

AFFIX SUSPENSION: THE ISSUES

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Suspended affixation (or, equivalently, affix suspension) is what you see, or indeed don't see, in this Turkish sentence:

Tebrik ve teşekkür-ler-im-i sunarım.

congratulation and thank-PL-1SG.POSS-ACC I.offer

'I offer my congratulations and thanks'

In a syntactic construction (namely coordination) where two members (nouns) can potentially be affixed for the same inflectional categories (number, person and number of possessor, case), only the second is, but the first isn't. The first could be suffixed too (*tebrik-ler-im-i ...*), with no great semantic or pragmatic difference in this particular case. As everybody knows, however, it does make a difference whether you suspend or don't in cases like this, in English and elsewhere:

I love Laurel('s) and Hardy's films.

Laurel and Hardy did make a few films separately, and you may find these less appealing than their joint ones.

The term "suspended affixation" was probably coined by G. L. Lewis in his *Turkish Grammar* (1967), and has subsequently found particular favour in Turkic linguistics (see further <http://ling.uni-konstanz.de/pages/home/kabak/papers/Kabak2007saff.pdf>). However, the phenomenon as such had long been on the agenda of morphological typology. In the Humboldt/Steinthal tradition, it was most notably taken into account by Franz Nikolaus Finck in his *Die Haupttypen des Sprachbaus* (1910), where it is subsumed under the notion of "group inflection". (What's nowadays called "phrase marking", as opposed to "word marking". See the editor's introduction to *Double Case*, if you find the original sources too heavy-going.)

Suspended affixation is, however, not something limited to inflection; derivational affixes can be suspended, too (subject to morphological and prosodic conditions; cf. Booij 1985, Zagana 1990, Okada 1999, Smith 2000, also Artstein 2005 on semantics):

This stuff is neither eat- nor drink-able.

Affix suspension bears instructively on questions of the interface of morphology and syntax: to put it neutrally, it shows that morphological construction and syntactic construction do not proceed as independently of each other as one could assume otherwise. Further, affix suspension is worth special attention because it isn't automatic. Here are two English examples, one from inflection (with no stem alternation induced by the suffix) and the other from derivation (with a semi-regular sort of stem alternation induced by the suffix), where suspension is equally out of the question:

She eat(-s) and drink-s.*

His theory lacks wid(-th) and dep-th.*

The question is how suspension is licensed and constrained, and the answer demands that one look not only at the morphology and syntax of constructions, but also at their phonology/prosody and semantics/pragmatics.

One general idea in morphological typology, at least implicitly (explicitly in Plank 1991 and 1999), was that the bonding of affixes can be tighter or looser (in a morphological sense, though also reflected in the phonology of constructions), and that the looser they are the more easily they are suspended. It would follow that clitics, being even more loosely bound to their hosts than the loosest of affixes (namely only in a phonological sense), should suspend even more easily — not to mention non-clitic function words. But then, the suspendability or otherwise of clitics and non-clitic function words is a hornets' nest. Even the basic facts about well known languages are often unclear. Can you or can't you suspend in such instances?

A man and [?](a) child came.

Ein Mann und [?](ein) Kind kamen.

N'Mann und [?](n')Kind kamen.

For certain languages, you're in for big surprises if you're attitude towards suspension is on the strict side. On the evidence of the internet, modern German, for example, is almost like Turkish in what people are prepared to suspend producing texts for the net, be it clitics, affixes, or even meaningless syllabic word-parts (*Mann und Frau-en* 'men [overt PL would be *-er* plus umlaut] and woman-PL', *ess und trink-t* 'eat and drink-2PL.IND.PRES', *Afri und Ameri.ka* 'Afri[ca] and America', *entwed oder* 'eith[er] or').

The tightness and looseness of morphological bonding has been assumed to be interconnected with other parameters of morphological typology, adding up to an overall distinction between agglutination and flexion (cf. Plank 1991, 1999). However, this notion of tightness/looseness itself needs to be further substantiated. In particular, is tightness/looseness of bonding a property of affixes or of affixees or of both? On the side of the affixee, bonding strength could be defined straightforwardly in terms of cooccurrence requirements: morphological bonding is tight if an affixee (root, stem, word, phrase, depending on the language) in all morphosyntactic circumstances requires a particular affix (an exponent of a particular morphological category) to form a complete morphological word. Exponents which are overtly null need to be made allowances for, too, given that (the terms of) the categories they express are implied by an affixee as a default interpretation. Thus, for example, with nouns such as *puer* 'boy' (a 2nd declension r-stem) in Latin, with no overt exponent for NOM.SG, the stem would be interpreted as being specified for case and number to form a complete morphological word, whereas nouns in the absolute form in Turkish, serving as subjects and non-specific direct objects, would be considered complete in their own right, requiring no specification for case nor number.

The syntax of constructions was not normally held responsible for differential affix suspendability. It deserves to be examined, though, whether the suspension of affixes, and of prosodically weak words is licensed, not by the looseness of

morphological combinations, but by the tightness of syntactic constructions and their correspondingly tight semantics.

Let me now briefly run through what I consider to be the main questions that need to be addressed when dealing with affix suspension.

- **What is suspended affixation in the first place?**

Answer: the non-expression of an affix under form-identity and meaning-identity (perhaps with form-identity sometimes licensing meaning-nonidentity)?

If so, is this sort of (German) example an instance of it?

mit mein-em Mann(-e) selig[-en]

mit mein-em selig-en Mann(-e)

‘with my late husband’

(every word in the NP agreeing in gender, number, case, but with the adjective unaffixed when postnominal)

- **What is the relation of suspended affixation to PHRASE MARKING?**

i.e., to patterns such as these: N-CASE; N-ADJ-CASE, with CASE not an agreement category, unlike in German *mein Mann selig*, above: cf. Turkish, where the adjective is, however, prenominal:

el-ler-im-i

hand-PL-1SG.POSS-ACC

‘my hands’ (specific direct object)

küçük-ler-im-i

small-PL-1SG.POSS-ACC

‘my small ones’

küçük el-ler-im-i

small hand-PL-1SG.POSS-ACC

‘my small hands’

- **What are the precise mechanisms of suspension?**

Is such non-expression (akin to) ellipsis — that is, the presence of nothing, as opposed to the absence of something?

Is there a uniform mechanism?

Can suspension (of the relevant kind) also be effectuated by casual/fast-speech phonology? Cf., once more from German (sorry):

Sie komm-en und geh-en.

they come-3PL.IND.PRES and go-3PL.IND.PRES

casually pronounced:

Sie komm(=ng) gehn [kɔm.ŋgɛ:n]

- **What determines the directionality of suspension?**

Is it always the first of two or more identical affixes which is suspended?

Or the first in the case of suffixes and the second in the case of prefixes?

Same directionality differences as with syntactic identity “deletions”

(forward/backward gapping)?

- **Which languages permit (or favour) and which prohibit (or disfavour) suspended affixation (of the genuinely morphological kind)?**

Surely not all permit it all the time ...

- **Which kinds of morphological milieus are conducive to affix suspension?**

Agglutination, with affixes separatist, invariant, loosely-bound,

not flexion, with affixes cumulative, variant, tightly-bound?

- **Is suspended affixation, wherever observed, characteristic of speech or only of writing?**

If speech only, then perhaps a casual speech phenomenon after all;

if writing only, then perhaps something rather artificial

- **What kinds of syntactic constructions admit suspended affixation in the relevant languages?**
Coordination, tight/loose apposition, subordinative constructions, cohesive passages within larger texts, ...
- **What does suspended affixation tell us about the nature of constructions?**
Relevant differences for MORPHOLOGICAL words, PHONOLOGICAL words/clitic groups, SYNTACTIC phrases?
- **What kinds of semantic and pragmatic constraints curb suspended affixation in circumstances where it would be possible on morphosyntactic and phonological grounds?**
Semantic unity or scope, with the functional rationale of suspension being that of morphosyntactic and corresponding semantic GROUPING; frequency; ...
- **What kinds of prosodic constraints curb suspended affixation?**
Phonological wordhood of bases, prosodic weight of affixes, ...
- **What notions of “word” and “phrase” are relevant for accounting for suspended affixation?**
Phonological, morphological, syntactic ...

WORDS CAN BE SUSPENDED, CLITICS CAN OR CAN'T, AFFIXES CAN'T

— true or false, wholly or in parts?

English

DEF ARTICLE TWICE

the father and the brother of John have come

the father and the advisor of John have come

(father ≠ advisor: 2 persons)

*?*the father and the advisor of John has come*

(father = advisor: 1 person)

the father and the uncle of John have come

the father and the mother of John have come

SECOND DEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED (ok?)

the father and brother of John have come

the father and advisor of John have come

(father ≠ advisor: 2 persons)

the father and advisor of John has come

(father = advisor: 1 person)

the father and uncle of John have come

the father and mother of John have come

INDEF ARTICLE TWICE

a car and a bicycle collided

a car and an elk collided

they had a son and a daughter

they had a dumb son and a bright daughter

SECOND INDEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED

**a car and bicycle collided*

**a car and elk collided*

they had a son and daughter

(twins?)

they had a son and heir

they had a dumb son and bright daughter

ok?

German

DEF ARTICLE TWICE

der Vater und der Bruder von Hans sind gekommen

der Vater und der Berater von Hans sind gekommen

(father ≠ advisor: 2 persons)

der Vater und die Mutter von Hans sind gekommen

SECOND DEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED (ok?)

der Vater und Bruder von Hans sind gekommen

der Vater und Berater von Hans sind gekommen

(father ≠ advisor: 2 persons)

der Vater und Berater von Hans ist gekommen

(father = advisor: 1 person)

**der Vater und Mutter von Hans sind gekommen*

DEF-NOM.SG.MASC — DEF-NOM.SG.FEM, overtly non-identical too:

suspension subject to categorial (and formal) identity

die Mutter und die Schwestern von Hans sind gekommen

=> *die Mutter und Schwestern von Hans sind gekommen*

DEF-NOM.SG.FEM — DEF-NOM.PL, but overtly identical (systematic homonymy):

suspension only subject to (systematic) formal identity, rather than categorial identity?

INDEF ARTICLE TWICE

ein Auto und ein Fahrrad sind zusammengestoßen

sie hatten einen Sohn und einen Enkel

sie hatten einen faulen Sohn und einen fleissigen Enkel

SECOND INDEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED

**ein Auto und Fahrrad sind zusammengestoßen*

sie hatten einen Sohn und Enkel

out?

sie hatten einen faulen Sohn und fleissigen Enkel

out?

sie hatten einen Sohn und Erben

French

DEF ARTICLE TWICE

le père et le frère de Jean sont venus

DEF.MASC.SG father and DEF.MASC.SG brother of Jean have come.MASC.PL

le père et le conseiller de Jean sont venus (father ≠ advisor: 2 persons)

DEF.MASC.SG father and DEF.MASC.SG advisor of Jean have come.MASC.PL

**le père et le conseiller de Jean est venu* (father = advisor: 1 person)

le père et l'oncle de Jean sont venus

DEF.MASC.SG father and DEF.MASC.SG uncle of Jean have come.MASC.PL

le père et la mère de Jean sont venus

DEF.MASC.SG father and DEF.FEM.SG mother of Jean have come.MASC.PL

SECOND DEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED (all bad???)

**le père et frère de Jean sont venus*

le père et conseiller de Jean est venu (father = advisor: 1 person)

**le père et oncle de Jean sont venus*

**le père et mère de Jean sont venus*

SECOND DEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED, FIRST DEF ART INFLECTION

COMBINING BOTH CONJUNCTS (SG & SG = PL)

les père et frère de Jean sont venus

DEF.PL father and brother of Jean have come.MASC.PL

les père et conseiller de Jean sont venus (father ≠ advisor: 2 persons!!!)

les père et oncle de Jean sont venus

les père et mère de Jean sont venus

le père et les frères de Jean sont venus

=> *les père et frères de Jean sont venus*

Bavarian

DEF ARTICLE (PROCLITIC OR PREFIX) TWICE

d-Schwesddà und b-Muàddà vom Sepp sà'n kemmà

d-Schwesddà und b-Freindin vom Sepp sà'n kemmà

(sister ≠ friend: 2 persons)

SECOND DEF ARTICLE SUSPENDED

**d-Schwesddà und Muàddà vom Sepp sà'n kemmà*

d-Schwesddà und Freindin vom Sepp is kemmà

(sister = friend: 1 person)

Swedish

DEF ARTICLE (SUFFIX OR ENCLITIC) TWICE

advokat-en och rådgivare-n har kommit

(lawyer =/≠ advisor: 1/2 persons)

lawyer-DEF.SG.UTR and advisor-DEF.SG.UTR has/have come

bil-en och cykel-n är där borta

car-DEF.SG.UTR and bicycle-DEF.SG.UTR is/are over there

bil-en och hus-et är nya

car-DEF.SG.UTR and house-DEF.SG.NEUT is/are new

fisk-ar-na och fågl-ar-na har försvunna

fish-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL and bird-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL has/have disappeared

flick-or-na och goss-ar-na har försvunna

girl-PL_{Decl1}-DEF.PL and boy-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL has/have disappeared

FIRST DEF ARTICLE (SUFFIX OR ENCLITIC) SUSPENDED

**advokat och rådgivare-n har kommit*

(lawyer =/≠ advisor: 1/2 persons)

lawyer and advisor-DEF.SG.UTR has/have come

**bil och cykel-n är där borta*

car and bicycle-DEF.SG.UTR is/are over there

**bil och hus-et är nya*

car and house-DEF.SG.NEUT is/are new

**fisk-ar och fågl-ar-na har försvunna*

fish-PL_{Decl2} and bird-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL has/have disappeared

**fisk och fågl-ar-na har försvunna*

fish and bird-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL has/have disappeared

**flick-or och goss-ar-na har försvunna*

girl-PL_{Decl1} and boy-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL has/have disappeared

**flick och goss-ar-na har försvunna*

girl and boy-PL_{Decl2}-DEF.PL has/have disappeared

DEF ARTICLE (ONE A WORD, THE OTHER A SUFFIX OR ENCLITIC) TWICE

den nya bil-en och den gamla cyckel-n är där borta

DEF. SG.UTR new car-DEF.SG.UTR and DEF. SG.UTR old bicycle-DEF.SG.UTR is/are over there

den nya bil-en och den nya cyckel-n är där borta

DEF. SG.UTR new car-DEF.SG.UTR and DEF. SG.UTR new bicycle-DEF.SG.UTR is/are over there

den unga advokat-en och den unga rådgivare-n är där borta

DEF. SG.UTR young lawyer-DEF.SG.UTR and DEF. SG.UTR young advisor-DEF.SG.UTR is/are over there

SECOND DEF ARTICLE (WORD) SUSPENDED

**den nya bil-en och gamla cyckel-n är där borta*

den nya bil-en och [nya] cyckel-n är där borta

den unga advokat-en och rådgivare-n är där borta

(1 person)

FIRST DEF ARTICLE (SUFFIX/ENCLITIC) ALSO SUSPENDED

**den nya bil och gamla cyckel-n av Jan är där borta*

**den nya bil och [nya] cyckel-n är där borta*

**den unga advokat och rådgivare-n är där borta*

NB: The definite article on nouns, variously analysed as a suffix or an enclitic, is cumulative and variant. It cumulates definiteness and number; it varies with the noun's gender in the singular (uter or neuter: *-(e)n/-(e)t*) and the noun's plural inflection class in the plural (*-na* if PL is in *-or/-ar/-er*, *-a* if PL is in *-n*, *-en* mostly if PL is zero).

GENITIVE SUSPENSION?

flick-or-na-s och pojk-ar-na-s far

girl-PL-DEF.PL-GEN and boy-PL-DEF.PL-GEN father

flick-or-na och pojk-ar-na-s far

'the father of (both) the girls and boys'

NB: Genitive is separative and invariant.

Hungarian (see Moravcsik 2003: 405-438)

DEF SUSPENSION BETTER THAN INDEF SUSPENSION

a lány-ok és (a) fiú-k

the girl-s and (the) boy-s

egy lány és '(egy) fiú

a girl and (a) boy

NO PLURAL SUFFIX SUSPENSION

**lány és fiú-k*

girl and boy-s

ART ADJ and (ART) ADJ N

a red dress and a blue dress

two dresses

ein rotes Kleid und ein blaues Kleid

a red and a blue dress

two dresses

ein rotes und ein blaues Kleid

red and blue dresses

(i) several dresses, all both red and blue

rote und blaue Kleider

(ii) one red dress and one blue dress?

(iii) more than one red dress and
more than one blue dress

a red and blue dress

one dress

ein rotes und blaues Kleid

INDEF N and (INDEF) N and NUM N and (NUM) N, as opposed to ADJ N and (ADJ) N

INDEF

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>a cow and a goat</i> | <i>were/*was missing</i> | 2 animals |
| <i>a cup and a saucer</i> | <i>were/*was missing</i> | 2 objects |
| <i>a phonologist and a syntactician</i> | <i>were/*was missing</i> | 2 persons |
| [?] <i>*a cow and goat</i> | <i>were/*was missing</i> | 2 animals, *1 hybrid |
| <i>a cup and saucer</i> | <i>*were/was missing</i> | 1 unit consisting of 2 parts |
| <i>a phonologist and syntactician</i> | [?] <i>were/was missing</i> | 1 person with 2 talents; <u>also</u> : 2 persons? |

NUM

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| <i>five cows and five goats</i> | <i>were missing</i> | 10 animals altogether |
| <i>five cups and five saucers</i> | | 10 objects altogether |
| <i>five phonologists and five syntacticians</i> | | 10 persons altogether |
| <i>five cows and goats</i> | <i>were missing</i> | 5 animals, not 10 (?): *5 cows, 0 goats [?] 4 cows, 1 goat 3 cows, 2 goats; <u>also</u> : 5 cows and an indefinite number of goats??? |
| <i>five cups and saucers</i> | <i>were missing</i> | 5 cup-saucer units; <u>not</u> : 3 cups, 2 saucers! |
| <i>five phonologists and syntacticians</i> | <i>were missing</i> | 5 persons, not 10 (?): *5 phonos, 0 syntacts [?] 4 phonos, 1 syntacts 3 phonos, 2 syntacts; <u>not</u> : 5 persons, each simultaneously a phonologist and syntactician! <u>also</u> : 5 phonologists and an indefinite number of syntacticians??? |

with PLURAL suspension: **five cow and goats*
 five cup and saucers
 **five phonologist and syntacticians*

ADJ

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>brown cows and brown goats</i> | <i>were all over the place</i> | |
| <i>tiny cups and tiny saucers</i> | | |
| <i>young phonologists and young syntacticians</i> | | |
| <i>brown cows and goats</i> | <i>were all over the place</i> | goats of whatever colour |
| <i>tiny cups and saucers</i> | | saucers also tiny? |
| <i>young phonologists and syntacticians</i> | | syntacticians of any age; <u>or also</u> : young linguists who are simultaneously phonologists and syntacticians? |