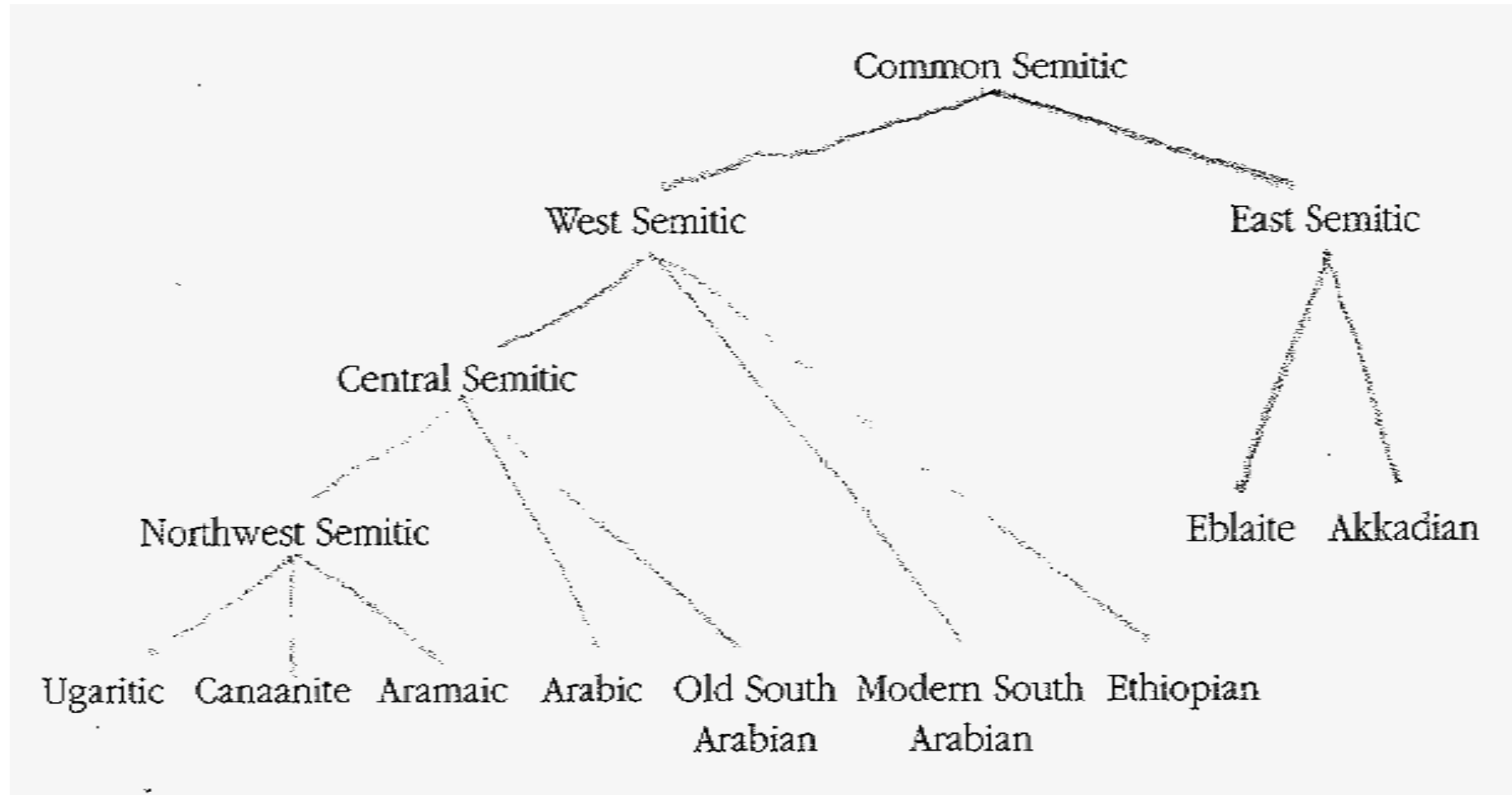
Patrick. R. Bennett: *Comparative Semitic Linguistics*, p. 67.

More on it in a special course on Semitic linguistics.

Historical linguistics (preliminary)

Language family and family tree
(approx. the standard version today)

John Huehnergard: 'Introduction'. In: John Kaltner and Steven L. McKenzie (eds.): *Beyond Babel: A Handbook for BH and Related Languages.* SBL 2002. Pp. 1-18.

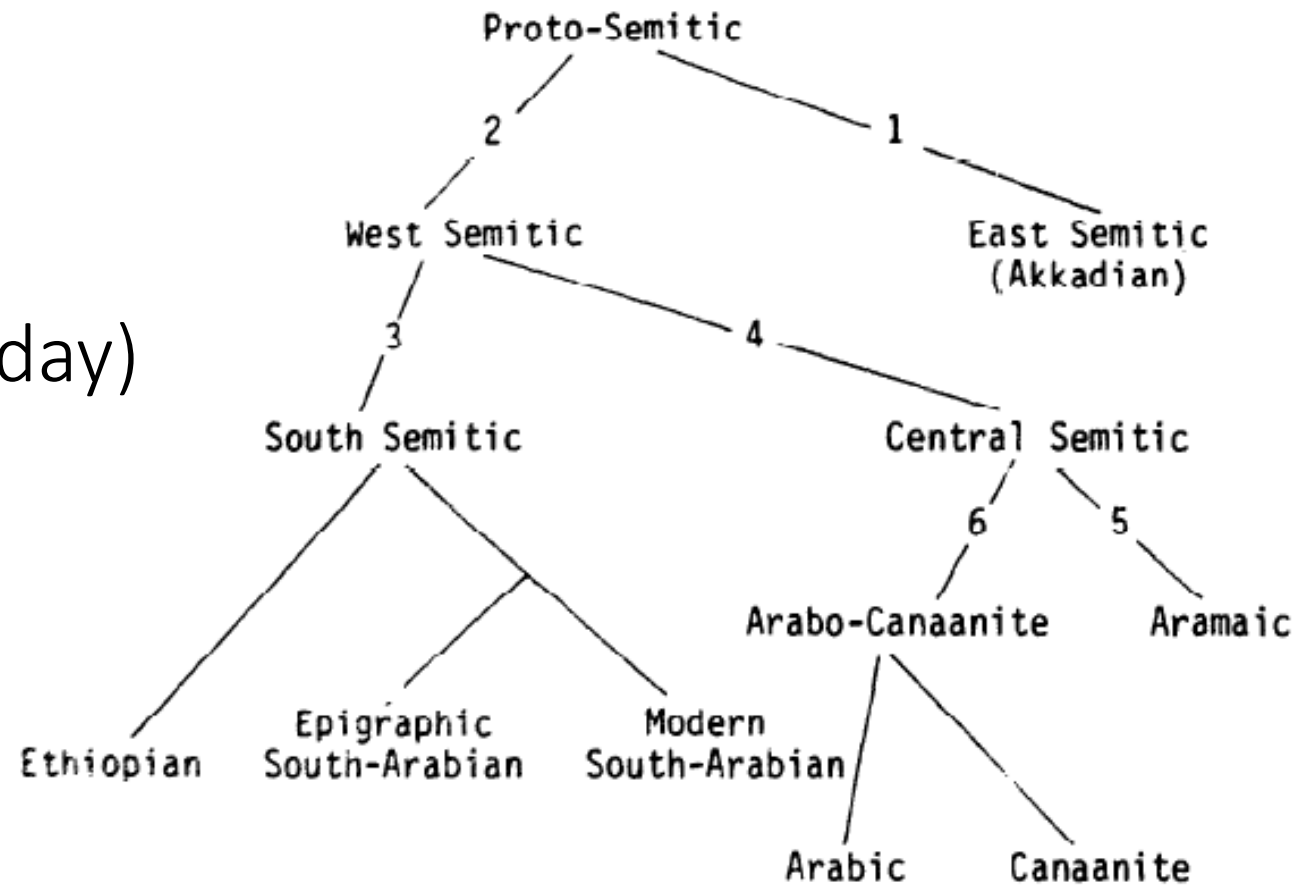# Language family and family tree
(a less standard version today)

Fig. 2. The genealogical tree of Semitic. 1: Akkadian – archaic in many respects. 2: West-Semitic – innovation: adoption of a suffix-conjugation for the past tense (4.2.2). 3: South-Semitic – innovation: Generalization of -k- in the past tense (2.1), generalization of a closed vowel in verbal prefixes (2.2). 4: Central Semitic – innovation: adoption of Jussive +u for the nonpast (4.2.3), generalization of -t- in the past tense (2.1), generalization of the same vowel for verbal prefixes in one verb (2.2). 5: Aramaic – archaic feminine plural (4.1). 6: Arabo–Canaanite – innovation: adoption of -na as a feminine plural ending in verbs (4.1).

Family tree model (preliminary)

- <u>Synchronic linguistics</u>: the state of the language in a specific moment.
  Family tree = typology, clustering based on similarities.

- <u>Diachronic linguistics</u>: the change of language in times.
  Family tree = a narrative about the gradual differentiation of languages, with subgroups branching away from a hypothetical common ancestor.

- Historical-comparative linguistics: what is the most plausible narrative?

- <u>Important</u>: history of languages ≠ history of the peoples speaking them, nor the history of the culture (etc.) of the peoples speaking them.

Assignment for next week

Következő órára: olvasandó + házi feladat

1. To read: Kálmán–Trón, 105–120 („Történeti nyelvészet"),
                   Rabin, 5–24 (Preface, II és III)   [+ if possible, also IV]

   + in two-weeks time: Kálmán–Trón, 86–104 („Fonetika és fonológia")

2. Create a family tree!

   - Some features of some fictive languages presented in the following table:
     http://birot.web.elte.hu/courses/2018-nyelvt/hf2.pdf   (and on the next slide).

   - Create the family tree of these languages.

   - More solutions are possible. Propose arguments for your solution.

   - Email to: biro.tamas@btk.elte.hu.

   - Deadline: Tuesday noon (12:00).

Lan-guage	Genders (masc., fem., neutral)	Declen-sion	Article front/back	Dual form	Conjugation for number and person	The verb *to be*	original *k* becomes	original *p* becomes	original *t* becomes	Umlaut
A	3	+	–	+	+		k	p	t	+
B	3	+	B	+	+	–	k	p	t	+
C	3	+	B	–	+	–	k	p	t	+
D	3	+	B	–	+	–	k	p	t	+
E	3	–	B	–	–	–	k	p	t	+
F	2-3	–	B	–	–	–	k	p	t	+
G	2	–	B	–	–	–	k	g	t	+
H	2	–	B	–	– (+)	–	k	p	t	+
I	0	–	F	–	– (+)	+	k	p	t	(+)
J	2	–	F	–	+	+	k	p	t	(+)
K	2	(+)	F	–	+	+	k	p	t	–
L	0	–	F	–	–	–	k	p	t	–
M	3	+	F	–	+	+	k	p	t	+
N	3	+	F	–	+	+	k, ch	pf, f, ff	z, s, ts	+
O	3	+	F	–	+	+	k, ch	f, ff	z, s, ts	+

() seldom   + yes   – no   F: article in front of the noun   B: (definite) article after the noun

Thank you for your attention

and see you next week