The ‘Schizoid’ Nature of Modern Hebrew Linguistics: A Contact Language in Search of A Genetic Past

by
Devon L. Strolovitch

Honors Thesis
Individual Major - Linguistics
April 21, 1997
Speak to me Yiddish, my Jewish land,
And I will speak Hebrew as a matter of course.

- Yankev Glatshteyn
## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
   1.1. A Jewish language in Israel ................................................................. 1
   1.2. Modern Hebrew and Israeli Hebrew .................................................... 3
   1.3. The Revival of Hebrew ............................................................................ 6
   1.4. Issues and objectives ........................................................................... 10

2. HEBREW DIGLOSSIA
   2.1. A Holy Tongue ...................................................................................... 15
   2.2. The phonology of diglossia: Whole and Merged Hebrew ................. 18
   2.3. Language shift as linguistic change ..................................................... 23
   2.4. The Ashkenazic substratum of Israeli Hebrew .................................... 28

3. MODERN HEBREW LINGUISTICS
   3.1. Diachrony vs. synchrony ..................................................................... 33
   3.2. The description of Israeli Hebrew ........................................................ 37
   3.3. Generativism and native Hebrew competence .................................... 42

4. THE STUDY OF SOUND CHANGE IN HEBREW
   4.1. Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Israeli ..................................................... 47
   4.2. Grapho-phonology ............................................................................. 54
   4.3. Non-norrmativity and psychological reality ....................................... 58

5. THE GENEALOGY OF ISRAELI HEBREW
   5.1. Nativization as creolization ................................................................. 63
   5.2. Semitic vs. Slavic: the Ashkenazic substratum revisited ..................... 67
   5.3. The barometer of linguistic change ....................................................... 71
   5.4. Non-genetic development: Abrupt Creolization ................................ 75

6. CONCLUSION
   6.1. A Hebrew Esperanto? .......................................................................... 81
   6.2. Jewish linguistic unity .......................................................................... 83

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... 87
APPENDIX ............................................................................................................... 93
1. INTRODUCTION

So, in one of the streets of Paris, in one of the cafés on the Boulevard Montmartre, I conversed in Hebrew for the first time with one of my acquaintances while we sat at a round table upon which stood two glasses of black coffee. The astonishing sounds of this dead ancient Eastern language, mingled with the din of the gay sounds of the vibrant, lovely and rich French language...


1.1. A JEWISH LANGUAGE IN ISRAEL

If a group of Yiddish speakers replaced all their Yiddish lexical morphemes with Hebrew ones, but continued to use Yiddish phonology and morphosyntax, then surely they no longer speak Yiddish; and the language they speak, though identical to Yiddish grammatically, is not related to Yiddish in the usual sense of being a changed (later) form of Yiddish. And it isn’t Hebrew, either, in spite of its 100 percent Hebrew vocabulary (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 7). This paper is concerned with the origins and development of this language. It has grown out of a mixture sources, characteristic of the ethno-linguistic family to which it belongs. Emerging from the languages in contact at the turn of the century in Palestine, it retained a fairly heterogeneous character in its early years. However, it has since crystallized, developed standard forms of expression, and evolved into a fully natural human language. Its native speaker population numbers approximately one million, most of whom are quite unconscious of the rich linguistic and literary history of the language’s antecedents. It is now the first official language of the State of Israel, the mother tongue of an increasing numbers of native Israeli children, and the most recent addition to the group of
Jewish languages. Its speakers follow a long tradition of Jewish language naming by calling their Judeo-Hebrew language יְהוּדִית [jehudit] -- 'Jewish.'

Lacking a unified national homeland since before the Christian era, and consequently a unified national language, Jewish communities have been characterized by forms of speech which represent a deeply rooted and highly systematic integration of their cultural legacy into their own vernacular. Fishman (1981: 5) defined a Jewish language as one which is phonologically, morphosyntactically, lexico-semantically, or orthographically different from that of non-Jewish socio-cultural networks, and that has some demonstrable function in the role and repertoire of a Jewish socio-cultural network. Some of the more widely-spoken and widely-studied Jewish languages include Yiddish, Judezmo, and Yahudic, each one representing a language related genealogically to an (originally) co-territorial non-Jewish language (German, Spanish, and Arabic respectively), infused with the community’s particular mixture of forms and structures derived from speakers’ knowledge of the Semitic languages of ancient Israel. Each one, in varying degrees, bears a resemblance to the so-called ‘standard’ forms of the parent language, with variation manifesting itself at all levels of linguistic structure, from straightforward lexical borrowing to more deeply-embedded structural interference.

1 All Hebrew forms are given in unpointed script, and all transcriptions, unless otherwise noted, indicate standard Israeli Hebrew pronunciation, even for items discussed within a Biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew context. The transcriptions are thus intended as ‘speech samples’ based on current pronunciation, rather than as phonemic encodings, given the uncertainties regarding the phonemic status of many segments (see section 4).

2 The standard model for the origins of Yiddish as a shift by Romance-speaking Jews to a Rhineland Middle High German dialect, a model most often associated with Max Weinreich, has been challenged in recent years by some Yiddishists. Unable to reconcile the massive Jewish population increases in Slavic-speaking countries that allegedly resulted from the eastward migration of the relatively small group of early Yiddish speakers, some linguists have suggested different geographical (e.g. Faber 1987) as well as linguistic (e.g. Wexler 1990a) origins for the Yiddish language.
Bunis (1981: 53) explains that Jewish language glottonyms 'derive from the name speakers use to refer to themselves, either "Jewish" or "Hebrew'', thus indicating ethnic as opposed to geographic affiliation. For example, 'Yiddish' is the Yiddish-language adjective meaning 'Jewish,' and 'Judezmo' is an equivalent substantive in Judeo-Spanish. American speakers of Yiddish may in fact refer to their Jewish language in English by the glottonym 'Jewish,' bearing further evidence to the tendency of Jewish language speakers to believe that theirs is the only Jewish language (Rabin 1981: 19). According to a theory by Wexler (1990b) which regards the Jewish language of Israel as 'schizoid,' because it is the only language whose origins are consistently misidentified by its speakers, the term 'Hebrew' is misleading. It unites two bodies of genetically unrelated linguistic material under a single glottonym. Therefore, by analogy with other Jewish languages, Wexler suggests 'Yehudit' as the native Hebrew word which could serve as the glottonym for the modern 'schizoid' language (1990b: 40).

1.2. MODERN HEBREW AND ISRAELI HEBREW

Nevertheless, use of the terms 'Judeo-Hebrew' and 'Yehudit' in the preceding paragraphs is, to say the least, curious. Furthermore, the process of linguistic change outlined above does not accurately describe the language spoken by Jews in Israel today. This language is Hebrew, and the native glottonym is יִבְרִית [ivrit], a name that functions quite differently from other

---

3 The only theoretical inconsistency in my method of transcription is with respect to /r/. This phoneme is realized as [ɾ] or [ʁ] in the standard speech of most native Israeli Hebrew speakers, while [r] is specifically indicative of non-Ashkenazic origin or prescriptively-minded speech (see section 4.1 below). Nevertheless, I will be following the convention of most Hebrew linguists, such as Blanc (1968), Rosén (1977), and Bolozky (1978), who use 'r' in both phonetic and phonemic transcriptions of Israeli speech, presumably to 'cover' the variation in articulation of /ɾ/.
Jewish glottonyms. And so it should, as the modern Hebrew language ‘functions’ quite differently from other Jewish languages. In fact, unlike the case of other Jewish languages, nowhere in linguistic literature is Hebrew prefixed in this way, nor is the ancient Semitic language referred to as ‘Judeo-Canaanite’ or its equivalent. And although the prophet Nehemiah (13:24) is among those who make reference to speakers of חֲנַנָּא, no language, Jewish or not, has been referred to in post-Biblical Hebrew in a technical sense by this glottonym (Bunis 1981). Clearly, there is a difference in nomenclature with regard to the modern Hebrew language of Israel, which sets the language apart from the group of Jewish languages in a number of significant ways. Unlike any other attested ‘Judeo-’ language, no matter how divergent from its non-Jewish form, Hebrew is not the vernacular of any known non-Jewish population. The qualification ‘Judeo-Hebrew,’ as with the name ‘Yehudit,’ is not only redundant, but misleading. Both fail to recognize a uniqueness about Hebrew both in Jewish linguistic history and with respect to more general processes of language shift and change. The term חֲנַנָּא, like the term ‘Hebrew,’ is meant to encapsulate at least 3,000 years of linguistic history. It refers simultaneously to the full range of registers and styles currently found in Israeli speech and writing, to the recited language of Jewish prayer, to the written language of 2,000 years of Jewish scholarship, and to the language of the earliest version of the Bible -- a rather heavy duty to bear, as Shavit (1993) puts it.

According to Gold (1983: 77), ‘since Jews have traditionally seen themselves as constituting a nation, it is no wonder that the native names for several Jewish languages all literally mean “Jewish” or “Judaism” or “Hebrew”.’ This statement is all the more appropriate to the Hebrew language, whose existence as the vernacular of Israeli Jews is a direct result of the Zionist
movement, the reassertion of Jewish nationhood at the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore, missing from the ‘Judeo-Hebrew’ scenario described earlier is the fact that there exists a Hebrew vernacular in Israel today only as a result of the conscious decision and deliberate action by a number of individuals and groups to pursue the goal of re-vernacularizing the language spoken by Jews when they last had political autonomy, over 2,000 years ago. This effort culminated in 1948, when Hebrew was declared the first official language of the newly-founded Jewish State in Israel, already the principal language of a half-million speakers and more than 60% of the Jewish population of Palestine (Hofman & Fisherman 1972: 345).

However, as Haim Rosén states, ‘en effet, l’hébreu utilisé actuellement en Israël n’a pas trop de rapports avec la Langue Sainte, beaucoup moins que ne le désirent ceux qui veulent encore y voir la réalisation du rêve de rattacher le peuple d’Israël à son histoire culturelle’ (1958: 89). ‘Hebrew’ alone does not suffice to specify the linguistic result of the national revival, which for the purpose of linguistic study requires a name that distinguishes the unique features of the most recent stage in its 3,000-year history. Weinberg (1981: 62) is strangely correct in suggesting that the naming of Israeli Hebrew merely ‘coincided’ with the birth of the State of Israel:

A fresh name was due because the precipitous development since 1880 had created new linguistic facts, and a strain of Hebrew quite apart from other strains. The political event of 1948 offered an opportunity to take stock, to analyze, to appraise — and since Israel was the center of this new phase of Hebrew, the term Israeli Hebrew was quite fitting.

In a sense, even if the national revival had not officially succeeded in renewing the Jewish homeland in Israel, the linguistic revival had already achieved the renewal of a native Hebrew homeland. Rosén was among the first linguists to
propagate the term 'Israeli Hebrew' as a name and a language of its own in linguistic scholarship, 'as a result of the recognition, by virtue of that same scholarly study, of its historical autonomy' (1977: 15). The term is now used almost universally, even by those who use it to point to the deviance in native modern Hebrew speech in from prescribed norms. I use it in this paper in the same sense as 'Canadian English,' or 'Mexican Spanish,' i.e. to specify for analysis the language spoken by an identifiable population. However, there is a certain difficulty with the term's reference. It derives from the subtle but important distinction between Israeli Hebrew and Modern Hebrew in general, terms which refer to different periods, forms, and domains of the language. The revival of the Hebrew language was indeed a unique linguistic event in human history, but by no means was it a monolithic process. The history of Israeli Hebrew is only one component of the revival, for which the emergence of a Modern Hebrew language was a necessary precursor.

1.3. THE REVIVAL OF HEBREW

For many historians, the Jewish 'Middle Ages' did not end until the second half of the eighteenth century, when a literary movement known as the \( \text{הָֹשָׁכָל} \) [haskalá], 'Enlightenment,' developed among Jews in Germany, and the age of Modern Hebrew began (Sáenz-Badillos 1993). This movement was an overt attempt to integrate Jews and Judaism into modern European civilization. It strove to reassert the link between the rationalistic modern Jew and the classical civilization of his past, as reflected in the Hebrew Scriptures, and thus with modern European culture, through the use of a classical language as a vehicle of secular culture (Shavit 1993). The Enlightenment thus marked the beginning of the 'revival' of Hebrew as a linguistic movement, wherein Hebrew was accorded a role and status associated with an ideological mission. To be sure, Hebrew had
been more than just an 'ancient' language, its service in the day-to-day life of various Jewish communities reflected in the large body of secular poetry, legal documents, and personal communication throughout the centuries. Yet the מַשְׁכִּילִים, 'Enlightened Jews,' sought specifically to create this classical language by purging Hebrew of the linguistic development it had undergone since its disappearance as a vernacular. They insisted on a 'pure' Biblical language, fostering a 'rather fanatical reduction of Hebrew exclusively to its Biblical variety' (Even-Zohar 1990b: 184).

Analogous to the Renaissance and Reformation in the Christian world, the Jewish Enlightenment signified a return to the ancient sources and a dissociation of Hebrew from the canonical authority embodied by the Rabbinic language. This Hebrew was to become both a 'language of reason' and a 'language of passions,' a vehicle for the modernization of Jews and Judaism (Shavit 1993). It was simultaneously a classical tongue, reflecting the golden age of national culture, and a modern language, creating a scientific literature in Hebrew. Harshav (1993: 124) stresses how the first 'revived' Hebrew influenced yet differed from the later speech revival:

The quasi-Biblical style of the Hebrew Enlightenment, which aspired to a 'pure' Hebrew language, suited the idealist taste of the German Romantic tradition and reflected the hatred of Gentiles and Maskilim for the Talmud and for the 'ungrammatical' distortions of Rabbinic Hebrew...The admiration for the 'pure' Biblical style was the legacy of the Enlightenment, which was certainly not a Zionist movement.

The following two centuries witnessed enormous developments in the Hebrew language, in which the grammatical and discursive scope of Hebrew writing expanded into every realm of modern linguistic function. Throughout this development, the revival has consistently been characterized by the intellectual struggle between adherence to the Biblical language and all other linguistic
innovation in the Hebrew language. However, a description of the general expansion of Modern Hebrew is neither within the scope of the present paper, nor its primary concern. My interest lies in that aspect of the expansion of Modern Hebrew which involved the revival of a specific feature of Hebrew, absent since well before the Enlightenment. I am referring, of course, to the use of Hebrew as native language, which is the essential and distinguishing feature of Israeli Hebrew.

Its vast body of liturgical, legal, literary, philosophical, and personal writing creates the genuine impression that Hebrew is characterized by a continuous history of usage, evolution, and influence. So do the frequent assertions of Hebrew’s inter-communal use as a *lingua franca*, or its other spoken uses by Jews throughout the world. Furthermore, as Kutscher (1982: 298) points out, ‘the very fact that an Israeli can go back to the Bible without having recourse to a translation creates a feeling of immediacy,’ so that there is nothing intuitively against referring to both by the same name. Since Israeli Hebrew speakers may feel that their language bears the same relationship to the sacred texts that Modern English does to Anglo-Saxon chronicles, or Modern Greek to the language of Plato, they often attribute an evolution to their language as a similar process of linguistically documentable changes in structure and use. The Hebrew language is considered the chronicle of the Jewish people, a language which has recorded their exile from the Holy Land almost 2,000 years ago, their struggles and successes in disparate communities throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, and their return to the Land of Israel and to their national language once again. Naphtali Tur-Sinai (1960: 8), a former president of the Academy of the Hebrew Language in Israel, reiterates the legacy of the Maskilim and encapsulates its integration into the philosophy of Zionism: ‘It is the Hebrew Bible that represents
our title deed to the soil of Israel -- and only by faithfully preserving the language of the Bible in which the land had been promised to our fathers, could we secure recognition as the legal claimants to the Holy Land.'

Hence the roots of Hebrew linguistic nationalism, and of Israeli Hebrew. A decisive moment in the development of both occurred when the Russian formerly known as Eliezer Perelman followed the advice of an essay he had written for a Hebrew-language newspaper while studying medicine in Paris. Changing his surname to Ben-Yehuda, he and his wife immigrated to Palestine in 1881, and attempted to instigate the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel by living as the first Hebrew-speaking household in more than a millennium. In the semi-mythology of Ben-Yehuda's revival of Hebrew speech, the intervention of his first child in an argument between Eliezer and his wife marked the first native utterance of Modern Hebrew, proof that the regeneration of a Hebrew-speaking population was possible.

Until that moment, the Hebrew language knew no native speakers. Nowhere was there a group of people using Hebrew as their daily medium of communication. Perhaps for affective value more than anything else, Hebrew was frequently labeled a dead language, 'entombed as it were between the covers of the ancient sacred books' (Tur-Sinai 1960: 4). As president of the government agency sanctioned to continue the revival effort symbolized and embodied by Ben-Yehuda, Tur-Sinai's comments were by necessity designed to provoke emotion on the subject of Hebrew. With an overarching goal of recreating the Hebrew speech of the last autonomous Jewish community, the appointed and self-appointed guardians of the language have taken a decidedly normative and prescriptive approach to Modern Hebrew, based on the structure of Semitic Biblical Hebrew. The Academy must justify its efforts by appealing to the
emotionally-charged principle of ensuring that revived Hebrew remains as close as possible to the language of the aforementioned title deed.

Reacting to the morbid terminology assigned to pre-revival Hebrew, many other commentators have stressed the inappropriateness of referring to a ‘dead’ language and its ‘revival.’ As Even-Zohar (1990a: 115) states, ‘this label has been taken so literally that many normally well-informed (to say nothing of the un-informed) linguists have been led to believe that Hebrew had indeed become a “dead” language, or that it had been confined to “liturgical use only,” which as we know is utter nonsense.’ Thus do some linguists correctly point out that creativity in the Hebrew language and production at some level has never ceased in writing (e.g. Gold 1989: 363-364), nor even in speech (e.g. Parfitt 1984: 256). Throughout the literature, then, there appears to be a fundamental discord in the linguistic thought on the nature of the Hebrew language before and after its revival. Furthermore, it seems that the variety of contentions regarding Modern Hebrew are a function not so much of variation in the language, but of the differential interpretation of its form in the linguistic study of Modern Hebrew.

1.4. ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

This conflict in views is the main issue of this paper. It involves an enduring tension between synchrony and diachrony which has characterized almost all analysis of the modern Hebrew revival. This tension has made Modern Hebrew, especially the spoken variety of native Israeli Jews, one of the most fascinating objects of study for both linguists and non-linguists, who have explored Modern Hebrew to express both highly conventional and highly unorthodox opinions regarding its character. Some consider it the direct descendent of an ongoing linguistic legacy, transcending certain principles of linguistic behavior (e.g. Tur-Sinai 1960). Others vehemently assert its autonomy
from Hebrews past, stressing its uniqueness exclusively in structural linguistic terms (e.g. Rosén 1956). And most intriguingly, some refine the finer points of both views to posit rather unorthodox facts regarding the nature of Modern Hebrew (e.g. Wexler 1990b). How is it that a single language, covering so small a geographical area and used only so recently by native speakers, whose internal past and external history are so well-documented, has been so divergently analyzed?

With respect to change in linguistic systems, Weinreich, Labov & Herzog (1968: 101) explain that ‘a native-like command of heterogeneous structures is not a matter of multidialectalism or “mere” performance, but is part of a unilingual linguistic competence.’ In other words, the competence of a native speaker must include the command of diverse ways of speaking, dependent on a wide variety of internal and external variables. A language has an inherent synchronic variability depending on the age, gender, and class of a speaker, the circumstances of the speech situation, et cetera (Labov 1972). Diachronically, a language must also be systemically variable, because even as structures change, people continue to talk effectively with one another. Weinreich, Labov & Herzog (1968) claim that this concept, which they refer to as the ‘structured heterogeneity’ of dynamic living language, has traditionally been ignored in historical linguistics. Instead, assumptions of regularity and homogeneity have been made in the belief that only a homogeneous system, with variation confined to the speaker’s idiolect, could be learned and propagated successfully by each generation.

The revival of Hebrew was nothing if not a historical endeavor, seeking to return a speech community to a historical language. And indeed, Hebrew linguistics has often suffered from the same shortcomings as has the historical
study of other languages. For example, referring to the nature of the language in the Middle Ages, Sáenz-Badillos (1993: 204) states that ‘Medieval Hebrew is not, properly speaking, a ‘language’ comparable to Biblical Hebrew or Rabbinic Hebrew. It did not possess sufficient vitality in daily life or even in literature to develop into a reasonably complete and homogeneous system.’ Though such comments may ignore the inherent heterogeneity of a language in use, they do point to the essential characteristic of pre-revival Hebrew as a language reduced in function and, consequently, in form. The revival reversed the effects of this contraction through a shift to the Hebrew language. Yet until linguists looked to Israeli Hebrew speech as an autonomous source of linguistic data, the historicity of Hebrew prevented the notion of ‘structured heterogeneity’ from adequately informing the analysis both of the Hebrew revival and of Modern Israeli Hebrew. Its dynamism has remained in the shadow of the presumed homogeneity of the classical language, such that variation and divergence became synonymous with degeneration. On the other hand, some study of Israeli Hebrew has sought to dissociate it entirely from its antecedents, thereby severing a genuine linguistic bond. Here lies the ‘schizoid nature’ of Modern Hebrew Linguistics.

This paper will elucidate various aspects of the incongruent approaches to the revival of Hebrew and to the modern Hebrew language of Israel. Most importantly, I will argue that the processes in the revival of abnormally-transmitted Hebrew display the characteristics of contact-induced change and the rise of a non-genetic language, as described by Thomason & Kaufman (1988). However, the study of change in the Hebrew language before and after its revival has on the one hand neglected and on the other selectively championed certain implications of the distinction between structural change in Hebrew, and the language shift that was the revival of Hebrew speech. Thus I will explore the
nature of previous work in this area, in regard both to the general linguistic thought on Modern Hebrew, and to the more specific study of sound change in the language. I will look at the ways in which much of this work has or has not succeeded in accurately describing the phonological facts and processes it attempts to explicate. Finally, by examining views on the genealogy of Israeli Hebrew, I will show how a recent theory by Wexler (1990b) does in some ways reconcile the inconsistencies of previous analyses, yet still neglects certain facts predicted by the properties of non-genetic languages described by Thomason & Kaufman (1988). I begin with a discussion of the nature of Hebrew in Jewish languages and Jewish linguistics, which will introduce several key concepts in the subsequent analysis.
2. HEBREW DIGLOSSIA

In those days I also saw the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Amon, and of Moab; and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

- Nehemiah 13:23-24

2.1. A HOLY TONGUE

Hebrew ceased to be a spoken idiom at approximately the time when the first great literary work in a new form of the language, the Mishna, was written, ca. 200 C.E. Mishnaic Hebrew, also referred to as Rabbinic Hebrew, was a form of Hebrew quite distinct in syntax and vocabulary from that which is represented in the Bible. Lexical differences include Aramaic borrowings such as אבא [ába] and אמא [ima] vs. Bib אב [av] and אם [ém] 'father' and 'mother,' as well as native replacement of other basic words, e.g. Bib אד [ex] vs. Mish כיزان [kejcd] 'how,' Bib אף [af] vs. Mish הזז [xotém] 'nose,' Bib בוכר [bókr] vs. Mish נש [xaxarit] 'morning,' and, fittingly enough, Bib שפה [safá] vs. Mish שפה [lašón] 'language' (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 199). The emergence of Mishnaic Hebrew occurred at a time when forms of Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew were all characteristic languages spoken in Jewish communities. Although Jewish

---

4 The "struggle" between Biblical and Mishnaic structures is one of the defining features of revival rhetoric. This struggle was most often discussed, and most commonly understood, in terms of such lexical differences. In many cases, however, semantic pairs co-exist in Modern Hebrew, differentiated in register, connotation, or a number of other ways.
communities were by no means monolingual in their linguistic behavior, the use of Hebrew as a vernacular was already in decline relative to the other languages. Thus Hebrew and Aramaic were to become identified as part of a relationship that would serve as the defining characteristic of Jewish linguistic behavior. Weinberg (1981: 38) explains the genesis of Jewish diglossia:

The same historical events that dealt blow after blow to the national and the physical existence of the Jewish people -- the Roman wars, beginning in 64 B.C.E., the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E., and the repression of the Bar-Kokhba revolt in 135 C.E. -- necessitated the preservation of the people’s religious and cultural possessions in the language and signaled the end of that language in speech.

Hence the Jewish people became a diglossic community, preserving the same sacred texts and producing a great body of scholarly, liturgical, and poetic writing in a language known as the לְשׁוֹן הָדֹרֶשׁ [lašón hakódeš], 'The Holy Language,' which would not serve as a daily spoken medium.

Although it involved two distinct languages, Hebrew and Aramaic, there is a tendency in the linguistic conceptions of the Jewish people to equate the Holy Language with the Hebrew language. Hence most revivalists regarded Aramaic more as an ‘external’ source of Semitic enrichment for the expansion of Modern Hebrew than as a component of the Holy Tongue to be concurrently revived (Wexler 1990b). Aramaic was a principal language in the Near East for over a thousand years. It remained in colloquial use among Jews until the end of the first millennium C.E., and its genealogical descendent continues to be spoken as modern Syriac. Yet it was a more or less strongly ‘Aramaicized’ Hebrew which was treated as the לְשׁוֹן הָדֹרֶשׁ, especially in regards to the Hebraisms which

5 To the degree that Jews had a command of both Jewish and non-Jewish colloquial languages, e.g. of Yiddish and Russian, or of Judeo-Spanish and standard Castillian, and to the degree that in each case, the two non-Hebrew languages represented discrete languages, ‘triglossia’ was not an uncommon situation.
comprise the most conspicuous part of the Holy Language element in colloquial Jewish languages (Mark 1954). Katz (1985: 93) prefers to speak of the ‘Semitic component,’ rather than the ‘usually encountered Hebrew-Aramaic’ component, since the latter implies a merged subsystem, which is not the case. He points out that Aramaic has a distinct ‘psychological sanctity,’ citing the קדיש [kadiʃ] prayer for the dead and the קול נידרא [kol nidrej] on יום קיפור [jom kipur], 6 ‘the Day of Atonement,’ as evidence for the independence of Aramaic from Hebrew in the Holy Language (1993: 47). Yet most Jewish speakers, though they may be aware of Aramaic-language liturgical and scholastic writing, do not readily identify individual Aramaisms in the Holy Language, and do so even less in their own Jewish vernaculars. The Aramaic component of the Holy Language is in this sense secondary to Hebrew in both content and function, so that Hebrew has a significantly higher degree of linguistic and cultural saliency to most Jewish speakers. Thus it was possible for revivalists to identify the revival of the Hebrew language as the revival of the Holy Language.

The emergence of Mishnaic Hebrew and a Holy Language tradition meant that from this moment onward through Jewish history, and until this century, no Jewish community would use a form of Hebrew as its vernacular, nor even as a functionally equivalent second language. Yet Hebrew was not to remain a language without use or users, merely frozen in a body of literature. The defining characteristic of diglossia is the complementary use of a language form for purposes from which a vernacular language form is restricted (Ferguson 1959). Therefore, while different languages would serve different communities, at

---

6 The transcription of the Aramaic-language names are as usual given in Israeli Hebrew pronunciation, their phonological form having merged into a single Holy Language form. The Anglicization of the names of these prayers as ‘Kaddish,’ ‘Kol Nidre,’ and ‘Yom Kippur’ do not only reflect the same phonological processes to be described in section 2.2, but also the persistence in English of the Aramaic name despite the existence of a Hebrew equivalent, e.g. קול נידראים [kol(h)anadarim].
different times and in different places, as the ‘low’ vernaculars, or L-language, of daily verbal communication, religious and literary activity would be carried out in the ‘high’ language, or H-language, of culture and history. In the case of Hebrew, its forms and structures would continue to evolve linguistically through its widespread, though non-native, use as a written medium. Still, it would maintain a restricted oral existence. Its texts would be performed ritually by Jews throughout the Diaspora, thereby giving rise to the different pronunciations of ‘Hebrew’ that would figure crucially in the renativization of Hebrew speech. Jews would also find in Hebrew a potential lingua franca, used especially in the two centuries between the Enlightenment and the speech revival, with the increased contact of Jews of various traditions converging in Palestine (Parfitt 1984).

2.2. THE PHONOLOGY OF DIGLOSSIA: WHOLE AND MERGED HEBREW

As the medium and object of religious study and ritual in many Jewish communities, especially in Europe, knowledge of Classical Hebrew would inevitably affect the vernacular language of its students. Weinreich (1954) introduced a terminological distinction in Jewish linguistics which has since served almost universally to characterize this interaction of colloquial and sacred language. Weinreich identified the most profound linguistic link between Jewish vernaculars and the Holy Language, whereby thousands of items occur simultaneously in different phonological guises, sometimes with semantic and morphosyntactic differentiation, in the colloquial language and in the oral performance of Hebrew. He defined it as an opposition between ‘Merged Hebrew’ and ‘Whole Hebrew’ (1954: 85-87). The former includes Semitic Hebrew material that is synchronically integrated into the vernacular, thereby representing a borrowed element within the language. Hence it is Whole Hebrew,
where the Aramaic component is more salient than it is in Merged Hebrew, that is referred to as the Holy Language. The term used in Yiddish merged Hebrew is [lóʃn kójdaʃ], where the name is a native word used to refer to the sacred language tradition, the H-language in the diglossic alliance. Uttered in its whole Hebrew form, i.e. read from a text, said in prayer, or produced in some other context of H-language performance by an Ashkenazic Jew, its form would be [laʃójn hakójdaʃ].

In his seminal piece on the sociolinguistic phenomenon of diglossia, Ferguson (1959: 335) pointed out that ‘the sound systems of H and L constitute a single phonological structure of which L is the basic system and the divergent features of H phonology are either a subsystem or a parasystem.’ Therefore, oral performance in the H-language is dependent on the native competence normally expressed via the L-language, i.e. oral forms of the H-language cannot, as a rule, have sounds not generally present in the L-language phonology. The fact of the matter is that the linguistic system represented by the H-language is an incomplete one, lacking an autonomous phonological component. This fact was captured by Katz (1993), who describes the phonological system of Eastern European Jewish diglossia as comprising two subsystems, each interacting with the Semitic component of Yiddish differently. He defines ‘Ashkenazic’ not only as the phonological system used by traditional Ashkenazic Jews in their pronunciation of Hebrew and Aramaic, but also as a term to characterize the differences in the behavior of Semitic elements in their Merged and Whole forms. Because neither Hebrew nor Aramaic was anybody’s native language in Ashkenaz, Katz believes that

an abstraction of the phonology of these sacred languages without reference to their users’ native language would be folly, firstly because it is the spoken language which divulges the true phonology of a speaker and
secondly because, in the society in question, the links between the vernacular and the two sacred languages were profound for virtually the entire population. (1993: 48-49)

This phonological framework conforms to that of a diglossic speech community, allowing us to characterize not only the linguistic form of its non-native speakers’ knowledge, but the system which describes the specific properties of the performance of Hebrew as a second language, its phonetic similarity to Yiddish and its phonological independence (Glinert 1993a: 9). It captures the phonological facts of Merged and Whole Hebrew, without forcing us to claim full bilingualism in Hebrew where none existed. Nor does it force the consequently unnecessary distinction between the Hebrew and Aramaic knowledge of Ashkenazic speakers. As Katz (1993: 47) states, ‘never did the twain merge in lexicon, morphology, or grammatical machinery...They did merge phonologically, however, hence the term and the concept “Ashkenazic”.

Any Yiddish Hebraism, by virtue of being a loanword from a co-existent H-language, has a potential Whole Hebrew form. That is not to say that any Yiddish form based on Hebraic material must be attested in Hebrew. Rather, the implication is that Ashkenazic speakers, having command of two co-existing and interacting subsystems within their native phonology, can potentially produce utterances conforming to the patterns of either subsystem. The ‘Loshen Kodesh’ example illustrates the most salient phonological differences between co-existing Semitic elements of Yiddish Merged Hebrew and Ashkenazic Whole Hebrew. The former have undergone stress shift and post-tonic vowel reduction, resulting in phonological variants such as ניטל Yid [ěrets jīrsōl] vs. Ashk [ěrets jīrsōl]
jisra'el] ‘the Land of Israel,’ יִשְׂרָאֵל Yid [kúlə] vs. Ashk [kúlə] ‘bride,’ and נְסָרָא Yid [éfʃər] vs. Ashk [əfʃər] ‘maybe’ (Katz 1993: 58-59). In many cases, the variation has been lexicalized, so that the Yiddish form has diverged from the Whole Hebrew form phonologically and semantically, e.g. בָּעֵל–לִבּוֹת Ashk [baal habajes] ‘head of the household’ vs. Yid [baal佑bəs] ‘boss,’ and נְקֵבָה Ashk [nakejva] ‘female, feminine gender’ vs. Yid [nakejva] ‘woman of loose morals,’ In other cases, the dual pronunciations and meanings both became integrated as Yiddish words, e.g. הָרַנְא where Merged Hebrew [ejs] = ‘heavenly omen’ and Whole Hebrew [əs] = ‘letter of the alphabet.’ Still other Hebraic items form only semantic oppositions in Yiddish and Ashkenazic. For example, סֵפֶר (Israeli Hebrew [séfer]) retains its general meaning of ‘book’ in Whole Hebrew, whereas in the merged Hebrew component of Yiddish, it contrasts with Yid בָּעַד [bux] ‘book’ by narrowing its reference to ‘sacred or religious book.’ The last two examples point to the fact that ‘phonologically Yiddish’ forms can be used for either the ‘Yiddish’ or the ‘Ashkenazic’ meaning, while Ashkenazic forms are limited to the Ashkenazic meaning, i.e. that which is usually identified with the classical Hebrew or Aramaic gloss (Katz 1993: 66-67).

In many cases, the phonological, morpho-syntactical, and other differences cited by Fishman (1981) as the defining features of Jewish languages are attributable to the varying degree and nature of Hebrew knowledge. This variation, due to the relative impact of Hebrew on the daily life of the particular Jewish community, is such that Hebrew has varying effects on the vernacular language of the community, hence the variation in the Hebrew component of Jewish languages. At the same time, the vernacular itself affects the oral and written production of Hebrew, hence the variation in the Hebrew pronunciations in the Yiddish press in Russia, which ‘naturalized’ the spelling of many Hebraisms (Mark 1954: 41).
of different communities. An alternative definition of a Jewish language could, in fact, be given not in terms of its structural relation to the co-territorial languages of non-Jewish populations, but of its functional relation to the non-territorial language of all Jewish populations, because it is Hebrew diglossia that serves as the linguistic and historical setting for the revival of the Hebrew language. This situation has been the norm in all traditional Jewish populations since the disappearance of Hebrew as a vernacular language. In fact, a ‘traditional’ Jewish community can be defined on the basis of such a diglossic relationship, and the degree to which it is manifested in the daily life of the community. A Jewish school is not merely one with a Jewish student body, but one with a curriculum which includes some degree of instruction either in Hebrew or in a Hebrew-language body of liturgy and literature. Thus a Jewish language is not merely a language with Jewish speakers, but one which is used in a diglossic relation with Hebrew (Rabin 1981: 21).

Such a definition is based in the linguistic behavior of the speech community as a whole. Therefore, it precludes the classification of any non-Hebrew language spoken by Jews as a Jewish language, where the individual speaker simply has some degree of knowledge of Hebrew. In fact, Glinert (1993b) coined a term to classify the ‘noncommunicative but far from dysfunctional’ use of post-revival non-native Hebrew, in order to set it apart from both traditional pre-revival diglossia and from ‘Israeli Hebrew as a second language.’ He describes the role of Hebrew in non-traditionalist Western Jewish life as one of a ‘quasilect’ -- a language whose functions are more symbolic than linguistic, part of a system in which next to no one ‘knows’ the language and the communication of meaning has come to play a fairly minor role (1993b: 249). From a native point of view, Ornan (1985) believes that Israeli Hebrew altogether
lacks the fundamental sociolinguistic characteristics of the Jewish language phenomenon. In his ‘typological’ classification, which refers to extra-structural features in classifying languages, it should not be considered a Jewish language. The consequences for Jewish interlinguistics of redefining what is Jewish language are beyond the scope of this paper. Yet whatever the motivation and justification for the claims by Ornan and Glinert, they clearly illustrate a change in the Hebrew language, a change of a distinctly ‘extra-structural’ nature.

2.3. LANGUAGE SHIFT AS LINGUISTIC CHANGE

If the history of a language is a function of the history of its speakers, then a language will not undergo change unless it is manipulated in some way by language users (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 4). Thus it is my view that the revival of Hebrew involved neither a complete language shift nor a series of changes completely internal to the structure(s) of Hebrew. Ferguson (1983) contends that language shift itself represents a form of linguistic change. He argues that altering not necessarily the structural nature of a language, but its socio-geographic distribution and/or its functional allocations, constitutes an essential element of linguistic change. Furthermore, theories of language change are incomplete if they do not allow for the possible influence of language planning, which most often results less in structural than functional changes in a language. Ferguson especially stresses the importance of planning in this sort of linguistic change:

When my linguist friends tell me you can’t even change a case ending by language planning -- that language structure is unconscious and built-in -- I can always say, ‘How about the whole language that got planned and came into existence as a mother tongue, which hadn’t been there as a mother tongue for centuries before?’ (1983: 35)
Ferguson’s conception of language change offers a more appropriate characterization of the ‘non-dead’ status of pre-revival Hebrew. If a language were entirely dead -- that is, having no actual communicative function whatsoever -- there would be no possibility of it undergoing any sort of linguistic change, especially re-vernacularization. This is perhaps the essence of the Hebrew revival, a defining feature of which was the intended careful planning of change in lexicon, phonology, syntax, and most importantly, in function -- that the language be the mother tongue of a new Hebrew-speaking nation.

Hence another unique aspect of Modern Hebrew in the Jewish language phenomenon: the shift to the H-language means that Israeli Hebrew speakers do not necessarily treat Classical Hebrew as a ‘separate’ language. It was certainly the primary motivation of many revivalists that this H-language be perceived at most as a literary form of the vernacular by its speakers, if not an ideal form to which they should aspire. As we will see in section 3, this view had a significant impact on the various directions taken by the linguistic study of Modern Hebrew, perhaps a greater impact than on the language itself. This view also represents a distinguishing feature of Jewish language shift. The retention of written forms of Hebrew and Aramaic have meant that language shift among Jews occurs not only with no loss of ethnic identity, but with continuous adstratal enrichment of the Jewish vernacular thus created -- adoption-cum-adaptation (Wexler 1981). Wexler (1990a: 114) highlights the distinction between what he terms textual/adstratal and inherited/substratal Hebraisms in Jewish languages because he believes that the latter, more commonly found as Merged Hebrew elements, represent a 2,600-year chain of borrowing going back to the last Jewish languages in contact with colloquial Hebrew. These elements may thus represent the reflexes of natural sound change in Hebrew material. This opposes the
traditional view, which holds that the Whole Hebrew patterns of certain Sephardic and Yemenite communities preserve the greatest number of ancient Hebrew features. When Ben-Yehuda wrote of his admiration for the 'Oriental' pronunciation of Hebrew by Sephardic Jews in Jerusalem, he was, of course, referring to Whole Hebrew, the performance of a second language, which became the basis for the normative efforts of the speech revival (Fellman 1973). This difference in views had important consequences for the study of sound change in Hebrew and the development of Israeli pronunciation, to which we will return in section 4.

The change in linguistic function represented by the revival of Hebrew also represents the Jewish participation in the rejection of diglossia in post-medieval Europe. To be sure, the actual linguistic situations were fundamentally different. The loss of diglossia for most European populations involved an identification with an already-spoken vernacular, and a decision to prefer it in asserting the indivisibility of nationhood and territoriality. Jews identified with this more conventional sort of linguistic nationalism to a certain degree as well. Though German, Russian, and French all had their supporters as the national language of Israel, none rivaled Hebrew more closely than Yiddish, the vernacular language of the greatest majority of immigrants to Israel in the revival period. A number of groups championed Yiddish as the true national language of Jews, either in opposition to the 'bourgeois' character of Hebrew as a language of the religious or social elite, or merely out of more practical concerns -- Jews needed a national language, yet Yiddish needed no revival. However, promotion of Hebrew had the 'rhetorically easier task' of claiming to be used as the vehicle 'to show our normalization as a people by using in daily life the exalted language of our great tradition,' as opposed to the elevation of Yiddish, whose burden
involved making ‘the daily language we take for granted (or even despise as a jargon) into an exalted national language’ (Spolsky 1991: 143). Therefore, although the aims of asserting nationhood and territoriality were the same for Jews as for other nations, it was the H-language whose domain was to be extended to the functions of the vernacular.

The elimination of diglossia in the wake of the revival of Hebrew has not been as complete for Jews as it was for post-medieval European populations (Wexler 1990b: 115). Whether as a traditional H-language, a ‘quasilect,’ or just another foreign language, Hebrew diglossia may still manifest itself in many non-Israeli Jews’ lives. Although Wexler believes that the divergent evolution of written and spoken Hebrew, not to mention their different genealogies, are the cause of this persisting diglossia, the fact is that the relative frequency with which multiple languages are spoken by Jews has changed little since Hebrew assured its dominance at end of World War I (Hofman & Fisherman 1972: 353). In fact, the growth of native Hebrew speech and its multifaceted form have nourished a renewed scholarly and community interest in the other languages of the linguistic melting pot of Israel. Revivalists themselves were fascinated by the diversity of speech forms already present in Palestine, where native communities spoke different geographical and cultural varieties of Arabic, Spanish, other languages. Many have studied the specific contributions of these languages, and those imported in the huge waves of immigration, to the development of Israeli Hebrew (e.g. Parfitt 1984, Bunis 1988, Even-Zohar 1990a), with an decisive emphasis on that of Yiddish (e.g. Mark 1958, Blanc 1965, Wexler 1990a, 1990b).

Yiddish influence has been one of the more contentious issues in description of Israeli Hebrew. This situation is understandable given the opposing symbolism that each presented to proponents of the national language
movement. Attitudes toward the linguistic features of Ashkenazic speech were for the most part negative, and revivalists specifically targeted such features for replacement in the planning of modern spoken Hebrew. Consequently, investigation of possible Yiddish influences has often been viewed cynically as part of an agenda to downplay the achievement of the revival. Still, few linguistic inquiries into the structure of Israeli Hebrew fail to offer at least an opinion regarding the impact of Yiddish. For example, commenting on Blanc’s (1965) treatment of ‘genuine structural influences of Yiddish in Israeli Hebrew,’ Rosén (1977: 36) stresses that this influence was ‘not on [his emphasis] Israeli Hebrew, because...these Yiddish elements were not a contributing factor the creation of Israeli Hebrew, but were operative in modifying its shape after it had been created.’ Even though Rosén was decidedly not a denier of the structural autonomy of Yiddish elements in Israeli Hebrew, his attitude is reminiscent of the prescriptivists who tried to limit the influence of Yiddish, and the descriptivists who sought to minimize it (Prager 1981). The latter, insofar as their descriptions matched contemporary usage, may have been successful. The former, however, could not have been, given the number of language shifters whose language was underlain by Ashkenazic standards. It is the influence of Yiddish and Yiddish speakers which proved to be decisive in certain areas of this change -- not only on the national language movement as an ideological opponent, but on the national language itself as a substratal influence in its development. This fact will prove crucial to explaining the birth of Israeli Hebrew as an instance of abrupt creolization.

Israeli Hebrew is the result of interrelated linguistic changes, of both a structural and extra-structural nature, which have occurred in the Hebrew language, the Yiddish language, and most importantly, in those whose community
spoke both, the Ashkenazic Jews. The dominant linguistic group in Israel today is one which has not been seen in Jewish linguistic history for nearly 2,000 years, one whose linguistic competence is expressed by a Hebrew language, with no restrictions in form or function. Whatever the structural relation to pre-revival Hebrew, it is this fact which represents the most fundamental linguistic change in the revival of the Hebrew language.

2.4. THE ASHKENAZIC SUBSTRATUM OF ISRAELI HEBREW

It is no coincidence that the Eastern European Ashkenazic Jews who initiated the revernacularization of Hebrew called their first language, Yiddish, the מאמות לעשה [máme lóšn] literally ‘mother tongue.’ Bar-Adon (1991) characterizes the transition of Hebrew from a second to a first language as a process of development in which to become a mother tongue, Hebrew first became a ‘father tongue.’ His analysis is dependent on the recognition of Ashkenazic Jews as the dominant group of speakers shifting to Hebrew over the course of its revival. Since most Ashkenazic females did not have equal access to formal religious education, in which Hebrew was taught quite rigorously as a second language, they were not as prepared to engage their children in Hebrew conversation as were fathers. Ironically, the mothers of the first Hebrew-speaking children may have been the last members in the family to speak their children’s native tongue.8

Bar-Adon’s characterization not only encapsulates the status of Hebrew in the diglossic repertoire of its speakers, but it also accounts for the crucial feature regarding the acquisition and transmission of Hebrew, even prior to the period of

---

8 In fact, in a Yiddish poem by Yankev Glatshteyn entitled ציון מינה un מהני [cvízn minax un májrv] ‘Between the afternoon and evening prayer,’ casts Yiddish in Israel as a ניידך-לשון [zéjda lošn] ‘grandfather tongue’ against the ‘shalom-chik’ language of the Hebrew University, as an illustration of the language conflicts between the different generations in Israel (Hadda 1980: 107).
active speech revival. That is, a language transmitted from generation to generation, one which could not rightly be called a 'mother tongue,' could not be considered to have undergone 'normal transmission,' i.e. the transmission of native competence, in the form of a complete single set of interrelated lexical and structural features (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 200). Native competence includes an autonomous phonological component, i.e. a set of 'rules' and representations which determine the phonetic form of all actually occurring morphemes in a language (Halle 1962: 58). Katz’s description of Ashkenazic speech explicitly provides a phonological account of the Hebrew of the vast majority of shifting Hebrew speakers, and the phonological form of the linguistic data being transmitted in the revival of Hebrew. Moreover, it implicitly describes how pre-revival Hebrew did not have the autonomous phonological component required for the normal transmission of a language, autonomous in the sense of being co-identified with a speaker’s native vernacular phonology. A sound system was ‘normally’ transmitted, of course. In its transmission from non-native to native speakers, however, it reflected fundamentally different levels of linguistic structure and knowledge.

Hence the revival of Hebrew was indeed a process of linguistic change: a language shift which restored normal transmission -- native competence and autonomous phonology -- to a diglossic language. The most salient aspect of the shift from Yiddish to Hebrew, the phonological substratum upon which shifting speakers re-vernalcarized the Hebrew language, has been the most often denied. Since the raison d’être of a diglossic H-language depends on its separation from the vernacular in both function and structure, it is not surprising for the revival of a classical language to be unreceptive to L-language enrichment, as well as to the assertion of L-language influence (Wexler 1971). Thus the language shift was
formulated in terms Whole Hebrew pronunciation patterns rather than vernacular phonology. Revivalists conceived of developing a Hebrew speech community, by uniform adoption of a uniform pronunciation of a uniform second language. In fact, more problematic than the absence of native speakers to many early revivalists and to the Hebrew teachers responsible for inspiring and propagating Hebrew speech, was the 'dichotomy' between the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic pronunciations of Whole Hebrew:

Some argue on behalf of the Sephardic pronunciation from the standpoint of habit when they say that the inhabitants of Palestine have already become accustomed to it...However, we ought not forget that the inhabitants of Palestine are few compared to the inhabitants of the Diaspora, who constitute the majority of our people and who are certainly accustomed to the Ashkenazic pronunciation.

Thus the definition of a national pronunciation was seen as an obstacle second only to the lack of 'modern' expressions in attempting to forge a new Hebrew nation:

If we proceed to replace it with the Sephardic pronunciation, then it will not only become a stumbling block to those who themselves are speakers, but we will further damage the spread of the language by our adding to it yet another impediment. (From the protocols of the charter convention of the Teachers’ Union 1903, cited in Saulson 1979)

I have shown that shift constitutes a form of 'external' linguistic change. Furthermore, it seems correct to say that such change might also affect the internal structure of a language, as evidenced by the guardians of the revival of Hebrew, who inevitably bemoan the discrepancies between the language before and after the shift, rarely accepting deviant usage as more than the result of imperfect learning. Although the effort to guide the language acquisition process of children had a certain degree of linguistic foundation, adult language users were not likely to internalize prescriptions concerning their language usage
which originated from a source external to them, particularly from a source outside the language acquisition environment (Saulson 1979: 187). The position taken by the Teachers’ Union ignored the inevitability of linguistic change as a necessary consequence of language shift, change which may or may not be a direct response to language planning. Since revivalists were not prepared to grant structural status to non-normative forms, the task of elucidating the structure of Modern Hebrew was left to those with a somewhat different connection to the language: professional linguists.
3. MODERN HEBREW LINGUISTICS

Our language today is really not a language at all, but a Biblical patch on top of a Mishnaic patch with a Tibbonite patch on top of it. And he who can master all those ‘languages’ and can juggle them and combine them in various strange blends is a ‘language virtuoso’... But for the needs of the living language and the living literature, for the needs of vital usage, we need a short and new grammar and a short and new dictionary that will give us only what is alive and breathing today...


3.1. DIACHRONY VS. SYNCHRONY

If the Jewish people were delayed in declaring their autonomy through linguistic emancipation, so too were linguists in assessing the revived language. It is here that the tension between the diachronic emphasis of a cultural tradition and the synchronic emphasis of a scientific method manifests itself most strongly.

For example, in his posthumously published *History of the Hebrew Language*, E.Y. Kutscher wrote that ‘the day the Bible will have to be translated into Israeli Hebrew will mark the end of the special attitude of the Israeli toward the Bible’ (1982: 298). This was a slightly tempered version of an attitude he expressed several decades earlier, wherein he stated that ‘I think it will certainly be a disastrous event if the Bible will have to be translated into a new language, into *Israeli Hebrew* [his italics]’ (1956: 44). Strangely enough, just fifteen years earlier, a semblance of such an event had already happened. In 1943, Joseph Klausner published a ‘translation’ of the book of Amos as an illustration of his idea of what he felt Modern Hebrew should be. Klausner, an early revivalist and a member of the pre-Academy זהב [vá?ad halafón], the Hebrew Language...
Committee, was an ardent advocate of Mishnaic norms as the basis for a living Hebrew. This attitude was based partly on the arguments of scholars such as M.H. Segal, who had argued for Mishnaic Hebrew as the direct lineal descendent of the spoken Hebrew of the Biblical period, distinct from both the literary Hebrew preserved in the Scriptures as well as from the contemporary Aramaic vernacular (Weinberg 1981: 38). Mishnaic Hebrew represented the last stage at which the language had led a ‘natural’ life, having evolved with restricted syntactic yet increasing lexical influence from Aramaic, thereby ‘bearing the stamp of colloquial usage’ (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 163). Along with many articles concerning the development of the language, Klausner, as many other prescriptively-oriented writers did at the time, presented his linguistic vision in his 1938 *Short Grammar of Modern Hebrew.* The language offered therein, and subsequently employed in his Biblical translation, did not reflect then-current written or spoken usage, but adhered strongly to Mishnaic rules, and represented a ‘Mishnaized’ version of Klausner’s own observations of contemporary usage (Rabin 1970: 331).

Just as spoken Modern Hebrew was the next step in the evolution of modern Jewish nationalism for Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, so modern Hebrew linguistics was a consequent development of the evolution of the revived language, especially to those who insisted upon a systematic study of Israeli Hebrew as an illustration of linguistic principles. However, the initial stages of the Hebrew revival occurred at a time when linguistics was very much a historical pursuit, unconcerned with synchrony and the autonomous description of linguistic phenomena in terms of rules and representations. Sound changes were imperceptible and gradual, and conformed to the ‘exceptionless hypothesis’ of

---

9 The exact title of the book uses the phrase ה̀דodynamics, literally ‘the New Hebrew.’
phonetic conditioning only. Apparent exceptions to these rule-governed processes were always due either to analogy, borrowing, or to other interacting sound changes (Kiparsky 1988: 365). This was the neogrammarian theory of historical linguistics: a language was the sum of its diachronic parts, and only historical linguistics could be a truly scientific method for describing language. Such was the dilemma not only of Modern Hebrew, but of Modern Hebrew linguistics. The language had almost no chance of self-determination and autonomy from its users' linguistic legacy without the application of an objective scientific method to counter the concentration of quasi-linguists on orthoepy and classical normativism, which continue to characterize much linguistic comment on Modern Hebrew. Strangely enough, Israeli Hebrew has been taken both as proof of the success of the language revival, as well as evidence that it is either immature or a failed prospect. Normativism and prescriptivism may compensate whenever a Hebrew speaker is lacking an 'appropriate' means of expression, appropriateness being a function of attestation in the classical language. Yet this same 'lack of expression' is evidence to others that Israeli Hebrew is as autonomous a linguistic entity as its speakers are a people.

Any thorough history of the Hebrew language includes not only a description of the language, but discussion of the contemporary 'grammatical thought' on Hebrew as well. As Rabin (1986: 548) states, 'linguistics and grammatical/lexical description are themselves part of the revival, being intellectual occupations borrowed from the culture that serves as the model for the revival.' This is to be expected when the history of a language is so intricately bound to the history of a people, in the eyes both of its users and its investigators. As a result, equally relevant to the study of Modern Hebrew as to the history of the revival itself, though hopefully somewhat less 'miraculous,' is
the history of linguistic inquiry into the processes and products of the revival. Berman (1978: 429) observed that ‘Modern Hebrew has developed and grown and evolved into a living, vital tongue like all other natural languages currently in use; but Modern Hebrew studies have not kept apace with this development.’ Given the time discrepancy between the emergence of a native Hebrew speech community in the decades before 1948 and the first studies to treat native speech as grammatical according to its generative potential only, the linguistic thought on Modern Hebrew has taken more time to evolve a set of objective tools for description than the evolution of the language itself.

Hence the study of Modern Hebrew has had more ground to cover in catching up to the realities of the language than did Israeli Hebrew in establishing itself as a functional language. The evolution of Kutscher’s judgments on the relation of Israeli Hebrew to the Biblical language is just one example of how a move from subjective assessment to objective description has shaped the commentary on Modern Hebrew. That there has been a cross-influence between Israeli Hebrew and its linguistic study is evidenced by the fact that Ze’ev Ben-Hayyim, a former president of the Hebrew Language Academy, opposed the first structural analyses of Israeli Hebrew specifically on the grounds that the struggle between Biblical and Mishnaic forms in the modern language meant that one could not yet examine it as a ‘system’ in the Saussurian sense (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 274). Less indulgent prescriptivists saw the application of linguistic method to the ‘unsettled’ modern language as an endorsement of non-normative usage, and an undermining of their authority in directing the language’s development. Nonetheless, linguistic and not-so-linguistic inquiries into revived Hebrew provided a glimpse at the processes of change simply by virtue of the nature of the writer’s commentary, whether positive, negative, or entirely neutral.
Furthermore, since Modern Hebrew has become the object of 'genuine' linguistic study, developments in theory and methodology have been able to shed new light on the origins and development of the contemporary language. The following presents several key moments in the tandem development of Modern Hebrew and modern Hebrew linguistics, illustrating the changes in the necessary relationship between the classical language, the modern language, and the framework of the present study.

3.2. THE DESCRIPTION OF ISRAELI HEBREW

What in retrospect appears as the earliest modern Hebrew linguistics was very much in the neogrammarian spirit, especially in the ubiquitous writing on the development of the different Whole Hebrew pronunciations. The study of the most substantial controversy about the nature of Israeli Hebrew began in earnest in the 1930's, when the issue of the co-existence of Biblical and Mishnaic elements began to receive attention outside revivalist circles (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 273). Still, apart from 'pronunciation,' most early revivalist-linguists focused almost exclusively on the development of the Hebrew lexicon, which had been receiving attention even before the revernacularization. The cultivation of a modern vocabulary for Hebrew was the avowed goal of the Hebrew Language Committee, founded by Ben-Yehuda in 1890 (Fellman 1973: 82), and continues to be the main pursuit of the Academy of the Hebrew Language (Saulson 1979: 82). The problem was exemplified by the creative but wordy circumlocutions used by writers throughout the nineteenth century to express what were often basic concepts lacking singular terms in non-vernacular Hebrew. Patterson (1962) describes quite vividly the 'violent stresses and strains' which confronted Hebrew novelists in expressing the phenomena of contemporary society while adhering almost exclusively to biblical vocabulary and idiom, and
the consequently ‘ferocious problems’ of creating any sort of convincing
dialogue. He cites, among many examples of literary paraphrasing, the
compounding of two biblical phrases in rendering the word ‘file,’ eight distinct
multi-word constructions denoting ‘newspapers,’ and the mention of a sled as a
‘winter carriage which has no wheels.’

Although nineteenth-century writers were equally wont to transliterate
foreign words or to append bracketed explanations of their terminology in
Yiddish, German, or Russian, it was their compulsion to use ‘clumsy and unwieldy
phrases...in order to express their ideas via an inadequate linguistic medium’
(Patterson 1962: 318) which propelled the realization by revivalists that the
Hebrew embraced by the Maskilim would not suffice as a natural modern
language. Nevertheless, the deliberate expansion of the Hebrew lexicon almost
always involved combing the Biblical and Mishnaic sources of the language for
obscure words and underused roots that could be reapplied to a yet unencoded
concept. The consequences for the linguistic study of Modern Hebrew were that
contemporary usage was seen as an exclusive feature of colloquial spoken
Hebrew, since the written language was considered to be a quasi-pure Classical
Hebrew, affected more directly by the source-based efforts of enrichment (Rosén

Even early attempts to identify non-native borrowings (which, of course,
meant anything unattested in classical layers) in spoken Hebrew were almost
always in terms of vocabulary. Such was the nature of an investigation by
Weiman (1950) into ‘foreign elements’ in Modern Hebrew. However,
concentrating mainly on morphophonemics, Weiman sought to establish a
systematic method for determining what constituted a native pattern in ‘informal

---

10 מנהל והדרי אשה לאלה אמסים, ‘carriage[-poss.] [of-]winter which there-is-not to-it[-fem.] wheels,’ used by Perez Smolenskin in 1868 (Patterson 1962: 319).
spoken Hebrew,’ and the degree to which foreign elements either did or did not conform to these patterns. Specifically avoiding reference to etymology and historical development, Weiman declared that

a ‘foreign’ word in Hebrew cannot be defined in terms of its origin...but only in terms of the criteria listed above, i.e. phonemic constitution, phonemic distribution, accentual pattern, failure to pattern fully in the morphological system, failure to have the morphophonemic alternants which native words have, and failure to enter into certain syntactical constructions. (1950: 65)

In other words, structural considerations alone could determine nativeness. Etymology had no value from the synchronic point of view, because the spoken language had its own sufficiently structured set of native patterns.

Hebrew linguistics was finally catching up to Modern Hebrew. The call to arms made by Haim Rosén (1952) was inspired in part by these findings, but also by an *a priori* belief that such results were the only results one could expect, given certain principles of linguistic evolution and the circumstances of Israeli Hebrew’s unique origins and development. Rosén proclaimed the existence of ‘une nouvelle langue vivante en Israël qui doit faire l’objet d’une description linguistique synchronique’ (1952: 4). His statement marked the first time the term ‘Israeli Hebrew’ was used in print in a technical sense, to differentiate modern spoken Hebrew from any past layer of the language. As such, it marked a significant turning point in the development of Modern Hebrew and modern Hebrew linguistics. For the first time, the positive facts of the language itself, and not their dissimilarity to the facts of ‘another’ language, would determine their viability in the language system. Rosén offered brief descriptions of accent, vowel quantity, diphthongs, and morphophonemic alternations, with reference only to their structural functions. He did, however, describe the consonantal phonemes of Israeli Hebrew in relation to their ‘état phonétique’ in Biblical
Hebrew. Although he stated that 'au point de vue historique l’hébreu israélien (HI) se présente d’abord comme une continuation de l’hébreu biblique michnaïque selon les procédés linguistiques généraux' (1952: 4), later in the article Rosén explained his rejection of the term ‘Modern Hebrew’ in favor of ‘Israeli Hebrew’ specifically because the former would incorrectly indicate ‘seulement une évolution linguistique normale à partir de l’hébreu classique’ (1952: 5). Hence the dual claim that the unique nature of Israeli Hebrew had developed as a result of both ‘normal’ linguistic change, as well as processes which must lay outside this form of evolution.

In his review of Weiman's book, Haim Blanc praised the work for 'fulfilling a need which has gradually been making itself felt since it became apparent that thousands of individuals used a new form of Hebrew as their native tongue, and that as such it deserved to be studied on its own merits' (1953: 87). Although Weiman undertook his study on the speech of a sample of the 'younger generation of native Palestinians' in New York, which Blanc cited as the cause of some inaccurate data, the work represented 'a welcome relief from the hitherto unchallenged traditionalist and normativist approach' (1953: 90). It inspired a series of descriptive studies of Israeli Hebrew, such as Rosén's, whose aims were significantly more emancipatory. Inquiries by linguists with strong structuralist inclinations, such as Haim Blanc's series of articles entitled בֵּן אֱדֹמָה [lajón bnej adám], 'The People's Language,' published in the literary weekly Massa from 1952 to 1954, began to stand in conscious opposition to the prescriptivism and normativism of the exclusively diachronic perspective (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 276). They called for the application of modern linguistic methods and attitudes to describe the language and its synchronic relations, to explain how the forms used by Israeli Hebrews functioned in their language system. Thus
did Modern Hebrew begin to receive attention not merely as a novel combination of past Hebrews, but as a ‘new’ stage in the history of the language, with the full communicative and innovative capacity of a language with synchronicity.

The publication of Rosén’s (1956) הָעִבְדֵּי שְׁלֹחַ, ‘Our Hebrew,’ marked the first comprehensive attempt to show systematically that the colloquial Hebrew spoken in Israel was not an intermediate phase of a language in the process of regenerating its past form. Rosén maintained that the struggle between Biblical and Mishnaic forms was no more than a normativist illusion, and certainly no impediment to systematic study. In fact, structural description was desirable, because the restructuring of past systems, having already taken place, had created a new ‘état de langue’ (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 274). The book’s subtitle, ‘As seen by the methods of linguistics,’ declared its intent to detach the analysis of Modern Hebrew from the quasi-linguistic study of normativists and to apply accepted linguistic methodology to the analysis of Israeli Hebrew. It did so by treating the forms and structures used in Israeli Hebrew, whether or not approved by prescriptivists and the Academy, whether or not attested in any layer of Classical Hebrew, as synchronically grammatical forms in the language.

Interestingly, Rosén (1958: 91) expressed the feeling that Our Hebrew was perhaps ‘unjustly’ considered as having called into question the normative efforts the ‘maîtres de la grammaire traditionnelle.’ Nevertheless, it was Rosén’s intention to redefine ‘correct’ usage by eliminating attestation in the Sources and traditional norms as criteria for acceptability, and insisting on synchronic usage as attestation itself. Blanc (1956) was critical of the book for the methodological inconsistency between Rosén’s claimed inspiration from major twentieth century linguists, while (in Rosén’s own words) ‘following his own credo’ by jettisoning widely accepted principles, as well as his tendency to ‘go off the deep end and
fight myth with counter-myth.' Nevertheless, he praised the work for having 'enriched the Hebrew language with much linguistic terminology hitherto lacking' and for trying 'to put the past and present of Hebrew in their proper perspective, to counteract normative fiction by an objective description of accepted usage' (1956: 795).

3.3. GENERATIVISM AND NATIVE HEBREW COMPETENCE

Israeli Hebrew represented a stabilized and nativized language system to the structuralists, a form of Hebrew that was not characterized by an admixture of classical elements. It incorporated structures reflective and reflexive of those in previous classical layers of the language, as well as historically-blind developments unknown in any prior stage. That these innovations existed and constituted native Israeli usage sufficed to dissociate Israeli Hebrew from any 'unresolved' struggle between classical forms. In the opinion of the descriptivists, the revival had succeeded not by returning an ancient language to the mouths of the Jewish people, but by allowing the existing Hebrew language to continue a natural linguistic development, one which by definition could only have resulted in a redefined set of linguistic structures. Blanc (1968) characterized Israeli Hebrew as having resulted from the familiar process of 'national language formation,' and as such displaying the properties typical of 'koine-ization,' whereby idiosyncratic elements were leveled and current usage guided the language's evolution. This position certainly represented a significant departure from the views held not two generations earlier that Modern Hebrew was a deliberate reconstitution of selected elements from earlier stages of a classical non-vernacular language.

Rosén (1958) believed that Israeli Hebrew represented something unknown and novel in the history of the language. He claimed that the classical
language knew neither the forms nor the nuances of connotation in current usage, hence it was ‘absurde de raisonner sur la structure grammaticale d'une langue à laquelle ces formes n’appartiennent point...Chaque innovation linguistique, dès qu’elle devient telle, doit cesser d’être considérée comme une faute’ (1958: 99-100). With the structural approach, the facts of the language used by Israeli speakers were legitimized by removing prescription from the description of Israeli Hebrew. Subsequent treatment in the generative framework gave the notion of novelty in Hebrew further scientific legitimacy by approaching the grammar of a language as a system of rules which represented the native speaker’s knowledge of his/her language. Utterances by native speakers, i.e. performance in their native language, reflected these rules, i.e. their linguistic competence. Novelty and creativity, and thus systemic change, were now a function of a vastly different sort of Hebrew knowledge, one which could be expressed not in terms of the discrete categorical rules of an invariant structure, but in terms of the variable rules that created an inherently ordered differentiation of linguistic expression (Labov 1972).

According to Bar-Adon (1977), the regeneration of a native competence in Hebrew, its *re-nativization*, was the most critical process in the revival of Hebrew. Nativization refers to the emergence of a system of form-meaning relations partially independent from the target language norm in the speech of second language learners. Creole languages, for example, are traditionally defined as nativized pidgins, i.e. simplified contact languages that have acquired native speakers. Such a language can rightly be considered independent of its source languages by virtue of the nativization process. Bar-Adon describes the process of the renativization with specific reference to the first native speakers of Israeli Hebrew. Unlike creoles, Hebrew was transformed from an existing second
language, requiring overt learning, to a first language, acquired naturally by native children. Indeed, this is a fundamental criterion for any language to be considered as ‘living,’ that it have a speaker population with native linguistic competence, who acquires it as a first language from infancy. Certainly this is a basic prerequisite for normal transmission and development of a language, and it is only recently that Hebrew has been subject to a fully natural transmission from one generation to the next. Blanc was indeed accurate in pointing out that Modern Hebrew’s ‘most unusual feature’ was not its mischaracterized transition from a dead to a living language, but that ‘it was no one’s mother tongue, and that there were no speakers of any dialects closely related to it’ (1968: 237). The first quotidian speakers of Hebrew literally gave birth to the most vital extra-structural change that was incurred by the shift to Hebrew, native competence.

Weinreich, Labov & Herzog (1968: 150) explain, with obvious relevance to the case of Hebrew, that ‘homogeneous structurists failed to offer an effective method for construing a single language out of chronologically disparate elements.’ As did the classically-based prescriptive evaluations of the language, the structuralist nature of the first synchronic studies of Modern Hebrew were unable to explain the nature of change which brought the legacy of Classical Hebrew to a new language system. In other words, linguistic change in Hebrew could not be identified uniquely as either variation in performance (which is how generativists interpreted the neogrammarian ‘gradualness’ theories of change), or as modification of the grammar. A grammar may represent the substance of a native speaker’s knowledge by assigning the correct structural description to every grammatical sentence in his/her language. However, without a speaker who internalizes this grammar, it could not represent the form of the knowledge by which a speaker acquires native competence in this language (Kiparsky 1968).
Such a speaker, one who could generate every grammatical sentence in Hebrew, did not exist until speakers renativized Hebrew competence. The generativist viewpoint thus adds to the implication that Hebrew has not undergone ‘normal’ linguistic transmission, and that the revival could not be at the outset be a process of ‘normal’ linguistic change.

Labov (1994: 5) states that ‘it is not likely that the explanation of language change can be drawn from linguistic structure alone, since the fact of language change itself is not consistent with our fundamental conception of what language is.’ How, then, does one explain change in a language having no native speakers, where structure may be the only reference point for observing change? Clearly the structure of the Hebrew language had undergone some sort of modification, and the non-native speakers of colloquial Modern Hebrew (as distinct, in exactly this way, from the speakers and the language of Israeli Hebrew), by shifting to this structure, contributed material from their own native languages and linguistic competence to this transformation. In fact, the revival of Hebrew may represent a classic case of ‘substratum interference,’ as was pointed out in section 2.4. The word-based emphasis on description in the linguistic study of Israeli Hebrew provided ample evidence of borrowed vocabulary and loan-translations as ‘contributions’ from speakers’ original languages to the preparation of Hebrew as a modern vernacular. However, more revealing in the development of Israeli Hebrew than lexical renovation was another component, which stands out as the most determining substratal influence in the genesis of Israeli Hebrew. The continuous efforts of descriptivists and prescriptivists alike to explicate the nature of its divergence from normative forms are testimony to something ‘unusual’ about Israeli phonology and the native Hebrew sound system.
4. THE STUDY OF SOUND CHANGE IN HEBREW

4.1. ASHKENAZIC, SEPHARDIC, AND ISRAELI

Normal linguistic transmission is primarily an acoustic affair. The first interaction any child has with language is in the form of acoustic signs, and under normal circumstances these signs will be part of the language that the child acquires first. This, of course, was not the case for Hebrew, until the eldest son of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the ‘first Hebrew child,’ became the first to know Hebrew in such a way in modern times. Thus the importance of the point made by Weinreich, Labov & Herzog (1968) regarding the structured heterogeneity of a unilingual linguistic competence can hardly be overstated. Linguistic material originating in a Hebrew language of the past has been repeatedly transmitted from speaker to speaker, incorporated into the expression of their linguistic
competence. As such, its limited corpus has been subject to some kind of phonological change through time. Weinberg (1966), in fact, presents an exhaustive description of the ways in which Modern Hebrew realizations relate specifically to the phonological rules of the classical language. His observations point to the fact that Biblical phonology per se can hardly be said to exist in Israeli Hebrew.

Yet ‘phonology,’ in its various conceptions, was a principle concern both of the early revival movement and of those overseeing the subsequent development of the language. The intention to eliminate the salient features of Ashkenazic Hebrew was not merely an attempt to dissociate the new Hebrew culture from Yiddish and Eastern European Jewish life. Aside from the romantic attraction to its ‘Oriental’ character, the Sephardi accent favored by Ben-Yehuda and most other revivalists had ‘scientific’ justification. They claimed that its features more accurately preserved those of the Biblical language (Fellman 1973: 84-85). However, even early in the speech revival, some realized that the nature of this concern, expressed in terms of the reading pronunciations of Classical Hebrew texts, was misdirected:

With respect to our own pronunciation, in relation to ‘our Ashkenazic society,’ it appears from what the supporters of the Sephardic inflection say that this principle is not a principle, and that the influence of imitation [of Germans and Poles] alone governs us. They pay no attention to the fact that in this very manner we could just as well not apply this very sentence to their own pronunciation...it is by no means the original pronunciation which the ancient Hebrews possessed. (Saul Tchernikovski 1912, cited in Saulson 1979)

Sound change in Hebrew is not merely a matter of change restricted to the Whole Hebrew pronunciation of various communities. Within the generative framework, Halle (1962) described phonological change as the loss and addition of rules to the grammar of a language which describes a speaker’s linguistic
knowledge. In addition, as the sub-field of generative grammar which seeks to describe the transformations of underlying representations to their phonetic realizations, generative phonology usually treats forms in terms of sub-segmental phonological features. Phonemes are 'cover symbols' for sets of features, and sound change operates at different phonological levels, affecting features rather than phonemes. This view allows for an integration of what have historically been competing theories as to the basic mechanism of sound change, i.e. 'phonemes change,' the neogrammarian principle that sound change is a gradual transformation in a continuous phonetic space, vs. 'words change,' the position of lexical diffusionists who argue for sound change as an abrupt substitution motivated by analogy (Labov 1994: 542).

Traditionally, however, the study of Hebrew sound change has been described not in terms of changes in the rules of a grammar or the features of phonemic segments, but in terms of the different pronunciations assigned by different traditions to the orthographic symbols of written Hebrew. Consequently, it does not describe the true nature of Jewish language speakers' phonological integration of Hebraic material into their linguistic competence, either in Merged or Whole forms. Furthermore, as Faber (1987: 20) states with respect to Ashkenazic Whole Hebrew, 'whether one treats the liturgical pronunciation as something that evolved in tandem with the religious and cultural traditions...or independently of them depends in large measure on one's (possibly romanticized) preconceptions about the centrality of religious

11 As King (1969: 66) stresses, 'rules' in this sense are what generativists conceive of as valid generalizations in the linguist's model of a native speaker's competence, the grammar. Language change, i.e. changes in the rules of a grammar are changes in a speaker's competence once s/he has reached linguistic adulthood.
12 Kiparsky (1988) explains this distinction as the result of two types of phonological rules, 'lexical' and 'post-lexical,' which interact closely with morphology, operating at different stages of the word-formation process. Thus the two types of sound change can be described in terms of the same rules which account for the synchronic facts of phonology.

49
observance in the Jewish past.' In other words, there is a tendency to underestimate the importance of linguistic competence in favor of overstating the influence of religious tradition on a speaker's linguistic knowledge. The distinct functional roles of orthography and phonology in the knowledge of Hebrew were thus merged into one. This blurring of functional distinctions between orthographic and phonological representations is especially interesting when we consider the role it played in the development of the native sound system.

In 1913, the Language Committee published the orthoepic grapheme-phoneme correspondences which they declared ת"ה הפסד, 'the Sephardic pronunciation' (see Appendix 1). These correspondences were to serve as the ideal pronunciation of Modern Hebrew, one which rejected the abuses of Ashkenazic Hebrew and endorsed the 'Oriental' pronunciation, which preserved, at the very least, more features of the original Hebrew phonological system. In doing so, the Committee intended to reinstate the large variety of phonetic distinctions indicated by the Tiberian tradition of vocalization in Hebrew texts, especially those lost or altered in Ashkenazic pronunciation. In addition to prescribing stress assignment according to traditional rules, they called for the pharyngeal articulation of ג and ב, which in Ashkenazic Whole Hebrew had merged with the [ʃ] and [ʔ] traditionally associated with ב and ג respectively. The realization of the latter in fact alternated freely with O in Ashkenazic Hebrew, so that the glottal stop was usually realized by ב. The Committee also called for the 'emphatic' articulation of כ, so as to differentiate it from dageshed ג [t]. Ashkenazic Hebrew speakers did differentiate כ [s] from its dageshed form, but

13 Tiberian vocalization included one diacritic within the graphemes, known as םו ה [daqe], 'emphasis,' which was used to indicate both gemination and the stop variant of spirantized allophonic pairs. The Committee did not prescribe different articulations of dageshed and undageshed ג and כ, despite the fact that the spirant allophones, [γ] and [δ], though not realized in the Hebrew component of Old Yishuv Judezmo in Jerusalem, were prevalent in the Merged and Whole Hebrew of Judeo-Spanish in Turkey and Greece (Bunis 1988).
the Committee opted for the Judeo-Spanish [0] realization. They prescribed a uvular articulation for \( \mathcal{J} \), which Ashkenazic Hebrew speakers did not differentiate from velar 𪾢. They sought to reinstate the [w] articulation of \( \mathcal{J} \), which in Ashkenazic Hebrew had merged with undageshed ʘ as [v]. In the case of the articulation \( \mathcal{J} \), it was less a matter of reinstating a lost distinction than the outright elimination of a characteristic feature of Eastern European Yiddish speech, the uvular trill, in favor of the alveolar trill to demonstrate Hebrew’s unity with the regional Sprachbund (Blanc 1968).

Yet by 1940, Rabin had observed that, except in the most formal registers, the glottal stop (the reflex of historical ʘ and ʘ) was disappearing from all styles of Hebrew speech. He noted that despite the condemnation of this pronunciation by the authorities of orthoepy, ‘elle s’est répandue de plus en plus, et les jeunes des groupes sephardi et yéménite l’adoptent de plus en plus’ (1940: 77). This trend has indeed persisted, so that the articulation of [ʔ] alternates freely with Ø in most environments and in most native Israeli Hebrew dialects (Bolozky 1978). Davis (1984) found that the pharyngeal segments, very often present in the phonemic inventories of non-Ashkenazic Jews, and prescribed as characteristically Semitic sounds part of ancient Hebrew pronunciation, are in fact stigmatized in Israeli Hebrew speech. Furthermore, based on studies of linguistic change in ‘apparent time,’ Davis believes that a sound change in progress is eliminating the pharyngeals from all varieties of Israeli Hebrew. In addition, Yaeger-Dror (1993) claims that ירמ [mizráxi] ‘Eastern,’ speakers, i.e. those of North-African and Middle-Eastern background, whose phonemic inventories and Whole Hebrew pronunciation include the prescriptive alveolar /r/, assimilate in their speech to the koine described by Blanc (1968), which has developed with a distinct preference for the non-normative uvular trill or fricative (see section 1.2,
footnote 3). And Katriel (1986) contends that children’s use of non-normative penultimate stress, which typically gives Hebrew words what she calls a ‘Yiddishized’ texture, has a distinct function as a pragmatic particle, which has permeated general speech patterns. The re-assignment of ultimate stress to the very same lexical items which in Yiddish Merged Hebrew received penultimate stress was as much a part of revival practice. Yet Katriel (1986: 280) states firmly that ‘the ideological connotations originally associated with the Hebrew stress pattern are no longer relevant to the understanding of its current uses.’ The same can be said of the other phonological features of Israeli Hebrew. Although they are the concern of normativists to promote, they have not developed as distinctive Israeli Hebrew features.

Other prescriptive efforts, such as that of articulating a well-documented rule of Biblical Hebrew phonology, known in traditional grammar as ‘schwa mobile,’ i.e. the insertion of [ə] in initial consonant clusters, are also almost completely ignored in casual speech, while conspicuously present in careful speech and extremely formal registers (Bolozky 1978). Many of the prescribed articulations, such as [q] and [θ], did not persist in any variety of Israeli Hebrew once a native speech community developed. The presence of the pharyngeal phones [ʕ] and [h], as well as an alveolar /ɾ/ have been maintained to a degree, and for Blanc (1964) they are a defining feature not only of the speech of radio announcers and of more formal registers, but of the Israeli Hebrew dialect he calls ‘Arabicized.’ However, Blanc states that he knows of ‘no case of genuine acquisition of Arabicized Israeli by a speaker of non-Oriental antecedents’ (1964: 134). The ‘General’ Israeli Hebrew phonemic system has not maintained any

---

14 A number of stress-differentiated doublets exist in Israeli Hebrew, especially in the names of towns established before Israeli independence from common nouns, e.g. רַחֲמִית, where [רַחֲמִית] = the name of the city, but [רַחֲמֹת] = ‘streets’. See section 2.2 for the possible predecessor of this phenomenon in Yiddish speech.
segmental distinctions that were not part of Ashkenazic Hebrew speakers’ phonological inventory, nor has it developed phonotactic patterns foreign to Ashkenazic speech. Hebrew linguists (e.g. Blanc 1965, 1968; Rosén 1958, 1977; Tene 1969, 1996) have stated repeatedly that there is no doubt that the phonological development of the ‘General Israeli Hebrew’ of the educated native Israeli speaker was conditioned overwhelmingly by Ashkenazic standards of speech. This conditioning is reflected in both the development of the native sound system, and the subsequent changes it has undergone.

It has been widely assumed in the study of sound change in Hebrew that at its ninth-century encoding, the Tiberian system of vocalization was devised to preserve graphically every one of the phonemes historically present in Hebrew, which by that time was no longer in vernacular use. Yet in the same way that the ‘rules’ of a grammar are the linguists’ model of native competence, so the phonemic system is an abstracted formulation of the way native speakers distinguish the sounds of their language. Ornan (1964: 111), for example, takes the very fact of Hebrew’s non-native status to mean that it is more likely that the codifiers of the Tiberian system intended it to represent ‘everything their ears heard; it was, then, basically a phonetic system, not a phonemic one...a marking system denoting the real situation of the language, not the theoretical one.’ The Hebrew Language Committee assigned a distinct phonemic value to each grapheme so that Hebrew would take on its ancient phonetic form. They viewed the Tiberian system as constituting a phonemic system of significant oppositions, and they believed that the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew most accurately preserved this system. The correspondences proposed by the Committee did reflect more closely the phonemic inventory of Arabic and ‘Oriental’ Hebrew speakers, especially in the consonant system. Yet the ‘Sephardic’ vowel system
adopted by the Committee actually maintained fewer distinctions than the Ashkenazic vowel pronunciations, which differentiated, for example, between the diacritics [kamáts] and [patáx] where most Sephardic speakers realized both as [a]. In fact, the Committee’s prescriptions did not match any extant Whole Hebrew pronunciation (Tene 1996). Inevitably, a new standard of speech, and a new standard for the analysis of this speech, had to emerge.

4.2. GRAPHO-PHONOLOGY

Many linguists have attempted to describe the sound system of the language of native Israeli speakers, objectively recognizing its divergence from the traditional pronunciations which influenced its development. An article entitled ‘The Phonology of Sabra Hebrew’ by Patai (1953), for example, offers such an analysis. Yet Patai’s description is not only far from the generative understanding of a ‘phonology,’ it is also typical of even the most non-prescriptive attempts to characterize the sound of the native Hebrew speech community. Patai begins his article by showing that with sixty-four phonetic elements potentially represented in Hebrew script, the contemporary spoken language, in its various traditions of pronunciation, necessarily shows fewer phonemic distinctions than it did at its ninth century encoding in the Tiberian system. In a similar vein, Morag describes the vowel systems of three pronunciation systems of Hebrew, traditional Sephardic, General Israeli, and Oriental Israeli, in specific reference to the respective realizations of the diacritic vowel marks he terms ‘historical qameš, holam and seri’ (1959: 251). And Kutscher specifically bemoans the phonemic split of ל, ל, and י, while accepting that the merger of the phonemes ר and י ‘has not in any way altered the structure of the language’ (1956: 40).
It should be noted that in modern phonological descriptions of a non-pedagogical nature, phonological representations are rarely treated in terms of orthographic forms. The neogrammarian theories of language, to which the phonemic principle is heir, were often so concentrated on idiolects and individual linguistic behavior that something as conventionalized as spelling could hardly have been synchronically revealing of a 'language custom' (Weinreich, Labov & Herzog 1968). However, Chomsky & Halle (1968) interpret the phonetic opaqueness and apparent inconsistencies of orthography, such as that of English, as desirable according to the principles of generative phonology, which views speech output as the product of systematic phonological rules operating on 'underlying' representations of lexical items. They claim that in English spelling, phonetic variability is not indicated where it is predictable by a general rule of phonology, so that it maintains a close correspondence between semantic units and orthographic forms. Though in no way a phonological reality, spelling is the custom around which idiolects vary. English orthography is to Chomsky and Halle 'a near optimal system for the lexical representation of English words,' because it represents what native English speakers know about their language (1968: 49). The 'conservative' nature of English spelling maintains what is psychologically real and salient about English words, namely, their etymological and semantic relations.

Hebrew, too, represents what is psychologically salient about its lexical items through a highly conservative orthography. I have shown elsewhere how in reading unvocalized Hebrew texts, which is the form of most modern printed Hebrew, lexical information is extracted primarily via the unpronounceable\textsuperscript{15} tri-

\textsuperscript{15} The three (or, in some cases, two or four) graphemes of a root determine a semantic field, and several distinct words can be represented in unvocalized texts with a single root pattern. For example, נב may represent the word [davar] 'thing, object,' [dibär] 'he spoke,' or
consonantal שורש [ʃøref], or ‘root.’ These graphemes preserve distinctions orthographically that existed phonologically in Classical Hebrew, but which are not represented fully in any Hebrew pronunciation tradition, giving the spelling a phonemically (though not morpho-phonemically) ‘historical’ or ‘archaic’ character (Rosén 1977: 67). Hebrew is thus considered to have a ‘deep’ orthography, where semantic information has significantly more psychological salience than phonological or phonetic information (Strolovitch 1996: 5). Moreover, orthographic forms that have existed in the Hebrew corpus since Biblical times have shown extraordinarily little variation in spelling in nearly every phase of Hebrew writing, including their forms in calque translations of texts into other Jewish languages. For example, Hebraisms in Yiddish were readily identifiable in writing as such by their ‘un-Yiddish’ spelling which, in keeping with their unvocalized Hebrew forms, did not make use of orthographic vowels (combinations of the four matres lectionis א, י, ו, and ה, some of the diacritic dashes and points) in the Hebraic root. However, a phonological analysis such as Morag’s cited above puts two entirely different levels of linguistic knowledge on the same plane of inquiry. It forces a comparison between the different phonetic outputs of a non-native language to two native systems, using terminology which Blanc (1964, 1968) more accurately applies to characterize the dominant synchronic phonemic inventories of Israeli Hebrew.

This tradition of analysis, whereby graphemes function as phonemes, can be reconciled by virtue of the diglossic nature of pre-revival Hebrew.

[daber] ‘speak!’ The word is ‘unpronounceable’ only in the sense that vowels, as well as the alternation of ז as [β]–[v], are in no way indicated orthographically.  
16 Kutscher (1958) gives examples of coinages which avoided direct borrowing by using existing Hebrew terms to mimic the acoustic qualities of a given loanword, e.g. [dilug rav] ‘telegraph’ (lit. ‘great leap’), [xoli ra] ‘cholera’ (lit. ‘bad disease’), and [prate kol] ‘protocol’ (lit. ‘all details’). Perhaps the salience of semantic versus phonological information in the Hebrew lexicon contributed the ultimate non-acceptance of these compounds.
Standardized orthographies fail to reflect phonetic reality not only because of their inefficiency in representing constantly-changing spoken language, but because they are more efficient when they have a cross-dialectical application (Wexler 1971: 336). Having fractionalized into different Whole Hebrew pronunciations, and having been integrated differentially into the Merged Hebrew components of Jewish languages, the written norm of pre-revival Hebrew was not intended to have a super-dialectical function. In this kind of diglossic situation, the orthography is an archetype for H-language performance. Yet the Hebrew Language Committee specifically intended to supersede the super-dialectical function of the written norm in their incipient non-diglossic Hebrew. This is evident from the pronunciation prescriptions which, when adopted by revivalists, were designed not to reflect Chomsky & Halle’s orthographic ideals, but to circumvent native phonology. For pre-vernacular Hebrew, whose performance was intimately tied to its visual representation, the absence of native speakers meant that knowledge of Hebrew was very much a textual matter. This conception carried over into the linguistic analysis of post-revival Hebrew, in terms of the locus of sound change in the language revival.

Berman (1978: 9) cites evidence from advanced courses in phonology at Tel-Aviv University, where students with considerable background in contemporary issues in phonological theory seem to have difficulty in distinguishing between sound and letter when discussing the structure of Modern Hebrew. She believes that because of the extremely low rate of illiteracy among native Hebrew speakers, orthographically ‘naïve’ informants are rare. Bentur (1978) maintains that in Israeli Hebrew, exposure to orthography can in fact lead to modification of the speaker’s grammar (in the generativist sense). She refers to the application of a historical /a/-insertion rule whose structural
description includes pharyngeal segments. The phonemic status of these segments in Israeli Hebrew is at the very least abstract and underlying, since they do not surface in most informal speech. Based on the results of word formation tests, she determined that such phonological rules can be psychologically real without being extended to all new formations which meet their structural description, because of access to orthographic information. Therefore, 'disregarding the relevance of orthographic data in phonological analyses results...in a misrepresentation of the speaker’s knowledge' (1978: 21). In fact, she offers a synchronic description of the rule which includes orthographic constraints on the conditioning environment, namely, that the /a/ is inserted before [?] and [x] only when these phones represent realizations of ꞌ and ꞌ. Because the 'phonemes' formerly known as ꞌ and ꞌ are synchronically realized as [?] and [x], which are historically the reflexes of ꞓ and Ꞓ exclusively, without the orthographic condition specifying that only underlying ꞌ/ and ꞌ incur the rule, i.e. the phonemes historically represented by ꞌ and ꞌ but no longer realized, the rule would not express the 'valid generalization' which is the object of generative phonology.

4.3. NON-NORMATIVITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY

Bentur's analysis, though by no means prescriptively oriented, is nonetheless inspired by the classical rules of Hebrew grammar, which are assumed to have persisted in some form throughout Hebrew's diglossic existence and to have adapted to the exigencies of modern usage. To determine the degree to which this is so requires linguistic study beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the influence of H-language normativism in even the most objective linguistic analysis of Modern Hebrew is typical of other situations of weakened diglossia. Rabin (1986) cites the first grammars of the European Romance
 vernaculars as an example of this practice, stating that these descriptions ‘continued to be written in slavish imitation of Latin grammar’ (1986: 548).

The so-called spirantization rule provides an excellent illustration. Faber (1986) states that the rule was productive in Biblical Hebrew, applying across word boundaries and within phrases. Six obstruent consonants, /b g d k p t/, alternated allophonically in post-vocalic environments with the corresponding fricatives, i.e. [v y ∫ x θ], except when geminated. An acronym\textsuperscript{17} formed from the corresponding graphemes, מ-כפ, shows not only the other name by which the rule is known, the ‘Begad-Kefat’ rule, but it also shows its limited application in current Hebrew phonology to /b k p/. Furthermore, variable application has resulted in several phenomena, such as the phonemic split of several formerly allophonic pairs, and hence the co-existence of spirantized and non-spirantized forms, sometimes as semantic doublets, e.g. התו, where normative [hitxavër] = ‘join, unite’ and non-spirantized [hitxabër] = ‘become friends.’ Fischler (1981) discusses how the rule is construed by the Academy and normativists, yet he also offers a plethora of examples of its non-operation, especially in regard to borrowings which conform entirely to native morphological patterning yet show almost no variance in their non-observance of spirantization. Bar-Adon (1977) gives credit to children for ‘revolutionizing’ the morphophonemics of /b g d k p t/. He cites forms with initial spirantization, e.g. [fixēd] ‘he feared,’ post-consonantal spirantization, e.g. [likfōc] ‘to jump,’ and post-vocalic de-spirantization, e.g. [jabār] ‘he broke’ as having gained currency

\textsuperscript{17}Because any set of consonantal graphemes can theoretically be vocalized, Hebrew forms words from the initial letters of many phrases, which then behave in complete accordance with applicable morphological rules. Such formations occur in all layers of Hebrew, as evidenced by the names of major medieval scholars (e.g. רבי מאן [rambam] ≠ /rabi mofe ben majmon/) and recent military coinages (e.g. רב ריפו [rasar] ≠ /rav samal rifon/ ‘sergeant-major’). Blanc (1953: 88) lists rasap/ ‘company sergeant-major,’ where the final /p/ stands for the word [plugati] ‘(of the) company,’ among other examples of non-spirantized native words.
in General Israeli Hebrew due to the persistence of these forms as produced by native children. He thus credits the first native speaking children with 'exceptional creativity,' and systematizes non-normative forms as part and parcel of new linguistic intuitions in a native Hebrew competence.

Kiparsky (1971) also sees a role for children in determining the current state of spirantization, although of a less pro-active nature. He believes that the spirantization rule has become 'opaque' in Modern Hebrew, because the surface output of the rule, i.e. the fricatives, occur in environments other than that predicted by the rule. The merger of /h/ ('historical n') with [x] (the spirantized form of /k/), which occurred prior to the speech revival, means that the output of spirantization has another source in the grammar. In addition, the non-articulation of historical schwas means that spirantization seems to have applied in an environment where it should not have, i.e. after consonants, as in /fax-ul > [faxul] 'they spilled' (Bolozky 1978: 34). While the spirantization of /p b/ remains 'transparent,' Kiparsky cites evidence that children have more difficulty learning the opaque part of Modern Hebrew spirantization, thereby producing forms such as [leka:bes] and [xvisá] where the rule calls for [leka:bes] and [kvisá] 'to wash / laundry' (1971: 78). In response, however, Ben-Horin & Bolozky (1972) object to the postulation of any sort of general spirantization rule in Modern Hebrew. They note that the sounds to which the rule applies do not form any kind of natural class of segments, and claim that the spirantization rule may in fact have no psychological reality to Modern Hebrew speakers:

...it took time before psychologically real (i.e. productive) rules were crystallized. We are not sure whether there is a productive spirantization rule in Modern Hebrew. And even if there is such a rule, it is obviously not a direct descendent of the more general spirantization rule, since the latter never existed in Modern Hebrew. (1972: E34)
This tentative conclusion betrays the importance of the difference between the psychologically reality of the rules of diglossic Hebrew and of the internalized system of language developed by native Hebrew speakers. Until ‘rules’ of this latter sort crystallized in the renativized grammar of native speakers, the Hebrew language did not have an autonomous phonological component which could operate in the grammar of a once-native language. In developing their linguistic competence, children do make ‘mistakes’ in the sense of over-generalizing, or ‘optimizing,’ the patterns of the language they are acquiring. Some linguistic change may result from children’s optimization of the grammar having persisted into their linguistic adulthood (King 1969). Still, to what extent these over-generalizations may replace ‘adult’ forms, and to what extent they actually reflect a changed linguistic competence, are difficult to establish. Thus it is equally difficult to determine to what degree the underlying representations and phonological rules of Israeli Hebrew are the result of natural evolution from those of the classical language during its restricted existence. What can be said is that the first native speakers were, by definition, not in contact with the speech of a native Hebrew competence -- their mother tongue was not ‘normally transmitted’ to them. At the very least, this must have resulted in differences greater than normal between the grammar constructed by the first Hebrew children and the grammar of those whose speech constituted their linguistic experience (Kiparsky 1968).

Having begun an article on the diachronic transition from Classical to Israeli Hebrew with the appropriate hesitation for treating such changes as ‘legitimate examples of linguistic change,’ Rosén (1964: 832) concludes that ‘the processes [of systemic change]...are of a purely internal nature (i.e. features of ‘diachrony’ and not of ‘contact’).’ However, this conclusion is unsatisfactory.
Changes in the Hebrew system are most definitely features of contact, between the native competence of non-Hebrew speakers and their performance in Hebrew through the ages. Moreover, these changes were accentuated when foreign substrata necessarily became the base upon which native Hebrew speech developed. However, as I have stated, the discontinuity in native competence meant that the rules which generate every grammatical Hebrew sentence have not been transmitted normally through the ages from speakers of Classical Hebrew to speakers of Israeli Hebrew. One cannot simply add current linguistic data to that of past centuries of Hebrew speech as if they were drawn from the same speech community, since the earlier community no longer exists (Labov 1994: 20). Thus the question which the next section addresses is, what were the mechanisms and influences which allowed an abnormally transmitted language to regain its potential for normal transmission, and thus normal linguistic change? In other words, what in the development of Israeli Hebrew can account for the consistent discrepancy not only between normativism and actual usage, but also between the contradictory views on the diachrony of the Hebrew language?
5. THE GENEALOGY OF ISRAELI HEBREW

To recall that the question of the Semitic identity of Israeli Hebrew is one concerning its genealogical, and not its typological relationship is to solve the problem.

- Haim B. Rosén (1977: 24)

...the ghost of typological classification masquerading as genetic classification can unfortunately not yet be laid to rest.

- Bernard Comrie (1989: 82)

5.1. NATIVIZATION AS CREOLIZATION

In discussing the nativization process and its crucial role in the development of Israeli Hebrew, Bar-Adon (1991: 126) asserts that 'if Hebrew were in use only by non-native speakers, it would resemble a somewhat artificial language, a 'pidgin,' rather than a creole.' Since Hebrew is in use by native speakers, he considers the nativization process to be similar rather to the process of creolization, in which a simplified contact language, deriving from a variety of lexical, phonological, and grammatical sources, crystallizes by becoming the first language of its users. Izre’el (1985: 79) refers to the koine-ization outlined by Blanc (1968) and the nativization described by Bar-Adon (1977) in explicitly stating that Israeli Hebrew, the mother tongue of approximately one million native speakers which did not exist as such just one hundred years ago, shows many of the ‘classic’ signs of pidginization and creolization. He cites, for example, the simplification of both the vowel and consonantal systems of the two major pre-revival ‘phonologies’ and its subsequent adoption as a single phonological system by the first native Hebrew children as evidence for the operation of these
processes in the development of modern spoken Hebrew. More than just leveling the idiosyncrasies of dialects toward the formation of a national *koine*, the origins and development of Israeli Hebrew show the characteristic simplification and expansion of pidginization and creolization, so that the language may properly be classified as a creole.

Invoking the terms 'creole' and 'creolization' is rarely without controversy. To the non-linguist, and sometimes even to the linguist, the terms have implications of mixture and deviation that undermine the systematicity, and hence the 'linguistic status,' of the speaker's language. Fishman (1981: 8), for example, explains that considerations as to the sources of Jewish languages 'combine to demote Jewish varieties to the status of dialects (and indeed, even to that of Creoles [sic], since the latter alone possess only vitality, or pidgins, since they alone lack even that saving grace).’ This attitude represents an attempt to accord Jewish languages the very status which it denies creole languages. It demotes the latter to a language form below the level of dialect, thereby regarding creoles and the process by which they developed as marginal to linguistic theory. However, linguists have been increasingly turning to pidgin and creole linguistics because of the models suggested therein for language acquisition, language variation, and language change (Traugott 1977). Creolization is a complex process of contact-induced language change, characterized by expansion in form and extension in use. A creole is the result of this process having converged to an autonomous norm, i.e. a native language (Hymes 1971: 84). In fact, the distinguishing features of most Jewish languages, as with creole languages, are very often the result of contact and mixture among languages, most commonly a particular Holy Language tradition, with its Whole and Merged Hebrew speech patterns, and a co-territorial non-Jewish language. Weinreich (1954: 78)
expressed this fact quite succinctly in his discussion on the origins of Yiddish, claiming that 'Yiddish is a fusion language, in which...four components have to be reckoned with...The emergence of Yiddish cannot be conceived of as the gradual breakaway of a certain German-speaking group from its former language.'

Hence the use of the label 'creole' is meant only to identify the product(s) of a form of linguistic change in which the language is neither the result of a complete speech community shift, nor merely a changed later form of an ancestor language. This is the claim I expressed earlier regarding the nature of Israeli Hebrew's development. It follows a definition given by Thomason & Kaufman, who argue for the existence of a class of languages 'whose developmental history involves abnormal transmission, by which we mean that a language as a whole has not been passed down from one speaker to the next with changes spread more or less evenly across all parts of the language' (1988: 211). The thought experiment which opened this paper is presented by Thomason & Kaufman using English speakers and a borrowed Russian lexicon as hypothetical languages in a contact situation. They use it to illustrate an essential characteristic of an 'abrupt creole,' namely, that the 'linguistic deculturation' from the original language(s) was abrupt enough so that a new native language, with lexicon and grammatical machinery of diverse origins, crystallized without having existed as a simplified, non-native pidgin (1988: 150). Yet the abrupt creole is neither 'English' nor 'Russian.' A native English speaker will recognize no lexical items or words from these speakers, while a native Russian speaker will find what lexemes s/he recognizes assembled in a fairly 'un-Russian' and incomprehensible way. The language spoken by the borrowing/shifting

18 In fact, the situation may not be entirely hypothetical. Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 103-104) discuss the case of Anglo-Romani, a language spoken by most English Gypsies, though
speakers is the genealogical descendent of neither English nor Russian, nor is it
uniquely classifiable as Germanic or Slavic. Its origin is non-genetic, because
there is no process of normal transmission in its initial development -- that is, the
transmission of an entire single set of interrelated lexical and structural features

Thomason & Kaufman concentrate on the distinction between genetic and
non-genetic development because they believe it to be crucial for the application
of the Comparative Method in reconstructing historical linguistic states. In the
case of Israeli Hebrew, the historical state of its principal component is well
reconstructed, of course. The task of historical Hebrew linguistics is to trace the
development of features in the current language state to their origins either in a
past stage of the language, or to an external source. Comrie (1989: 82)
characterizes as a common assumption of historical linguistics, that no matter how
intense the level of borrowing, it will always be the case that ‘daughter’
languages remain genetic descendants of their ‘parent’ language. Yet genetic
relationship entails a systematic correspondence in all linguistic subsystems, such
that a daughter language is a changed later form of its single parent language
(Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 11). I believe that the abrupt creolization model
more accurately characterizes the genesis of Israeli Hebrew, because it is not a
changed later form of its single parent language. The grammar of pre-revival
Hebrew, the system which is internalized by the native speaker and constitutes
part of what enables him/her to produce and understand arbitrary utterances in
the language, was not the expression of this Hebrew speaker’s linguistic
competence. Israeli Hebrew necessarily derived certain structures from non-

in no cases as a first language. They claim that the language is non-genetic, because it is the
product of two entirely distinct historical processes of inheritance and borrowing. These
correspond respectively to the completely Romani vocabulary and entirely borrowed English
grammar, resulting in a mixed speech form, yet one which is no more ‘grammatically
impoverished’ than English itself.
Hebrew sources, because those structures did not exist in pre-revival diglossic Hebrew.

The most obvious source of these structures is the language from which most of the first Hebrew speakers shifted, and whose speech output was the first linguistic data heard by the native children: Yiddish. As noted earlier, opinions about the degree of affinity between Israeli Hebrew and Yiddish vary widely. Having explored some of the attempt to minimize Yiddish influence in the previous section, I would like to explore an intriguing theory which does just the opposite. The development of Israeli Hebrew on a ‘Yiddish base’ is, as Bolozky (1994: 82) notes, ‘a reasonable hypothesis, [since] many unexplained phenomena fall into place with the notion of an underlying Yiddish syntax, modified by Hebrew structures already in operation in Yiddish.’ It is also an exciting one, with important implications for the study of Modern Hebrew and its origins, for research on language revival, and in particular for the issue of genetic linguistics. In fact, the same evidence used by Wexler (1990b) to propose a genetic link between Yiddish and Modern Hebrew motivates much of my own position regarding the nature of Modern Hebrew. However, while striving to account for the discrepancies of past accounts of the development of Israeli Hebrew, Wexler’s explanation actually serves to highlight the some of the same issues in genetic linguistics upon which I base my claims.

5.2. SEMITIC VS. SLAVIC: THE ASHKENAZIC SUBSTRATUM REVISITED

Replacing the Thomason & Kaufman English/Russian thought experiment with Yiddish/Hebrew also illustrates the essential nature of the theory proposed by Wexler (1990b) that Modern Hebrew, by virtue of having its origins in the Yiddish speech of Yiddish speakers, is a genetically-related development of the Yiddish language -- a changed later form of Yiddish. While the Thomason &
Kaufman model might claim that such a language is genetically related to none of its source languages, Wexler extends his other claims of a Slavic (medieval Judeo-Sorbian, to be precise) origin for Yiddish to assert that Modern Hebrew is a genetically Slavic language. In his scenario, the revival of Hebrew involved a relexification, whereby Yiddish and Slavic speakers replaced almost all of their native vocabulary with a borrowed Semitic Hebrew lexicon, while (unwittingly) maintaining the phonological, phonotactic, and syntactic features of these Slavic languages, especially Yiddish. Wexler dubbed this process a 'partial language shift,' and states that Jews, especially Ashkenazic Jews, have a history of similar shifts to and from the Hebrew language. He believes that the 'striking parallels' between the Biblical/Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew lexicon, due to the relexification of Yiddish, are the cause for native Hebrew speakers to mistakenly assert a genetic link between their language and the classical Semitic language. In fact, he cites Thomason & Kaufman (1988) among linguists who would not establish genetic relationships on the basis of lexicon alone (1990b: 103).

Wexler's position is an interesting one with regard to the channel of transmission of Hebrew material. The merged Semitic component of Jewish languages, he believes, represents a chain of borrowing going back to the last languages in contact with colloquial Hebrew and Aramaic. Yiddish, which not only has a greater corpus of Hebraisms than any other Jewish languages, often exhibits a greater phonetic discrepancy between the Merged and Whole Hebrew realizations of Hebraic items. While revivalists were mostly concerned with expanding the spoken use of the Whole Hebrew norms, and especially those of non-Ashkenazic speakers, Wexler concentrates on the Merged Hebrew norms of Yiddish as being both more preservative of aspects of old colloquial Hebrew, and a richer source of linguistic information for the study of Israeli Hebrew. He bases
these claims on the well-attested facts that Yiddish and Slavic speakers formed the overwhelming majority of the first ‘revivers’ of Hebrew speech and the parents of the first Israeli Hebrew speakers, asserting that the Yiddish vernacular, full of lexical and phonological ‘Hebraism’ already, was crucial in facilitating the shift to Hebrew. In fact, he states unequivocally that ‘had the language planners of the late nineteenth century been predominantly speakers of Jewish languages other than Yiddish — all of which have a far smaller Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaic corpus -- it would probably have proven impossible to revive Hebrew as a spoken language’ (1990a: 124).

These influences are for Wexler part of the ‘hidden Slavic standard’ of Modern Hebrew speech. He believes that one of the distinguishing features of Modern Hebrew is the co-existence of minimal pairs defined by a Yiddish-influenced divergence from traditional norms. He compares this process to that which resulted in similar doublets in Romance languages, where borrowed Latinisms co-exist alongside inherited cognates, e.g. French ‘frèle’ vs. ‘fragile.’ While the former reflects the operation of sound change on the Old French form, the latter was ‘rephonologized’ based on a combination of historical knowledge and synchronic French phonology. Similarly, the reduced operation of spirantization in Modern Hebrew actually reflects its partial dismantling in Yiddish Merged Hebrew, though its effects (rather than its continued productivity) surface in the borrowed Biblical/Mishnaic lexicon of Modern Hebrew (1990b: 94-95). Wexler claims that in borrowing Hebraic material from their native language, Yiddish speakers eliminated elements of their native phonology and morphosyntax from many of Yiddish Hebraisms by rephonologizing lexical items with what he calls an ‘Ashkenazified Judeo-Spanish pronunciation.’ In other words, the ‘relexification-cum-rephonologization’ of
Modern Hebrew, which represented the revivalists’ best efforts to distance modern Hebrew speech from Ashkenazic norms, actually canceled the effects of historical sound changes in the Semitic Hebrew component of Yiddish, so that Hebraisms of the latter are often phonologically closer to the forms of Old Hebrew than those in Modern Hebrew itself (1990b: 75). Only the etymology of the Modern Hebrew lexicon has maintained a genuine link to its Semitic ancestry.

Wexler’s position is echoed by the claims of others who have focused on the phonological and lexical influence of Yiddish on Israeli Hebrew, often denied by many normativists. Prager (1981), for example, shows how lexemes created in Yiddish with Hebrew raw material have been subsequently naturalized in Hebrew. These do not merely represent borrowings from Yiddish to Prager, but rather the persistence of Yiddish merged Hebrew forms in Israeli Hebrew. Since Hebraisms in Yiddish were by definition non-native, these Israeli Hebrew borrowings forms a class of ‘reverse substitutions.’ For example, normative [taxlît] and Merged Hebrew [táxløs] forms of Hebrew תכלית ‘purpose, goal,’ co-exist in Israeli Hebrew, where the latter carries its Yiddish meaning of ‘practical purpose, business matter.’ Similarly, מְכִיא [meciá] ‘find (n.), discovery’ opposes [meciø] ‘bargain (n.),’ and חברה [xevrā] ‘society, company’ matches with [xève] ‘the gang.’ Although they are unattested in Classical Hebrew with the specific semantic or phonological features of the Yiddish formations, and because they do not correspond to the Ashkenazic Whole Hebrew realizations, Prager maintains that the specifically Yiddish origins are consistently ignored in the lexicographic analysis of Israeli Hebrew. Gold (1982) shows similar evidence of Yiddish creativity having influenced Modern Hebrew, focusing on Yiddish items formed from Hebrew-Aramaic elements that do not follow normative Hebrew-Aramaic grammar. He cites Hebrew compounds with בן [ben], ‘boy, son,’ which
he claims to have been coined on the model of Yiddish words containing [kInd] ‘child,’ [bóxar] ‘young man, bachelor,’ or [jíngl] ‘boy.’ More intriguingly, he cites a semantic shift in the use of a Hebrew word of Biblical origin, בן-אדם [benadam], ‘human,’ to the sense of Yiddish mens, ‘a real human being.’ In this case, Gold believes a Yiddish word of non-Semitic origin to have determined the Modern Hebrew meaning of a Semitic Hebrew word.

5.3. THE BAROMETER OF LINGUISTIC CHANGE

The question of whether such influences are central or peripheral to the nature and development of Israeli Hebrew is part of a set of broader issues in historical and contact linguistics. Thomason & Kaufman often refer to Weinreich's work on contact-induced language change and genetic relationships as heir to the Prague school's proposals for linguistic constraints on linguistic interference (1988: 13). For instance, Weinreich understands Meillet's insistence on continuity of transmission to be not a criterion, but only a common characteristic of genetic relationship. Therefore, he claims that the existence of cognates in the basic morphemic stock may be used as a primary measure of genetic distance in general (1958: 376).

Hence basic vocabulary and inflectional or derivational morphology have traditionally been cited as criteria for maintaining Israeli Hebrew's genetic affiliation as Semitic, insofar as both maintain the character of Classical 'Semitic' Hebrew. A modern Hebrew dictionary such as Even-Shoshan's lists only 22% of current Hebrew vocabulary as having its source in the Biblical language. Sivan (1980: 27-28) claims, however, that the percentage of words of Biblical origin in actual modern Hebrew texts is about 65%, and that considerations of semantic change in Biblical vocabulary further increase the role of Biblical Hebrew in the modern language. He likens this discrepancy to that found in modern English
dictionaries, which cite less than 10% of modern English vocabulary as being of Anglo-Saxon origin, while the percentage of Germanic word stock in actual speech runs from 70% to 90%. This inconsistency does not prevent English form universally being classified as Germanic; so Sivan maintains the same is true of Modern Hebrew's Semitic origins.

On the other hand, Rosén (1969) makes an interesting argument for Israeli Hebrew as simultaneously Semitic in origin and affiliation, while almost completely Western in its conceptual approach to categorical classification. He attributes this to a certain 'question fatale' which undermined the relational system of concepts that existed in Classical Hebrew. By asking 'what is X called in Hebrew,' the overwhelmingly European revivalists ensured that the reconstruction of the Hebrew linguistic system, beyond its physically apparent formal features, would perpetuate a Western conceptual system based on the range of reference of X. He points to several semantic relations which he claims have been reorganized to match European semantic ranges, resulting in an almost perfect one-to-one relation between Israeli Hebrew and Western European word classes (1969: 100-105).

However, while Wexler claims that Modern Hebrew is genetically Slavic, he believes that it displays a strong tendency to become typologically Semitic (1990b: 102). This is because various elements of the sound structure and phraseology of Israeli Hebrew have their immediate origins in a Slavic language, Yiddish. The revival did not result in the Europeanization of Hebrew syntax and phonology, as is most often claimed, but in the Semiticization of the Yiddish lexicon, by borrowing heavily from a Semitic lexicon and re-phonologizing the

19 Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 263-331) present an extensive argument against the characterization of Norse and French influence on Old and Middle English as a case of creolization.
genetically Semitic material in Yiddish Whole Hebrew. In fact, this corresponds exactly to the one area in which revivalists achieved a true measure of success. The tendency of Israeli Hebrew to become typologically Semitic represents the ongoing efforts of the Academy and normativists to replace 'native' (i.e. Yiddish/Slavic) forms of Israeli Hebrew with forms from what Wexler believes to be a genetically unrelated language, Classical Semitic Hebrew (1990b: 103). However, this phenomenon is hardly uncommon in multilingual situations, where one language, whether or the not the target language of a shifting speech community, is viewed as more prestigious. The discrepancy between the dictionary content and actual use of the Greco-Latin stratum in English is an artifact of such borrowing. The two major varieties of Yiddish are also distinguished by, among others things, differential lexical borrowing. Thus increased eloquence is in Eastern Yiddish associated with a greater frequency of Hebrew-Aramaic elements, while in Western Yiddish an analogous stylistic effect is associated with an increase in the German component (Hymes 1971: 68).

Bolozky (1994) agrees with Wexler that the retention of the great number of Yiddish Hebraisms in the Modern Hebrew lexicon, side by side with Biblical or Mishnaic forms, provides evidence for the Yiddish base of Israeli Hebrew. Given the attitudes toward Yiddish in the early revival period, and the revivalists' concentration on the classical lexicon, it is unlikely that Yiddish Hebraisms would be regarded as a source for borrowing. Yet their existence, in the form of semantic and phonological contrasts with indigenous Hebrew elements, testifies to their persistence in the partial language shift as native forms. Still, Bolozky is skeptical about assigning a Slavic genetic affiliation to Israeli Hebrew, and cites several inherited Semitic features typical of Hebrew in all its historical forms. He states, for example, that 'if linear [word] formation can be shown to be expanding
at the expense of [characteristically Semitic] discontinuous derivation, then it could be argued that Modern Hebrew is indeed losing its Semitic character’ (1994: 75). Tene (1969: 59), in fact, showed how Modern Hebrew ‘seems to be impenetrable to foreign influence as far as verb conjugations and noun declensions are concerned,’ and that borrowing of verbs is impossible without full grammatical integration.

Nevertheless, Tene admits that ‘native Hebrew speech contains a considerable sediment of features stemming from the primary languages of the Hebrew renovators,’ and that the influence of their vernacular is ‘decisive’ in Israeli phonology (1969: 52). This influence is manifested not only on the level of phonemic inventory but, as we have shown, in terms of broader phonological processes. Tene’s claim of full grammatical integration should be viewed cautiously, since ‘integrated’ loanwords such as [tilfen] ‘he telephoned,’ and [medupraš] ‘depressed,’ do not conform to the spirantization rule of allophonic variation which can be shown to operate at some level (Fischler 1981). Many of the claims made by Wexler (1990b) rest on such phonological and phonotactic evidence that non-native (i.e. non-Slavic, thus borrowed Semitic) forms in Israeli Hebrew follow Yiddish phonological patterning. The lack of articulation of the pharyngeal and emphatic consonants, the reduced operation of the spirantization rule, and the non-avoidance of initial consonant clusters are for Wexler features in Israeli Hebrew speech inherited from Yiddish norms, highly uncharacteristic of Semitic Hebrew. Yet, as Bolozky (1994: 66) points out, ‘the phonological system is usually the least likely to maintain the characteristics of the proto-language, and the most likely to be affected by adjacent languages, regardless of whether they are genetically related or not.’ Therefore, the super-imposition of a borrowed lexicon and morphosyntax onto a native sound system is neither a necessary nor
sufficient condition for asserting a genetic affiliation between the pre-shift language and its subsequent ‘daughter’ language.

5.4. NON-GENETIC DEVELOPMENT: ABRUPT CREOLIZATION

The debate on distinguishing between inherited similarities in two languages and similarities resulting from language contact, known in American linguistics as the Boas-Sapir controversy, is representative of the difficulty of positing structural similarities as the criteria for genetic classification. This difficulty became apparent when linguists and anthropologists applied the methods devised for written languages to unwritten ones, such as the American Indian languages, thereby continuing to reconstruct relatively homogeneous and probably formal styles. The genetic model was first and foremost conceived of as a way of explaining the history of the patterned sound-meaning correspondences that existed between languages (Traugott 1977). Previous languages states, even ‘proto-languages,’ could be reconstructed based on these relationships. The model was developed because of and for the historical reconstruction of Indo-European languages -- languages that were well attested in written documents which provided the empirical data for reconstruction.

Thomason & Kaufman accept the position associated with Boas that diffusion of linguistic features of all sorts is possible, and therefore that no single subsystem is criterial for establishing genetic relationship. Thus they propose several criteria which they believe underlie the assumption of normal transmission of a language: (a) all languages change through time, (b) change can occur at any and all levels of the linguistic system, (c) a language is passed on with relatively small degrees of change over the short run, and most importantly, (d) the label ‘genetic relationship’ does not properly apply when transmission is imperfect. Their approach to the study of genetic relationship, and to the study of non-
genetic language development, is based theoretically on the social fact of normal transmission rather than merely on the linguistic facts themselves (1988: 9-12).

Wexler (1981: 137) identifies the immediate problem in applying this comparative method to the Jewish language phenomenon:

Traditionally, languages have been chosen for comparison on grounds of genetic affiliation, areal contiguity, or simply random selection. The comparison of Jewish languages is not based on any of these considerations... Each is derived from a coterritorial non-Jewish language, and each is open to similar types of enrichment -- sometimes even similar resources.

In other words, of all the features characterizing Jewish languages as a group, the only unique feature is

...membership in a chain of language shift leading back to Hebrew. To urge the comparison of languages on these grounds is tantamount to proposing a fourth parameter in comparative linguistics.

Weinreich (1958) is opposed to this kind of Sprachbund classification, because it is usually defined with respect to any structural isolglosses, in an often ad hoc manner. However, Wexler suggests that the very nature of Jewish languages may provide insights for creole linguistics because of their much longer recorded histories, from which he believes inferences may be drawn regarding earlier stages of creole languages. Since Hebrew speakers, until this century, were not speakers of Hebrew alone, their effect on linguistic change in Hebrew involved assigning both functions and basic structures which it did not have before. The 'miracle' of the Hebrew revival, as has been amply noted, was that Hebrew, 'dead' or 'alive' prior to its revival, has been unambiguously transformed into a native language. Yet it is crucially important to realize that the lack of a native phonological component in pre-revival Hebrew meant that Hebrew speech could not be a normally transmitted linguistic system. It could not have been a genetic
development of the literary Hebrew language, whose grammar (in the generativist sense) described a full native competence of neither non-native pre-revival Hebrew speech, nor of the Yiddish language.

The case of Indian English is discussed by Thomason & Kaufman as an example of substratal interference being restricted to phonology in language shift. In this case, too, the influence of the primary language of the shifting speakers was phonologically ‘decisive.’ Although Standard English morphosyntax was acquired, the particular phonological and intonational patterns of Indian English can be explained by reference to typological features common to most or all languages of India (1988: 129). They attribute this to the fact that the speakers have shifted to an established literary language, already in use as a second language among educated speakers, while isolated from the main target language speech community. This certainly seems to parallel the shift to Hebrew, in both sociological and phonological terms. Yet Thomason & Kaufman classify Indian English as a case of ‘language shift with normal transmission,’ while I have stressed the abnormal transmission of a diglossic H-language and its abrupt creolization in the case of Israeli Hebrew. In a sense, Thomason & Kaufman’s other scenarios of contact-induced change illustrate how the genesis of Israeli Hebrew has been mischaracterized:

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE. Interestingly enough, two very different positions express the view that Modern Hebrew is the genetic development of two very different languages. The standard view of the revival holds that Hebrew was a language maintained within the Jewish cultural legacy. This framework allows for the widely differing views regarding the degree of borrowing and substratal interference, as well as to the source of foreign influence. It allows for effects of contact-induced change by insisting that these
changes occurred internally to the Hebrew system of language, continuously employed and spoken throughout. One the other hand, this framework conforms to Wexler’s theory, that a re-lexification involving heavy lexical and morphological borrowing from Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew by Yiddish speakers maintained enough of the latter to assert that Modern Hebrew is a genetic development of Yiddish. Borrowing entails maintenance, and this supports Wexler’s position of a relexification of Yiddish, i.e. with a heavy degree of borrowing.

LANGUAGE SHIFT WITH NORMAL TRANSMISSION. This framework recognizes lack of a native speaker community, but sees Hebrew’s linguistic structure and the first developments of colloquial modern Hebrew as a case of shift to a pre-existing linguistic structure. This position emphasizes the role of second-language learning in the Hebrew revival, as well as the effects of substratal interference on the target language. A shift with normal transmission is the most general view of the Hebrew revival, with varying degrees of autonomy attributed to pre-revival Hebrew.

It is the model of LANGUAGE SHIFT WITHOUT NORMAL TRANSMISSION -- Abrupt Creolization -- which I believe correctly describes the birth of Israeli Hebrew. As Blanc (1965: 187) points out,

Unlike grammar and lexicon, there was, properly speaking, no Hebrew phonology which could be subjected to the interference of Yiddish speech habits...The present General Israeli sound system is an outgrowth of this combination of Yiddish phonic habits and the new spelling-pronunciation rules, with the addition of some other factors (internally induced phonic change, non-Yiddish external interference, normative influences. Hence, we cannot study Yiddish influence on a pre-existing sound system, but must consider rather residual traces of and deviations from Yiddish sound patterns.
Israeli Hebrew is a contact language whose linguistic study is characterized overwhelmingly by the search for a genetic past. The attempt by Wexler (1990b) to relate Israeli Hebrew's genealogy uniquely to the Slavic language family elucidates the main contact-induced changes in the Hebrew language, but it does not establish a singular genetic link between Yiddish and Modern Hebrew. Hebraic structures were adopted by speakers with what was a novel phonological system in the history of Hebrew language, primarily a development of Ashkenazic Hebrew and Yiddish speech. Israeli Hebrew, especially with regard to phonology, is the result of both shift to aspects of a target language and change in the pre-existing structures of speakers which did not exist in the target language. The model of abrupt creolization thereby recognizes the abnormal linguistic transmission inherent in the acquisition of a diglossic H-language, one without an autonomous phonological component.
6. CONCLUSION

6.1. A HEBREW ESPERANTO?

Rosén (1977: 19) wrote that 'an allusion that Israeli Hebrew was not really, fundamentally, and intrinsically Hebrew, would taint scholarship with ethno-cultural [sic] attitudes, which we had better not allow to distort our insights.' It seems appropriate, then, that a brief discussion in one of the most comprehensive histories of the Hebrew language (Sáenz-Badillos 1993: 277) about the suggestion of Israeli Hebrew as just that should have initially inspired my exploration of the topic of this paper. The author, having reviewed the work of Rosén and others who argued for Israeli Hebrew's linguistic autonomy, points out that it is 'natural' to ask whether there is a point at which the language ceases to be a Semitic one, given the frequent claims of its 'Indo-Europeanization.' Having described the development of Israeli Hebrew as a process of abrupt creolization, it would seem equally 'natural' to consider here whether other models of non-genetic linguistic development offer further insight into the nature of Modern Hebrew.

Although Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's actual role in the holistic development of Israeli Hebrew speech is questionable, he remains the most salient figure of the revival movement, and certainly one of its most passionate advocates. His role in and aspirations for the revival of Hebrew have thus been compared to those of Ludwig Zamenhof, inventor and promoter of the Esperanto language, with some intriguing parallels observed. Both men were born in Belorussia, in consecutive years, speaking the same Northeastern variety of Yiddish as their first language. They each wrote what most consider to be their linguistic manifestos within a
decade of one another, deriving much of their inspiration from their Jewish heritage. Both adopted new languages with the intent to spread them through a community as part of a quasi-religious philosophical idealistic movement, which resulted for each in withdrawal from their first-language culture (Wood 1979: 441).

The question of Modern Hebrew’s linguistic affinity with Esperanto has been raised explicitly, by both Hebrew and Esperanto linguists (e.g. Kutscher 1982, Wood 1979). They ask whether it is possible that the revival of Modern Hebrew created an artificial ‘Hebrew Esperanto,’ a quasi-Semitic language analogous to quasi-Romance Esperanto. After all, we have seen how the phonological, the functional, and the conceptual relationships of Modern Hebrew have been restructured into ‘new’ systems, and how the classification of Israeli Hebrew within the Semitic language family is hardly uncontroversial. Perhaps its systems are best classified as ‘artifacts’ of the revival movement rather than the results of any sort of linguistic evolution, deliberately constructed in the same way as those of Esperanto. Wexler (1990b) does point to several significant differences in the Modern Hebrew and Esperanto movements, such as the claim of unbroken transmission and the resulting archaizing trends in the former. However, his claims hinge on his belief that both are cases of partial language shift, in the case of Esperanto by relexifying a Yiddish phonological and syntactical base with an ‘unspoken’ Latin vocabulary. Thus he states that while ‘the inventor of Esperanto seems to have eschewed the question of classifying the language genetically...Esperanto is not “non-genetic,” but a “dialect” of Yiddish -- hence of Slavic’ (1990b: 122).

Yet Esperanto is non-genetic, exactly by the criteria I have adopted for the classification of Israeli Hebrew, because there was no normal transmission of a
complete language system when the first Esperanto speakers shifted to a language for which there were no native speakers. In fact, I believe that for some purposes, it may be more instructive to the study of artificial languages to compare the case of Esperanto to that of Israeli Hebrew, rather than vice-versa. Esperanto’s classification as ‘artificial’ may be as unwarranted as the classification of pre-revival Hebrew as a ‘dead’ language, since both labels imply a similar lack of interdependence between linguistic structure and language use. Still, one cannot but notice how differently two similar linguistic endeavors have unfolded. The failure of Esperanto to achieve a sustainable speech community is often viewed in relation to the success of Israeli Hebrew, a state language with over one million native speakers. Whatever the internal continuities of the chain of language shift that began some 2,600 years ago, the Jewish language phenomenon, including its most recent materialization in Israeli Hebrew, provided the essential resources upon which to build a viable community, for which Esperanto’s linguistic resources were simply not sufficient.

6.2. JEWISH LINGUISTIC UNITY

Nevertheless, Wexler (1990b) is correct that genetic affiliation was probably not important to Ludwig Zamenhof. Esperanto was designed to transcend the cultural and political boundaries of linguistic nationalism, and thus the constraints of historical linguistics. Israeli Hebrew, on the other hand, cannot dissociate itself from the genealogical debate. Its existence was intended to affirm a unified Jewish nation as Semitic by re-declaring its unity with a people, a land, and a language of Semitic descent. If Israeli Hebrew has its origins in this Semitic language, then structurally creolized as it may be, it is held to be a Semitic language. This genealogical argument, the basis of the revival of Hebrew, has been bolstered to a degree by the typological arguments advanced by twentieth-
century linguists, who have argued consistently that there are a sufficient number of structural and functional correspondences to other Semitic languages that even if Israeli Hebrew was born of non-Semitic linguistic stock, it is, or has become, formally Semitic.

Nevertheless, the field of linguistics has yet to resolve what combination of genetic and/or typological considerations determine a language’s pedigree. A century ago, this was not the case, and the legacy of this earlier attitude is such that in any index, even where the work attempts to show its ‘Indo-Europeanization,’ Hebrew is usually classified as a Semitic language. I have shown in this paper how a major feature of Israeli Hebrew typology, its phonological system, was primarily conditioned by the speakers of a language of distinctly non-Semitic genealogy. I have maintained that this conditioning was part of a process of ‘abrupt creolization,’ whereby Israeli Hebrew cannot be considered the genetic descendent of a single parent language. Furthermore, I have argued that such a conclusion is the inevitable result of the sociological and linguistic circumstances of Israeli Hebrew’s origins. Hence, the inadequacies of past explanations of the Hebrew revival are due to a lack of recognition paid to these crucial factors, which operated both internally and externally in the development of Israeli Hebrew. Does this investigation, then, confirm the prediction by Spolsky (1991: 146) that ‘it would be ironic and fitting if continued research were to establish that the contemporary Hebrew language owes its basic Indo-European bent to the Yiddish with which it successfully competed for loyalty?’ Few communities identify so strongly with two languages, which are at once so intricately bound to one another’s history, yet so opposed, in so many ways, for so many reasons. At the outbreak of World War II, Yiddish was spoken by more Jews than have ever spoken a Jewish language at any time. Consequently, as Roskies (1993: 159) put it, ‘Yiddish would be the bridge to
Loshn-koydesh and to modern Hebrew.’ It is hardly ironic that there are concurrently those who strive to fuse further the stories and histories of Hebrew and Yiddish, while others cannot but defend one against the supposed onslaughts of the other. The linguistics of Modern Hebrew are indeed ‘schizoid’ in nature; perhaps Israeli Hebrew has transcended this phenomenon.
REFERENCES


ORNAN, UZZI. 1964. The Tiberian vocalisation system and the principles of

—— 1985. Hebrew is not a Jewish language. In J.A. Fishman (ed.)

PARFITT, TUDOR V. 1984. The contribution of the Old *Yishuv* to the revival of

PATAI, RAPHAEL. 1953. The phonology of ‘Sabra’-Hebrew. *Jewish Quarterly
Review* 44: 51-54.

PATTERSON, DAVID. 1962. Some linguistic aspects of the nineteenth-century

PRAGER, LEONARD. 1981. The treatment of Yiddish-origin lexemes in Hebrew

RABIN, CHAIM. 1940. La chute de l’occlusive glottale en hébreu parlé et
l’évolution d’une nouvelle classe de voyelles. *Comptes-rendus du
Groupe Linguistique d’Etudes Chamito-Sémitiques* 3: 77-79.

South West Asia and North Africa*. T.A. Sebeok, ed. The Hague:
Mouton.


Vol. 2: Sociolinguistics and the Sociology of Language*. J.A. Fishman et
al, eds. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

ROSEN, HAIM B. 1952. Remarques descriptives sur le parler hébreu-israélien.
*Comptes-rendus du Groupe Linguistique d’Etudes Chamito-Sémitiques
6* : 4-7.

—— 1956. תַּכְּבֵרִית שֶּלֶגֶה: דְּמוּדִיהָ מְנוֹר שֶּׁמֶר שֶּׁמֶר הַבָּלָשִׁים (Our Hebrew: As Seen
by the Methods of Linguistics). Tel-Aviv: Am-Oved.

—— 1958. L’hébreu-israélien. *East and West: Selected Writings in
Linguistics by Haim B. Rosén. Part Two: Hebrew and Semitic Linguistics.*
Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

—— 1964. Some possible systemic changes in a Semitic system of language.
*Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists,
Mouton & Co.

—— 1969. Israel language policy, language teaching, and linguistics. *Ariel 25* :
92-111.


bilingual education. *Hebrew in America: Perspectives and Prospects.* A.


APPENDIX 1.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ʔ]</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[v]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[w]</td>
<td>ХХ:Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h] (IPA [h])</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>іХ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>іХ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>Х:Х:Х:Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>іХ:Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʃ] (IPA [ʃ])</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[p]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ts]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[q]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[r]</td>
<td>Х</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʒ] (IPA [ʃ])</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[t]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[θ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

93