

# Hybridity versus Revivability: Multiple Causation, Forms and Patterns in Israeli (somewhat misleadingly a.k.a. ‘Modern Hebrew’)

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to suggest that due to the ubiquitous **multiple causation**, the revival of a no-longer spoken language is unlikely without cross-fertilization from the revivalists’ mother tongue(s). Thus, one should expect revival efforts to result in a language with a **hybridic** genetic and typological character. The article highlights salient **morphological** constructions and categories, illustrating the difficulty in determining a single source for Israeli grammar. The European impact in these features is apparent inter alia in structure, semantics or productivity. Being an article rather than a long book, this paper does not attempt to be grammatically exhaustive but rather to cast new light on the *partial* success of language revival in general and on the genetics of Israeli in particular.

Multiple causation is manifested in the *Congruence Principle*, according to which **if a feature exists in more than one contributing language, it is more likely to persist in the emerging language**. This article discusses multiple causation in (1) constituent order, (2) tense system, (3) copula enhancement, (4) calquing, and (5) phono-semantic matching in ‘Israeli’ (Zuckermann 1999, somewhat misleadingly a.k.a. ‘Revived Hebrew’ / ‘Modern Hebrew’). It suggests that the reality of linguistic genesis is far more complex than a simple family tree system allows. ‘Revived’ languages are unlikely to have a single parent.

Generally speaking, **whereas most forms of Israeli are Semitic, many of its patterns are European**. It is proposed that (1) Whereas Hebrew was synthetic, Israeli – following Yiddish etc. – is much more analytic; (2) Israeli is a habere language (cf. Latin *habere* ‘to have’, taking the direct object), in stark contrast to Hebrew; (3) European languages sometimes dictate the gender of Israeli coinages; (4) The (hidden) productivity and semantics of the allegedly completely Hebrew system of Israeli verb-templates are, in fact, often European; (5) In Hebrew there was a polarity-of-gender agreement between nouns and numerals, e.g. *éser banót* ‘ten girls’ versus *asar-á baním* ‘ten (feminine) boys’. In Israeli there is a simpler – European – system, e.g. *éser banót* ‘ten girls’, *éser baním* ‘ten boys’; (6) Yiddish has shaped the semantics of the Israeli verbal system in the case of inchoativity; (7) Following ‘Standard Average European’, the Israeli proclitics *be-* ‘in’, *le-* ‘to’ and *mi-/me* ‘from’, as well as the coordinating conjunction *ve-* ‘and’, are phonologically less dependent than in Hebrew; (8) Word-formation in Israeli abounds with European mechanisms such as portmanteau blending.

Israeli possesses distinctive socio-historical characteristics such as the lack of a continuous chain of native speakers from spoken Hebrew to Israeli, the non-Semitic mother tongues spoken by the revivalists, and the European impact on literary Hebrew. Consequently, it presents the linguist with a unique laboratory in which to examine a wider set of theoretical problems concerning language genesis and hybridity, social issues like language vis-à-vis politics, and practical matters, e.g. whether it is possible to revive a no-longer spoken language. The multisourced nature of Israeli and the role of the Congruence Principle in its genesis have implications for historical linguistics, language planning and the study of language, culture and identity.

## 1 BACKGROUND

Linguistic and social factors are closely interrelated in the development of language change. Explanations which are confined to one or the other aspect, no matter how well constructed, will fail to account for the rich body of regularities that can be observed in empirical studies of language behavior.

(Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968: 188)

### 1.1 Introduction

‘Israeli’ (Zuckermann 1999) – also known as ‘Modern Hebrew’ – is currently one of the official languages of the State of Israel (established in 1948) and is spoken to varying degrees of fluency by its more than 7 million citizens – as a mother tongue by most Israeli Jews (whose total number exceeds 5 million), and as a second language by Israeli Muslims (Arabic-speakers), Christians (e.g. Russian- and Arabic-speakers), Druze (Arabic-speakers) and others. During the past century, Israeli has become the primary mode of communication in all domains of public and private life among Israeli Jews.

Israeli possesses distinctive socio-historical characteristics such as the lack of a continuous chain of native speakers from spoken Hebrew to Israeli, the non-Semitic mother tongues spoken by the revivalists, and the European impact on literary Hebrew. Consequently, it presents the linguist with a unique laboratory in which to examine a wider set of theoretical problems concerning language genesis, social issues like language and politics, and practical matters, e.g. whether it is possible to revive a no-longer spoken language. The multisourced nature of Israeli and the role of the **Congruence Principle** (§1.5) and the **Founder Principle** (§1.4) in its genesis have implications for historical linguistics, language planning, creolistics and the study of grammars in contact.

The aim of this article is to propose that due to the ubiquitous **multiple causation**, both linguistically and socio-linguistically (on the latter see the quote above from Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968: 188, as well as Dorian 1993), the revival of a no-longer spoken

language is unlikely without cross-fertilization from the revivalists' mother tongue(s). Thus, revival efforts result in a language with a hybridic genetic and typological character. I shall highlight salient morphological constructions and categories, illustrating the difficulty in determining a single source for Israeli grammar. The European impact in these features is apparent *inter alia* in structure, semantics or productivity. Being a journal article rather than a lengthy book, this paper does not attempt to be grammatically exhaustive but rather to cast new light on the *partial* success of language revival in general and on the genetics of Israeli in particular.

### *1.2 Proposed periodization of Hebrew and Israeli*

Hebrew was spoken by the Jewish people after the so-called conquest of Canaan (*c.* thirteenth century BC). It belonged to the Canaanite division of the north-western branch of Semitic languages. Following a gradual decline, it ceased to be spoken *by* the second century AD. The failed Bar-Kokhba Revolt against the Romans in Judaea in AD 132-5, in which hundreds of thousands of Jews were exterminated, marks the *symbolic* end of the period of spoken Hebrew. But the actual end of spoken Hebrew might have been earlier. Jesus, for example, was a native speaker of Aramaic rather than Hebrew. For more than 1700 years thereafter, Hebrew was comatose. It served as liturgical and literary language and occasionally also as a *lingua franca* for Jews of the Diaspora, but not as a mother tongue.

Periodization of Hebrew is not an easy task. *Biblical Hebrew* (*c.* tenth through first centuries BC) is the Hebrew of the Old Testament and of inscriptions from the First Temple period. Its use spanned three main periods: (i) Archaic Biblical Hebrew: Pentateuch and the Early Prophets; (ii) Standard Biblical Hebrew: The prose preceding the Babylonian Exile (597-538 BC); and (iii) Late Biblical Hebrew: Chronicles and other later books of the Hebrew Bible composed between the period after the Babylonian Exile and the birth of Rabbinic Judaism (Pharisees). There are also 'minimalist' views, according to which all the Hebrew

Bible books were written at the same time, e.g. in the fifth century BC. Anyway, although the relationship between the written language of the Bible and the actual language spoken by the Jews at the time is unclear, I believe that Hebrew was a mother tongue when the Bible was written.

This may not be the case with *Mishnaic Hebrew*, sometimes known as Rabbinic Hebrew (c. first century BC through sixth century AD), which consisted of the *Mishnah* (Rabbinic interpretation of the Pentateuch) and (the Hebrew parts of) the Palestinian and Babylonian *Talmud* (including the *Gemara*, which consists of discussions on the *Mishnah*). My own guess is that the *Mishnah* was written in the first and second centuries AD because the *Tannaim* (e.g. Hillel, Shammai, Rabbi Akiba and Simeon Bar Yohai) realized that Hebrew was dying and feared the loss of oral tradition.

*Medieval Hebrew* refers to the varieties of literary Hebrew in the Middle Ages (c. sixth through c. seventeenth/eighteenth centuries): *piyyutim* ‘liturgical poems’, scientific writings, interpretation and Rabbinic literature. There are various views concerning the time at which so-called *Modern Hebrew* began. The most comprehensive solution was suggested by W. Chomsky (1967: 206-11), who maintained that there was a ‘transitional period’ from Medieval Hebrew to Modern Hebrew (the latter in this case meaning Israeli). This transitional period lasted between the Jewish medieval ‘Golden Age’ in Spain and the ‘Hebrew revival’ in *Eretz Yisrael* (‘Land of Israel’, Palestine), and included early modern Hebrew literature in Italy, as well as the German *Haskalah* (lit. ‘intellect’, referring to the 1770-1880 Enlightenment Movement), led by Moses Mendelssohn and Naphtali Herz Wessely. Almost all the dates suggested by others for the beginnings of the language fall within this transitional period (see Zuckermann 2008a).

Unlike *Maskevic Hebrew* (i.e. the Hebrew of the *Haskalah*), a literary language, *Israeli* is a living mother tongue. Its formation was facilitated in *Eretz Yisrael* only at the end of the nineteenth century by the most famous revival ideologue Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922),

schoolteachers and enthusiastic supporters. Itamar Ben-Avi (1882-1943, born as Ben-Zion Ben-Yehuda), Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's son, is symbolically considered to have been the first native Israeli-speaker. He was born one year after Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a native Yiddish-speaker, conversant in Russian and French, arrived in *Eretz Yisrael*.

But it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that Israeli was first spoken by a community, which makes it approximately 100 years old. The first children born to two Israeli-speaking parents were those of couples who were graduates of the first Israeli schools in *Eretz Yisrael*, and who had married in the first decade of the twentieth century (see Rabin 1981: 54). In April 2000, the oldest native Israeli-speaker was Dola Wittmann (in her late 90s), Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's daughter, who also happens to be one of the first native Israeli-speakers.

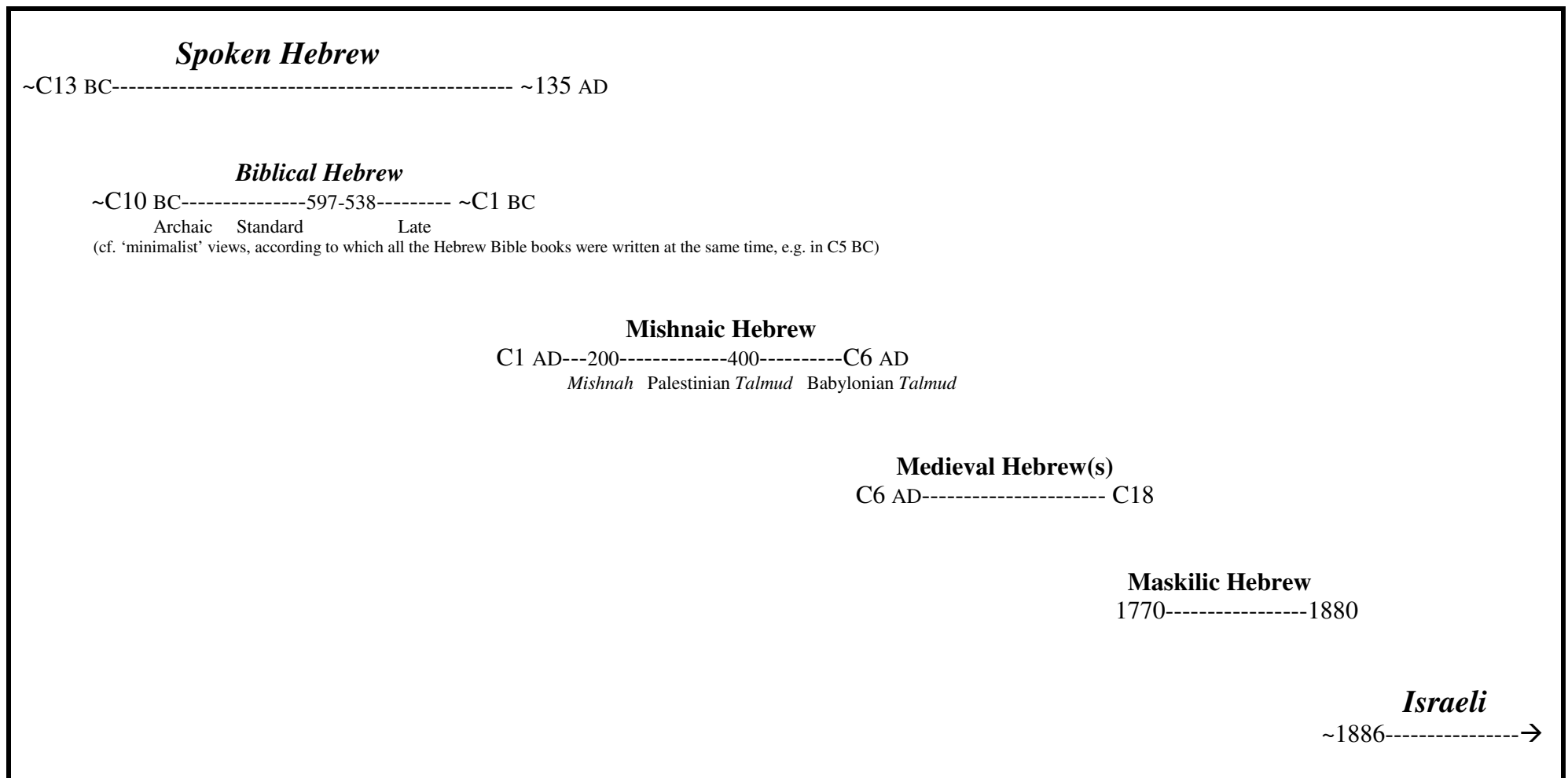
Ben-Yehuda would have been most content had Israelis spoken Biblical Hebrew, which he (and many others) considered the 'purest' form of Hebrew. The Sephardic pronunciation – e.g. with 'more Semitic' consonants and word final stress – was preferred to the Ashkenazic one. But as Zuckermann (2005) demonstrates, Israeli phonology and phonetics are by and large European rather than Semitic. Compare, for example, the Hebrew syllable structure CV(X)(C) with the Israeli one: (s/sh)(C)(C)V(C)(C)(s/sh). Or juxtapose the Hebrew pharyngealized (emphatic) consonants ק [q], ט [tʰ] and צ [sʰ] with their phonetic realization in Israeli: [k], [t] and [tʰ]. Or the Hebrew alveolar trill ר [r], realized phonetically in Israeli as a lax uvular approximant [ʁ] – despite huge efforts by the Hebrew normativists to eradicate it.

Ben-Yehuda's numerous neologisms were often based on Semitic languages such as Arabic. For example, Israeli *ribá* 'jam' was coined by Ben-Yehuda in 1888 on the basis of Arabic [mu'rabba] 'jam' (from *r.b.b.*), as though it derived from Hebrew *r.b.b.* Similarly, Israeli *ahád* 'liked, sympathized (msg)' was Ben-Yehuda's 'phono-semantic matching of Arabic ['ha:wada] 'returned to, made peace with, felt sympathy towards, complied (with the

humour of) (msg)’ – cf. also Israeli *ahadá* ‘sympathy’, Ben-Yehuda’s 1899 parallel to Arabic [ha<sup>1</sup>wa:da] ‘complaisance, clemency, sympathy, indulgence’. The rationalization might have been the Hebrew Biblical names [ʔe<sup>1</sup>hūd] (Judges 3:15) and [ʔohad] (Genesis 46:10) (the current pronunciation is the quasi-hypercorrect *ohád*) (cf. Zuckermann 2003: 215).

The following sequence (Figure 1) depicts my proposed new periodization for both Hebrew and Israeli. We should acknowledge *literary* overlaps between the various phases. For example, the twentieth-century author Shmuel Yosef Agnon wrote in a non-native variant of Hebrew (largely Mishnaic) rather than in Israeli (his mother tongue being Yiddish).

Furthermore, none of the so-called ‘periods’ in the history of Hebrew is clearly delineated. More than one ‘Hebrew’ – e.g. Biblical, Mishnaic and Medieval – may have coexisted with another one at any one time. In fact, Israelis tend and are taught to perceive the various Hebrews as one language.



**Figure 1 – Proposed periodization of Hebrew and Israeli**

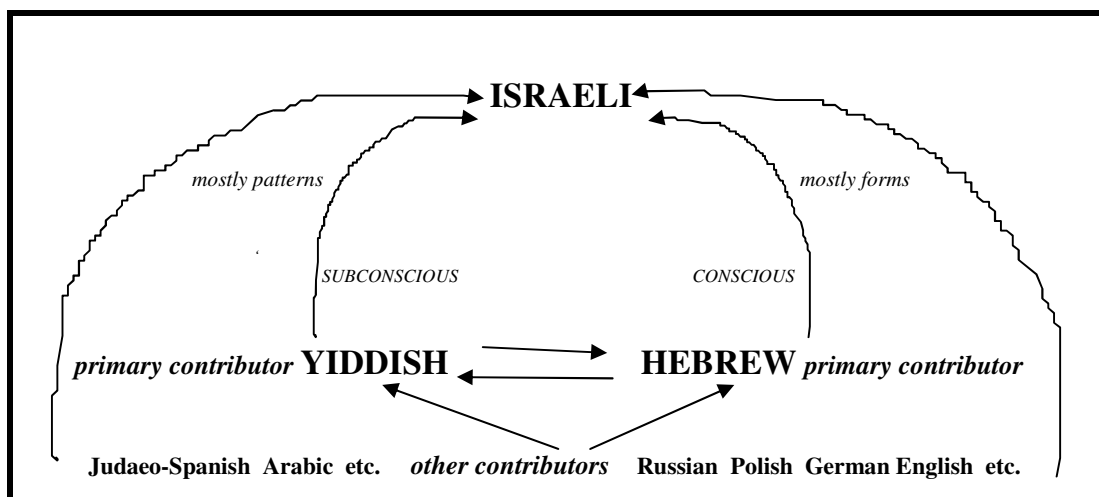
### 1.3 The genetic classification of Israeli

The genetic classification of Israeli has preoccupied scholars since the beginning of the twentieth century. The still regnant (not to mention politically pregnant) traditional view suggests that Israeli is Semitic: (Biblical/Mishnaic) Hebrew *revived* (e.g. Rabin 1974). The revisionist position defines Israeli as Indo-European: Yiddish *relexified*, i.e. Yiddish, most revivalists' *máme lóshn* (mother tongue), is the substrate, whilst Hebrew is only a superstrate providing lexicon and frozen morphology (cf. Horvath and Wexler 1997).

From time to time it is alleged that Hebrew never died (e.g. Haramati 1992, 2000, Chomsky 1957: 218). It is true that, throughout its *literary* history, Hebrew was used as an occasional lingua franca. However, between the second and nineteenth centuries it was no one's mother tongue, and I believe that the development of a literary language is very different from that of a fully-fledged native language. But there are many linguists who, though rejecting the 'eternal spoken Hebrew mythology', still explain every linguistic feature in Israeli as if Hebrew never died. For example, Goldenberg (1996: 151-8) suggests that Israeli pronunciation originates from internal convergence and divergence within Hebrew.

I wonder, however, how a *literary* language can be subject to the same *phonetic* and *phonological* processes (rather than analyses) as a mother tongue. I argue, rather, that the Israeli sound system continues the (strikingly similar) phonetics and phonology of Yiddish, the native language of almost all the revivalists. Unlike the traditionalist and revisionist, my own hybridizational model acknowledges the historical and linguistic continuity of both Semitic and Indo-European languages within Israeli. Hybridic Israeli is based simultaneously on Hebrew and Yiddish (both being *primary contributors*), accompanied by a plethora of other contributors such as Russian, Polish, German, Judaeo-Spanish ('Ladino'), Arabic and English. Therefore, the term 'Israeli' is far more appropriate than 'Israeli Hebrew', let alone 'Modern Hebrew' or 'Hebrew' (*tout court*). Figure 2 illustrates the intricate genesis of Israeli (→ representing either contribution or influence):





**Figure 2 – My hybridizational model of Israeli genesis**

What makes the ‘genetics’ of Israeli grammar so complex is the fact that the combination of Semitic and Indo-European influences is a phenomenon occurring already within the primary (and secondary) contributors to Israeli. Yiddish, a Germanic language with a Latin substrate (and with most dialects having been influenced by Slavonic languages), was shaped by Hebrew and Aramaic. On the other hand, Indo-European languages, such as Greek, played a role in pre-Medieval Hebrews (see, for example, Hellenisms in the Old Testament). Moreover, before the emergence of Israeli, Yiddish and other European languages influenced Medieval and Maskilic variants of Hebrew (see Glinert 1991), which, in turn, shaped Israeli (in tandem with the European contribution). This adds to the importance of the Congruence Principle (§1.5).

The obvious competing hypothesis is the classical language contact analysis, according to which Israeli is (axiomatically) Hebrew (revived) with extensive influence from Yiddish and other European languages spoken by its creators. I hope that this article weakens the viability of such a hypothesis, which to me sounds implausible even only from a historical sequence perspective. If the phonology, phonetics – and in fact all linguistic components – of Israeli were shaped by European languages in the revival process, I wonder why one should argue that Israeli is Hebrew influenced by Yiddish. Such a contact linguistic analysis may suit

Modern Japanese, extensively influenced by American English but how can one expect it to suit the case here in which neither Israeli nor Hebrew were mother tongues between the second and the nineteenth centuries AD? In other words, Israeli is *not* a simple case of Hebrew with an ‘imposition’ (cf. van Coetsem 1988, 2000, as well as Winford 2005).

Obviously, I cannot argue that *every* revived language must be hybridic but given that the Hebrew revivalists succeeded only partially – despite (1) the remarkable strength of their motivation, zealotry and almost 2000 years of ‘next year in Jerusalem’ ideology, and (2) the extensive documentation of Hebrew (as opposed to, say, sleeping Aboriginal languages) – it is simply hard to imagine more successful revival attempts. At the very least, this article should make linguists refrain from referring to Israeli as a case of complete language revival. I believe that Israeli does include language revival but also the survival of both pervasive and numerous linguistic features from the revivalists’ mother tongues.

#### 1.4 *The Founder Principle*

Most revivalists were Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim. Furthermore, as indicated by *sfirát yehudéy érets yisraél*, a census conducted in 1916-18 (see Bachi 1956: 67-9), the Ashkenazim were the ones most receptive to the ‘Hebrew revival’: 61.9% of Ashkenazic children and 28.5% of Ashkenazic adults spoke Israeli in 1916-18. The percentage of Israeli-speakers among Sephardim (constituting most of the veteran residents in *Eretz Yisrael*) and the other *mizrahim* (excluding the Yemenites, Jews originating from Yemen) was low: only 18.3% of Sephardic children and 8.4% of Sephardic adults spoke Israeli in 1916-18, whilst 18.1% of *mizrahi* children (excluding Sephardim and Yemenites) and 7.3% of *mizrahi* adults spoke Israeli (cf. 53.1% among Yemenite children and 37.6% among Yemenite adults). To obtain an idea of the approximate ‘real’ numbers, one should note that between 1850 and 1880 approximately 25,000 Jews immigrated into *Eretz Yisrael* (mostly *Ashkenazim*), in 1890 a

total of only 40,000 Jews lived in *Eretz Yisrael* – see Bachi (1977: 32, 77). Between 1881 and 1903 20,000-30,000 Jews arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* (ibid.: 79).

I propose that had the revivalists and their followers been Arabic-speaking Jews (e.g. from Morocco), Israeli would have been a totally different language – both genetically and typologically, much more Semitic. The impact of the founder population on Israeli is much more significant than that of later immigrants, no matter how large the latter have been. For example, the influence of several hundreds of Russian-speakers at the beginning of Israeli was significantly larger than that of one million Russian-speakers arriving in Israel at the end of the twentieth century.

The following is how Zelinsky (1973: 13-14) describes the influence of first settlements, from the point of view of cultural geography:

Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance to the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been [...] in terms of lasting impact, the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants generations later.

Harrison *et al.* (1988) discuss the ‘Founder Effect’ in biology and human evolution, and Mufwene (2001) applies it as a creolistic tool to explain why the structural features of so-called creoles are largely predetermined by the characteristics of the languages spoken by the founder population, i.e. by the first colonists. I propose the following application of the *Founder Principle* in the context of Israeli:

**Yiddish is a primary contributor to Israeli because it was the mother tongue of the vast majority of revivalists and first pioneers in *Eretz Yisrael* at the crucial period of the beginning of Israeli.**

The Founder Principle works because by the time later immigrations came to Israel, Israeli had already entrenched the fundamental parts of its grammar. Thus, Moroccan Jews arriving in Israel in the 1950s had to learn a fully-fledged language. The influence of their mother tongue on Israeli was relatively negligible. Wimsatt's (1999a, 1999b) notion of 'generative entrenchment' is of relevance here. (Although the Founder Principle refers to an obvious, long-known fact, there are cases pointing otherwise, e.g. the influence of a late wave of African slaves on the structure of Haitian Creole – see Singler (1995).)

At the same time – and unlike anti-revivalist revisionists – I suggest that liturgical Hebrew too fulfills the criteria of a primary contributor for the following reasons: (i) Despite millennia without native speakers, Hebrew persisted as a most important cultural, literary and liturgical language throughout the generations; (ii) Zionist revivalists were extremely ideological and made a huge effort to revive Hebrew and were, in fact, partly successful.

The focus of this article is morphology (and syntax). Elsewhere, I discuss the impact of Yiddish and other European languages on Israeli lexis, word-formation and semantics (Zuckermann 1999, 2003, 2004), phonetics and phonology (e.g. Zuckermann 2005, 2008a), complementation (Zuckermann 2006a) and reported speech (Zuckermann 2006b). By and large, whilst Israeli phonology and phonetics are mostly European (see Zuckermann 2005), its morphological forms and basic vocabulary are mainly – albeit not exclusively – Semitic.

Figure 3 illustrates this generalization:

Unrevivable ← 'Genius/Spirit/Mindset' Phonology Phonetics Semantics Morphology Syntax Lexis → Revivable  
(European) (Semitic)

**Figure 3 – A tentative cline of revivability**

Phonology is claimed to be less revivable than phonetics because intonation, for example, is less revivable than a specific consonant. Within semantics, connotations and associations are less revivable than senses. On 'genius', 'spirit' or 'mindset' – cf. relexification in Horvath and

Wexler (1997), as well as Dawkins (1916) on Asia Minor Greek: ‘the body has remained Greek, but the soul has become Turkish (in Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 65). Clearly, some scholars may find these metaphors inappropriate but perhaps we should not ignore what they refer to only because it is unquantifiable. Lack of measurability should not automatically result in ignoring.

### *1.5 The Congruence Principle*

My lexicological research (e.g. Zuckermann 2003) has strengthened the importance of the ***Congruence Principle***:

**If a feature exists in more than one contributing language,  
it is more likely to persist in the emerging language.**

This principle is applicable to all languages and indeed to linguistic *evolution* in general. After all, every language is mixed to some extent (cf. Schuchardt 1884 and Hjelmslev 1938). Such congruence is a commonplace observation in pidgin and creole studies, as well as in research into many other languages. Kerswill (2002) describes how features found in several varieties are the most likely to survive in the koine formation.

This article argues that the Congruence Principle can be profitably used also to allow for grammatical features of Israeli. Hebrew grammatical features which – either serendipitously or due to an earlier Indo-European influence (see §1.3) – were congruent with those of Yiddish and other European languages were favoured, and vice versa.

### *1.6 Forms versus patterns*

The distinction between forms and patterns is crucial too as it demonstrates multiple causation. In the 1920s and 1930s, *gdud meginéy hasafá*, ‘the language defendants regiment’

(see Shur 2000), whose motto was *ivri, dabér ivrit* ‘Hebrew [i.e. Jew], speak Hebrew!’, used to tear down signs written in ‘foreign’ languages and disturb Yiddish theatre gatherings. However, the members of this group only looked for Yiddish – as well as Russian, Polish and sometimes ‘Standard Average European’ – forms rather than patterns in the speech of the Israelis who did choose to speak ‘Hebrew’. (The term ‘Standard Average European’, henceforth SAE, was first introduced by Whorf (1941: 25) and recently received more attention from Haspelmath (1998, 2001) and Bernini and Ramat (1996) – cf. ‘European *Sprachbund*’ in Kuteva (1998). I use this term only occasionally when it so happens that Yiddish, Russian, Polish and other European languages contributing to Israeli have a feature which have already been identified in the research as SAE.)

This is, obviously, not to say that the revivalists, had they paid attention to patterns, would have managed to neutralize the impact of their mother tongues, which was very often subconscious. Although they engage in a campaign for linguistic purity (they wanted Israeli to be Hebrew, despising the Yiddish ‘jargon’ and negating the Diasporic Jew – see Zuckermann 2008a), the language revivalists create is very likely to mirror the very hybridity and foreign impact they seek to erase (Israeli is both Semitic and Indo-European).

This article proposes that in the case of ‘revived’ languages such as Israeli, whereas the language’s forms are much looked over, its patterns are overlooked. For example, the (hidden) productivity and semantics of the allegedly completely Hebrew system of Israeli verb-templates (the latter are regarded here as Semitic forms – as opposed to their semantic patterns) are often Europeanized. Generally speaking, whereas most forms of Israeli are Semitic, many of its patterns are European. Figure 4 illustrates this observation:

**European**   ←   **Patterns**                      **Forms**   →   **Semitic**

**Figure 4 – Semitic forms cum European patterns**

This is not to say that Israeli does not have European forms (but these are outside the basic vocabulary – cf. the productive English *-able/-ible* – and obviously cannot alone prove hybridity). In addition to thousands of common lexical items of non-Semitic descent, Israeli abounds with various non-Semitic derivational affixes, which are applied to words of both Semitic and non-Semitic descent. Consider the following words consisting of a Hebrew-descent word and a non-Semitic-descent suffix: *khamúda-le* ‘cutie (fsg)’, from *khamuda* ‘cute (fsg) + *-le*, endearment diminutive of Yiddish descent; *miluím-nik* ‘reservist, reserve soldier’, from *miluím* ‘reserve’ (lit. ‘fill-ins’) + *-nik*, agent suffix of Yiddish and Russian descent; *bitkhon-íst* ‘one who evaluates everything from the perspective of national security’, from *bitakhón* ‘security’ + the internationalism *-íst*; *kiso-lógya* ‘the art of finding a political seat (especially in the Israeli Parliament)’, from *kisé* ‘seat’ + the internationalism *-lógya* ‘-logy’; *maarav-izátsya* ‘westernization’ (from *maaráv* ‘west’ + the internationalism *-izátsya* ‘-ization’). Examples of Israeli words which include an international prefix are *post-milkhamtí* ‘postwar’, *pro-araví* ‘pro-Arab’, *anti-hitnatkút* ‘anti-disengagement’.

Consider also the productive derogatory prefixal phonestheme *shm-*, which results in an ‘echoic expressive’ (Haig 2001: 208-9). For example, *um shmum*, lit. ‘UN shm-UN’, was a pejorative description by Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, of the United Nations. When an Israeli speaker would like to express his impatience with or disdain for philosophy, s/he can say *filosófya-shmilosófya*. Israeli *shm-* is traceable back to Yiddish. (Cf. the Turkic initial *m*-segment conveying a sense of ‘and so on’ as in Turkish *dergi mergi okumuyor*, lit. ‘magazine “shmagazine” read:NEG:PRES:3sg’, i.e. ‘(He) doesn’t read magazine, journals or anything like that’ (Haig 2001: 209, Lewis 1967: 237).)

Another Yiddish-descent linguistic device to convey impatience is the ‘involvement discourse marker’ *nu* as in Israeli *nú kvar* (< Yiddish *nu shoyrn*) and *nu bemét*, lit. ‘nu, in-truth’, meaning ‘stop it’ or ‘what kind of behavior is that!’. Maschler (1994) finds that this is the second-most prevalent interpersonal discourse marker. Among its functions are (i)

hastening a nonverbal action, (ii) urging further development within a topic, (iii) granting permission to perform an action, and (iv) providing a joking/provoking tone (Maschler 2003).

## 2 GRAMMATICAL CHARACTERISTICS

In the following sections I highlight salient morphological (and syntactic) constructions and categories, illustrating the difficulty in determining a single source for Israeli grammar. The European impact in these features is apparent in structure, semantics or productivity. Obviously, due to a lack of space, the survey is not exhaustive.

### 2.1 *Analytic Israeli*

Whereas Hebrew was synthetic, Israeli is much more analytic, both with nouns and with verbs. Muchnik (2004) demonstrates that literary Israeli (i.e. the language of Israeli literature and newspapers – cf. diglossia in §2.6) shows a clear preference for analytic grammatical constructions. I suggest that the analyticization of literary Israeli is due to the influence of spoken Israeli, which – *ab initio*, owing to the European contribution – has been much more analytic than has hitherto been admitted. The tendency towards analytic structures is correlated with language contact – see McWhorter (2002). But Israeli was more analytic than Hebrew *ab initio* rather than as a result of analyticization due to post-genesis language contact.

Consider the construct-state (CONSTR), the Semitic N-N structure in which two nouns are combined, the first being modified or possessed by the second:

- (1) רפובליקת בננות  
 repúblika-t      banánot  
 republic-CONSTR    bananas  
 ‘banana republic’



Unlike in Hebrew, construct-state indicating possession is not productive in Israeli. Compare the Hebrew construct-state *'em ha-yéled* ‘mother- DEF-child’ with the more analytic Israeli phrase *ha-íma shel ha-yéled* ‘DEF-mother GEN DEF-child’, both meaning ‘the mother of the child’, i.e. ‘the child’s mother’.

One might argue that the weakening of the construct-state occurs only in possessive construct-states but not in others. But many ‘compound’ construct-states are not treated as construct-states either; they are lexicalized and treated as one word. Thus, although *orekh din*, lit. ‘arranger- law’, i.e. ‘lawyer’, is historically a construct-state, there are several indications that it is not so anymore: (i) the stress has changed from *orékh din* to *òrekh dín*; (ii) when definite, the definite article *ha-* precedes it rather than appearing between the two nouns: *ha-òrekh dín*, lit. ‘DEF arranger- law’ rather than Hebrew *'orékh ha-dín*, lit. ‘arranger- DEF law’.

Analyticity in Israeli is also conspicuous in non-construct-state possession. Israeli favours a Yiddish analytic possessive construction, as in *my grandfather*, to a synthetic one. Thus, whereas the Hebrew phrase for ‘my grandfather’ was *sav-í* ‘grandfather-1sgPOSS’, in Israeli it is *sába shel-ì* ‘grandfather GEN-1sg’.

But analyticity is not restricted to NPs. There are many non-Hebrew, periphrastic, complex verbal constructions in Israeli. Israeli *sam tseaká* ‘shouted’ literally means ‘put a shout’ (cf. the Hebrew-descent *tšaák* ‘shouted’); *natán mabát* ‘looked’ literally means ‘gave a look’; and *heíf mabát* ‘looked’ literally means ‘flew/threw a look’ (cf., *cast a glance, threw a look* and *tossed a glance*) (cf. the Hebrew-descent *hebít* ‘looked at’). The analytic grammatical construction (using auxiliary verbs followed by a noun) – employed here for the desire to express swift action – stems from Yiddish. Consider the following Yiddish expressions all meaning ‘to have a look’: *gébñ a kuk*, lit. ‘to give a look’, *ton a kuk*, lit. ‘to do a look’ and the colloquial *khapñ a kuk*, lit. ‘to catch a look’.

Such constructions are not nonce, *ad hoc* lexical calques of Yiddish. The Israeli system is productive and the lexical realization often differs from that of Yiddish. Consider Israeli

*hirbíts* ‘hit, beat; gave’, which yielded *hirbíts mehirút* ‘drove very fast’ (*mehirút* meaning ‘speed’), *hirbíts arukhá* ‘ate a big meal’ (*arukhá* meaning ‘meal’) – cf. English *hit the buffet* ‘eat a lot at the buffet’, *hit the liquor/bottle* ‘drink alcohol’. This is not to say that the complex Semitic verbal forms were discarded (see §2.3 and §2.4).

## 2.2 Israeli as *habere* language: reinterpretation of a Hebrew form to fit a European pattern

As opposed to Berman (1997: 329) and Ullendorff (1997: 558b), I argue that Israeli is a *habere* language (cf. Latin *habere* ‘to have’, taking the direct object), in stark contrast to Hebrew. How does one say in Israeli ‘I have this book’? If one tried to speak ‘proper Hebrew’ (albeit with an Israeli accent, which is European), one would say the following:

(2)	<i>yésh</i>	<i>l-i</i>	<i>ha-séfer</i>	<i>ha-zè</i>
	EXIS	DAT-1sg	DEF-book	DEF-msgPROX
	there is	for me	the book	the this
	‘I have this book’			

The NP *ha-séfer ha-zè* is the *subject* of the sentence. However, in Israeli one would actually say the following:

(3)	<i>yésh</i>	<i>l-i</i>	<i>et</i>	<i>ha-séfer</i>	<i>ha-zè</i>
	EXIS	DAT-1sg	ACC	DEF-book	DEF-msgPROX
	there is	for me	ACC	the book	the this
	‘I have this book’				

Here, as demonstrated by the accusative marker *et*, the NP *ha-séfer ha-zè* is the *direct object*.

That said, there are still normativists who ‘correct’ native Israeli-speakers and urge them only

to use (2), which is, paradoxically, ungrammatical in most Israelis' idiolects. Ask these normativists how they say 'I have it'. None of them will actually utter \**yesh l-i hu* 'EXIS DAT-1sg he'. Israeli for 'I have it' is *yésh l-i ot-ò* 'EXIS DAT-1sg ACC-he'. Consider also the Israeli expression *yésh l-o et zè* 'EXIS DAT-3msg ACC DEF-msgPROX' ('he has this'), i.e. 'he is suitable/cool'. Again, it is impossible to say \**yésh l-o ze* 'EXIS DAT-3msg DEF-msgPROX'.

Yiddish has two options to indicate possession. The most common form is *(i)kh (h)ob*, lit. 'I have', which requires a direct object (accusative). However, there is also a form which is more similar to old Hebrew: *ba(y) mir i(z) do*, lit. 'By me is there', followed by the subject (nominative) (cf. Taube 1984). The latter form, available in the feature pool together with the erstwhile non-*habere* Hebrew form, did not prevail because *(i)kh (h)ob* is more productive in Yiddish – cf. other European *habere* languages.

In conclusion, the Hebrew existential construction employed to mark possession was reinterpreted in Israeli to fit in with a construction predominant in Yiddish and other European languages. A similar process occurred in Maltese: 'in the possessive construction, subject properties have been transferred diachronically from the possessed noun phrase to the possessor, while the possessor has all the subject properties except the form of the verb agreement that it triggers' (Comrie 1981: 212-218).

### 2.3 *Prosodic structure, verb-template productivity and the weak status of the consonantal root*

Traditional grammars of Hebrew describe seven verb-templates:  $\triangle a \triangle \acute{a} \triangle$ ,  $ni \triangle \acute{a} \triangle$  (its passive),  $hi \triangle \triangle \acute{i} \triangle$  (causative),  $hu \triangle \triangle \acute{a} \triangle$  (its passive),  $\triangle i \triangle \acute{e} \triangle$ ,  $\triangle u \triangle \acute{a} \triangle$  (its passive) and  $hit \triangle a \triangle \acute{e} \triangle$  (reflexive/reciprocal/intransitive) (each  $\triangle$  represents a radical slot). Consider the following verbal morphemic adaptations in Israeli, all in the infinitive form (unless indicated otherwise):

A. Using the  $hi\hat{\Delta}(\hat{\Delta}\hat{\Delta})\hat{\Delta}i\hat{\Delta}$  verb-template (historically transitive causative):

- *le-hashvīts* (INTR) ‘boast, show off’, preserving the consonant cluster of its origin Yiddish *shvits* ‘sweat’.
- *le-hashpríts* (AMB) ‘splash’, retaining the consonant cluster of its origin Yiddish *shprits* (cf. German *Spritz, spritzen*) ‘splash, spout, squirt’ (cf. Rubin 1945: 306).
- *le-haflík* (AMB) ‘slap’, maintaining the consonant cluster of its onomatopoeic origin Yiddish *flik* ‘pull, pluck’ or Yiddish *flok* ‘pole, club’, cf. Israeli *flik* ‘slap’.
- *le-hasníf* (AMB) ‘“snort”, inhale (e.g. cocaine)’, retaining the cluster of its origin English *sniff* (cf. *snuff*). The pre-existent Israeli *snif* ‘branch’ does not appear to play a role here.

B. Using the  $\Delta a\hat{\Delta}á\hat{\Delta}$  verb-template:

- *la-khróp* (INTR) ‘sleep soundly, sleep tight’, preserving the consonant cluster of its origin Yiddish *khrópŋ* ‘to snore’, cf. Yiddish *khrop* ‘snore (n)’.

C. Using the (often reflexive and reciprocal)  $hit\hat{\Delta}(\hat{\Delta})a\hat{\Delta}(\hat{\Delta}\hat{\Delta})é\hat{\Delta}(\hat{\Delta})$  verb-template:

- The *jocular* slangism *hitrandevú* (INTR) ‘(they) had a rendezvous’, preserving the cluster of its international source *rendezvous* (cf. Sappan 1971: 77a).

D. Using the  $(\hat{\Delta})(\hat{\Delta})\hat{\Delta}i(\hat{\Delta})(\hat{\Delta})\hat{\Delta}é\hat{\Delta}(\hat{\Delta})$  verb-template (traditionally  $\hat{\Delta}i\hat{\Delta}é\hat{\Delta}$ ):

- *le-katér* (INTR) ‘whine, complain’, traceable to Polish Yiddish *kútər* ‘male cat, complainer’ (cf. Lithuanian Yiddish *kótər*) (perhaps because cats whine when asking for food / in heat / during copulation).

- *le-fakés* (TR) ‘focus’, traceable to the internationalism *focus*.
- *le-faksés* (TR) ‘fax’, traceable to the internationalism *fax*.
- *le-flartét* (INTR) ‘flirt’ (cf. *flirtét* ‘flirt:3msgPAST’), reduplicating the [t] to preserve the cluster of the internationalism *flirt*.
- *le-fargén* (INTR) ‘not begrudge’, nativizing Yiddish *fargínən* ‘not begrudge, not envy, indulge’ (cf. the past participle form *fargúnən*), from German *gönnen* ‘not to begrudge’ or German *vergönnen* ‘to grant’.
- *le-daskés* (AMB) ‘discuss’.
- *le-sankhrén* (TR) ‘synchronize’ (The Academy of the Hebrew Language introduced the noun *sinkrún* ‘synchronization’ – see *Laméd Leshonkhá* 171, 1989).
- *le-farmét* (TR) ‘format (in computing)’.
- *le-tarpéd* (TR) ‘torpedo (figurative), sabotage’.
- *le-sabséd* (TR) ‘subsidize’.
- *le-natrél* (TR) ‘neutralize’.

E. Using the (△)△o△é△ variant of the (△)(△)△i(△)(△)△é△(△) verb-template:

- *le-shnorér* (TR) ‘obtain by begging’ (cf. the English slangism *shnorr*), from Yiddish *shnórη* ‘obtain by begging, sponge off, shnorr’ (cf. Yiddish *shnórər* ‘beggar, layabout, scrounger’ and Israeli *shnórer* ‘id.’). Israeli *shnorér* was introduced by Bialik in *beír haharegá* (‘In the City of Slaughter’, 1903; cf. 1959: 98b).
- *le-yonén* (TR) ‘ionize’, traceable to the internationalism *ion*.
- *le-kodéd* (TR) ‘codify’, from Israeli *kod* ‘code’, traceable to the internationalism *code*.

- *le-otét* (INTR) ‘signal’, an Israeli neologism based on the Hebrew-descent *ot* ‘signal’

Whereas  $(\Delta)(\Delta)\Delta i(\Delta)(\Delta)\Delta \acute{e}\Delta(\Delta)$  is productive,  $\Delta a\Delta \acute{a}\Delta$  is not. The reason is due to what phonologists call ‘prosodic structure’. The prosodic structure of  $(\Delta)(\Delta)\Delta i(\Delta)(\Delta)\Delta \acute{e}\Delta(\Delta)$  (which I call  $\sigma_i\sigma_e$ , wherein  $\sigma$  represents a syllable) is such that it retains consonant clusters throughout the tenses. Take, for example, *le-transfér* ‘to transfer (people)’ (TR). In the past (3msg) one says *trinsfér*, in the present *metransfér* and in the future *yetransfér*. The consonant clusters of *transfer* are kept throughout.

Let us try to fit *transfer* into  $\Delta a\Delta \acute{a}\Delta$ . The normal pattern can be seen in *garám* – *gorém* – *yigróm* ‘cause:3msg (past, present, future)’. So, yesterday, he *\*transfér* (3MSGPAST) ‘transferred (people)’; today, he *\*tronsfér*. So far so good; the consonant clusters of *transfer* are maintained, the nature of the vowels being less important. However, the future form, *\*yitrnsfór* is impossible because it violates Israeli phonology. As opposed to Hebrew CV(X)(C), the non-Semitic syllable structure of Israeli, (s/sh)(C)(C)V(C)(C)(s/sh), facilitates morphemic adaptations of Yiddishisms, other Europeanisms, Americanisms and internationalisms. However, *\*yitrnsfór* is impossible because any syllabification would violate the ‘Sonority Sequencing Generalization’, which in Israeli *prohibits* rising sonority from the peak to the margins. Thus, in *Vtr.nsfV*, for example, *r* is more sonorous than *t* and *n* is more sonorous than *s* and *f*.

But even if *\*yitrnsfór* were possible, it would still not be selected because – lacking a vowel between the *r* and the *n* – it destroys the prosodic structure of *transfer*. This is exactly why *click* ‘select by pressing one of the buttons on the computer mouse’ is fitted into  $hi\Delta(\Delta\Delta)\Delta \acute{i}\Delta$  (*hiklók*) ‘click:3MSGPAST’ rather than  $(\Delta)(\Delta)\Delta i(\Delta)(\Delta)\Delta \acute{e}\Delta(\Delta)$  (*\*kilék*) or  $\Delta a\Delta \acute{a}\Delta$  (*\*kalák*). The form *hiklók* is the only one which preserves the [kl] cluster. One important

conclusion is that phonological considerations supersede semantic ones. For example, although  $hi\Delta(\Delta\Delta)\Delta\acute{i}\Delta$  is historically the causative verb-template, it is employed – on purely phonological grounds – in the intransitive *hishvīts* ‘show off:3msgPAST’ and in the ambitransitive (in fact, usually intransitive) *hiklīk* ‘click:3msgPAST’.

One crucial implication is the selected productivity of verb-templates. Unlike Hebrew, where the most productive verb-template was  $\Delta a\Delta\acute{a}\Delta$ , the most productive verb-template in Israeli is  $\Delta\acute{i}\Delta\acute{e}\Delta$  ( $\sigma_i\sigma_e$ ). This productivity is also apparent in the case of denominalizations (cf. Bolozky 1978; i.e. verbalizations) of nouns which are *not* perceived as foreign. Consider *smirtét* ‘treat like a rag, render someone worthless (3msgPAST)’, from *smartút* ‘rag’; *sibén* ‘soap, pull someone’s leg (3msgPAST)’, from *sabón* ‘soap’, and the above mentioned *otét* ‘signaled’, from the Hebrew-descent *ot* ‘signal’. Such denominalization in Israeli is far more productive than the occasional use of  $\Delta\acute{i}\Delta\acute{e}\Delta$  in Hebrew in the case of quadri-radical roots.

But there is another weighty conclusion: the uprooting of the importance of the Semitic consonantal root. Like Bat-El (1994, 2003), I argue that such verbs are based on a lexical item rather than on its alleged naturalized root within Israeli. As opposed to what Israelis are taught in intensive grammar lessons at primary and secondary schools, *le-magnét* ‘to magnetize’ (documented 1938, cf. Torczyner 1938: 25) does not derive from the consonantal root *m.g.n.ʔ* fitted into the  $\Delta\acute{i}\Delta\acute{e}\Delta$  (in fact,  $\sigma_i\sigma_e$ ) verb-template. Rather, it is traceable back to the internationalism *magnet* (Israeli *magnét*), which is the *stem* (or the *root* in the European sense) – rather than the *root* (in the Semitic, consonantal, sense) – of the verb.

Compared with the traditional Semitic consonantal root apophony, the system described here (e.g. *hishprīts* ‘splash:3msgPAST’ – *hishprátsti* ‘splash:1sgPAST’) is much more similar to the Indo-European *Ablaut* (‘vowel gradation’) as in English *s□ng* (*sing-sang-song-sung*) and German *spr□ch* (*spricht-sprechen-sprach-gesprochen-Spruch*). The consonantal root system – which does not play a role here – is a fundamental element of the morphology of Hebrew and other Semitic languages. Although, on the face of it, the forms used, viz. verb-templates,

are Semitic, their prosodic employment (e.g.  $\sigma_i\sigma_e$  rather than  $\triangle i\triangle é\triangle$ ) and their productivity are, in fact, determined by non-Semitic contributors.

#### 2.4 Inchoativity

Yiddish has shaped the semantics of the Israeli verbal system. Consider the inchoative verbs, which denote the *beginning* of an action (an inceptive). While Israeli *shakháv* ‘was lying down (3msg)’ is neutral, Israeli *nishkáv* ‘lay down, started being lain down (3msg)’ is inchoative. Importantly, many Israeli inchoative forms are new and did not exist in Hebrew (see Blanc 1965: 193-7). The verb-templates chosen to host these forms are the ones possessing prefixes: *ni* $\triangle a\triangle á\triangle$  and *hit* $\triangle a\triangle é\triangle$ . Table 1 contains examples of new inchoative verbs in Israeli and their Yiddish precursors, together with older neutral forms. (The translations of the Israeli verbs are in the present tense, although the basic form, which is presented here, is 3MSGPAST.)

My claim is not that the *ni* $\triangle a\triangle á\triangle$  and *hit* $\triangle a\triangle é\triangle$  verb-templates were chosen to host the inchoative forms because the Yiddish inchoative forms usually have a prefix (consider Yiddish *avékleygn zikh* ‘lie down’ and *avékshtelṅ zikh* ‘stand up’, as opposed to the neutral Yiddish *lign* ‘be lying down’). Rather, since the non-inchoative forms are semantically unmarked, the verb-template hosting them is the unmarked  $\triangle a\triangle á\triangle$ . Consequently, other verb-templates – which happen to include ‘prefixes’ – host the inchoative forms, thus making the inchoative aspect in Israeli systematic. Whilst Yiddish also indicates inchoativity by the use of the reflexive *zikh* or of *verṅ* ‘become’, Israeli opted to grammaticalize this notion using its existing system of verb-templates, in this case two intransitive verb-templates: passive *ni* $\triangle a\triangle á\triangle$  and reflexive, reciprocal *hit* $\triangle a\triangle é\triangle$ . In other words, Yiddish introduced a clear-cut semantic-grammatical distinction in Israeli between inchoative and non-inchoative, using the pre-existent inventory of Hebrew forms.



The Yiddish impact may also be seen in the presence of analytic (cf. §2.1) neutral (non-inchoative) verbs which have developed – due to analogy – from inchoative forms, for example *hayá malé* ‘was full (m)’, *hayá zakén* ‘was old (m)’, and *hayá nirgásh* ‘was excited (m)’. Note also that often the Yiddish contribution has resulted in the increased use of a pre-existent inchoative Hebrew form. Further research should examine – in line with the Congruence Principle and multiple causation – whether the Yiddish inchoative impact was amplified or accompanied by the co-existence of parallel inchoative forms in Russian and Polish, the latter two languages having been spoken by many first Israeli speakers (cf. §2.12).

Table 1 – Inchoative verbs in Yiddish and in Israeli

NEUTRAL (DURATIVE) (unmarked)		INCHOATIVE (DENOTING THE BEGINNING OF AN ACTION) (marked)		
Israeli	Yiddish	Israeli		Yiddish
–Mostly Old Forms–		– Mostly New Forms–		
⊠a⊠á⊠ Verb-Template		<i>ni</i> ⊠⊠á⊠ Verb-Template	<i>hit</i> ⊠a⊠é⊠ Verb-Template	
שׂכב <i>shakháv</i> 'be lying down'	ליגן <i>lígn</i>	נשׂכב <i>nishkáv</i> 'lie down'		זיך (אָװעק) לייגן זיך ( <i>avék</i> ) <i>leygn zikh</i>
עמד <i>amád</i> 'be standing'	שטיין <i>shteyn</i>	נעמד <i>neemád</i> 'stand up'		זיך (אָװעק) שטעלן זיך ( <i>avék</i> ) <i>shtelḡ zikh</i> , אױפֿשטיין <i>úfshteyn</i>
עמד <i>amád</i> 'be halted'	שטיין <i>shteyn</i>	נעמד <i>neemád</i> 'come to a halt'		אָפֿשטעלן זיך <i>opshtelḡ zikh</i>
זכר <i>zakhár</i> 'remember'	געדענקען <i>gedénkən</i>	נזכר <i>nizkár</i> 'recall, remember suddenly'		זיך דערמאָנען זיך <i>dermánən zikh</i> , זיך דערמאָנען זיך <i>dermónən zikh</i>
פחד <i>pakhád</i> 'be afraid'	שרעקן זיך <i>shrekḡ zikh</i>	נבהל <i>nivhál</i> 'become frightened'		זיך דערשרעקן זיך <i>dershrekḡ zikh</i>
היה <i>hayá</i> 'be'	זיין <i>zayn</i>	נזיין <i>ni(hi)yá</i> 'become'		ווערן <i>vern</i>
ישן <i>yashán</i> 'sleep'	שלאָפֿן <i>shlófn</i>	נרדם <i>nirdám</i> 'fall asleep'		אָנטשלאָפֿן ווערן <i>antshlófn vern</i>
היה רגוע <i>hayá ragúa</i> 'be calm'		נרגע <i>nirgá</i> 'calm down'		
ישב <i>yasháv</i> 'be sitting'	זיצן <i>zítsḡ</i>		זיך הײַטש <i>hit'yashév</i> 'sit down'	זיך (אָװעק) זעצן זיך ( <i>avék</i> ) <i>zetsḡ zikh</i>
שתק <i>shaták</i> 'be silent'	שווייגן <i>shváygḡ</i>		זיך הײַשטאַטעק <i>hishtaték</i> 'become silent'	אָנטשווייגן ווערן <i>antshvígḡ vern</i>
אהב <i>aháv</i> 'love'	ליב האָבן <i>líb hobḡ</i>		זיך הײַטאַהב <i>hit'ahév</i> 'fall in love'	פֿאַרליבן זיך <i>farlibḡ zikh</i>
בלט <i>balát</i> 'be prominent'			זיך הײַטבאַלעט <i>hit'balét</i> 'become prominent'	
שלט <i>shalát</i> 'control'			זיך הײַשטאַלעט <i>hishtalét</i> 'get control'	
היה נשוי <i>hayá nasúy</i> 'be married'			זיך הײַטקאַהען <i>hit'khatén</i> 'get married'	
מלא <i>hayá malé</i> 'be full'			זיך הײַטמאַלע <i>hit'malé (hit'malá)</i> 'get full'	
זקן <i>hayá zakén</i> 'be old'			זיך הײַטזאַקען <i>hi'dakén</i> 'become old'	
היה נרגש <i>hayá nirgásh</i> 'be excited'			זיך הײַטראַגעש <i>hit'ragésh</i> 'get excited'	

## 2.5 Decliticization-in-progress of the proclitics *be-* ‘in’, *le-* ‘to’, *mi-/me-* ‘from’, *ve-* ‘and’

Following Standard Average European, the Israeli proclitics *be-* ‘in’, *le-* ‘to’ and *mi-/me* ‘from’, as well as the coordinating conjunction *ve-* ‘and’, are phonologically less dependent than in Hebrew.

Although orthographically *be-* ‘in’, *le-* ‘to’ and *mi-/me* ‘from’ – as well as the *ve-* ‘and’ – form one orthographic word with the following host, there are several manifestations of decliticization-in-progress:

- (i) In Hebrew, the scope of the proclitic was limited to one host: one would have to say *be-’atúna*, *be-zhenéva u-ve-lóndon* (<*ve-be-lóndon*), lit. ‘in Athens, in Geneva and in London’. In Israeli – just like in English – one says *be-atúna*, *zhenéva ve-lóndon*, lit. ‘in Athens, Geneva and London’.
- (ii) An Israeli can pause after these prepositions, and insert a host which s/he did not have in mind before pronouncing the preposition. For example, one can say *ze hayá be*, *be-mélbörn*, *lo*, *sídni* ‘It was in, in Melbourne, no, Sydney’.
- (iii) Unlike in Hebrew, there is no spirantization of a following [b], [k] and [p] (into [v], [χ] and [f]). For example, Israeli ‘in-grade second’ (i.e. ‘in the second grade’) is *be-kitá bet* rather than *be-khitá bet*.
- (iv) Unlike in Hebrew, the proclitic does not change its vowel according to the first syllable of the host. For example, in Israeli one says *be-shvédyá* ‘in-Sweden’ rather than *bi-shvédyá*.

Thus, although the forms used are Hebrew prepositions, they are restructured to replicate the European/Yiddish pattern. This clitic weakening may result in full decliticization.

## 2.6 Numeral and noun (dis)agreement

Hebrew had a consistent polarity-of-gender agreement between nouns and numerals. Consider *‘éser banót* ‘ten girls’ versus *‘asar-á baním* ‘ten-fsg boys’. In the latter, the feminine suffix *-a* is added to the numeral which modifies a masculine noun. (Israeli pupils are told that *asar-á* is masculine but this is historically incorrect; the *-a* suffix stands for feminine – see Israeli *ashír* ‘rich (m)’ versus *ashir-á* ‘rich (f)’) However, in most Israeli idiolects, sociolects and dialects, the system is much simpler: *éser banót* ‘ten girls’ and *éser baním* ‘ten boys’. Just like in Yiddish, there is no difference between a numeral modifying a masculine noun and a numeral modifying a feminine one.

That said, although 90% of Israelis (cf. Ravid 1995) would not say *asar-á shkal-ím*, lit. ‘ten-feminine.singular shekel-masculine.plural’, i.e. ‘ten shekels’, there are some Israelis who speak a variety in which the latter is the grammatical form. These speakers are cherished by the Academy of the Hebrew Language.

In fact, massive normative pressure (see Zuckermann 2008b) has resulted in hypercorrect conflated forms. Official rules are often used inconsistently because they are – paradoxically – counter-grammatical vis-à-vis numerous idiolectal, sociolectal or dialectal realities. For example, there are speakers who say – normatively – *shlosh-á shkal-ím* ‘three shekels’ (cf. the non-prescriptive *shalósh shékel*) but *shlósh-et ha-dód-ot* ‘the three aunts’ (cf. the normative *shlósh ha-dod-ót*).

Thus, Israeli already shows signs of diglossia: native Israeli speech versus non-native (high-flown, pseudo-) Hebrew in writing. If language planning persists, that is if Israeli teachers continue to indoctrinate Israelis to use Hebrew (e.g. *‘asar-á baním* to name but one example out of hundreds) – rather than Israeli (e.g. *éser baním*) – grammar, full diglossia may be established – cf. *mutatis mutandis* Arabic polyglossia: Modern Standard Arabic (cf. Classical Arabic) – as opposed to the various vernacular Arabics (cf. so-called Arabic dialects) – is no-one’s mother tongue. Most Arabs consider Modern Standard Arabic as their

language and yet speak Palestinian Arabic or Egyptian Arabic and so forth.

### 2.7 *Tense system*

As opposed to Biblical Hebrew, which had no tenses, only a perfect/imperfect distinction, Israeli – like Yiddish and Mishnaic Hebrew – has instead three tenses: past, present and future. The problem here warrants solutions similar to those in §2.8 (see below). I would like to suggest that the Israeli tense system is multi-parental.

Note that in the past and future, verbal forms differ according to gender, number and person. However, in the present tense, verbs are only conjugated according to gender and number and there is no person distinction. The reason is that the **forms** of the Israeli present can be traced back to the Hebrew participle, which is less complex than the historical perfect and imperfect forms.

### 2.8 *Constituent order*

Israeli linguists often claim that Israeli constituent order, AVO(E) / SV(E), demonstrates the impact of Mishnaic Hebrew, which had it as the marked order (for emphasis/contrast) – as opposed to Biblical Hebrew, usually characterized by VAO(E) / VS(E) order. However, there is resemblance between Mishnaic Hebrew and Standard Average European syntax. There are various possible analyses or interpretations, including the following:

- (i) One source: Israeli constituent order is Hebrew and serendipitously resembles that of SAE. After all, there is a limited number of options.
- (ii) One source: Israeli constituent order is SAE and serendipitously resembles that of erstwhile Mishnaic Hebrew (or a more recent literary variant of Hebrew).
- (iii) Multiple source: Israeli constituent order is simultaneously based on SAE and Hebrew.

Whereas normativists opt for Analysis (i), revisionists prefer Analysis (ii). They are actually similar in that they both believe in one source. My hybridizational model, which has multiple causation at its core, would advocate Analysis (iii).

### 2.9 Copula enhancement

Unlike Hebrew, which has a plethora of verbless sentences, Israeli often uses copulas, viz. the proximal demonstrative *ze* and the pronouns *hu* ‘he’, *hi* ‘she’, *hem* ‘they (m)’ and *hen* ‘they (f)’, all forms which are traceable to Hebrew. Compare Biblical Hebrew [ʔădo'n-áj ʔɛ'hád], lit. ‘Lord-pl:1sgPOSS one’, i.e. ‘Our Lord is one’ (Deuteronomy 6:4), with Israeli *késef ze lo ha-kól*, lit. ‘money COP NEG DET-all’, i.e. ‘Money is not everything’. Israeli does not accept \**késef lo hakól*. Whereas the copula existed in Hebrew, its use was reinforced by Yiddish and other European languages. In verbless sentences Yiddish always has a copula: *dos méydľ iz klug* ‘The girl is clever’. Again, although the patterns employed here are European, the forms are still Hebrew.

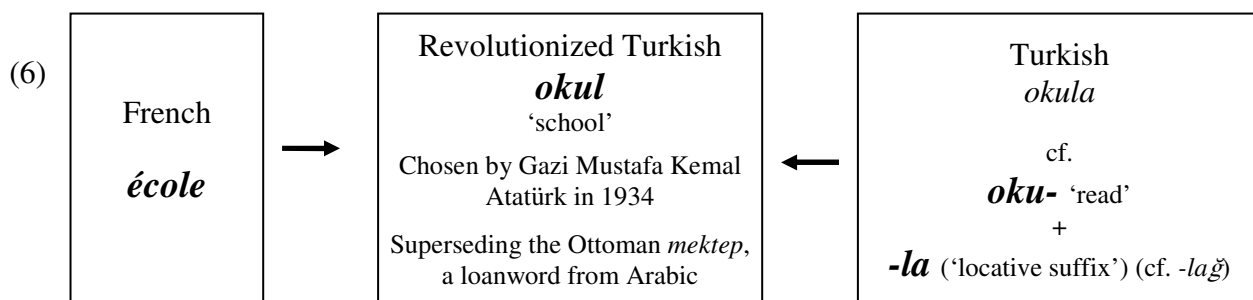
### 2.10 Phono-Semantic Matching

Israeli has more than 200 ‘phono-semantic matches’ (PSM, Zuckermann 2003), in which a lexical item derives simultaneously from two (or more) sources which are (usually serendipitously) phonetically and semantically similar. I define PSM as camouflaged borrowing in which a foreign lexical item is matched with a phonetically and semantically similar **pre-existent** native word/root. For example:

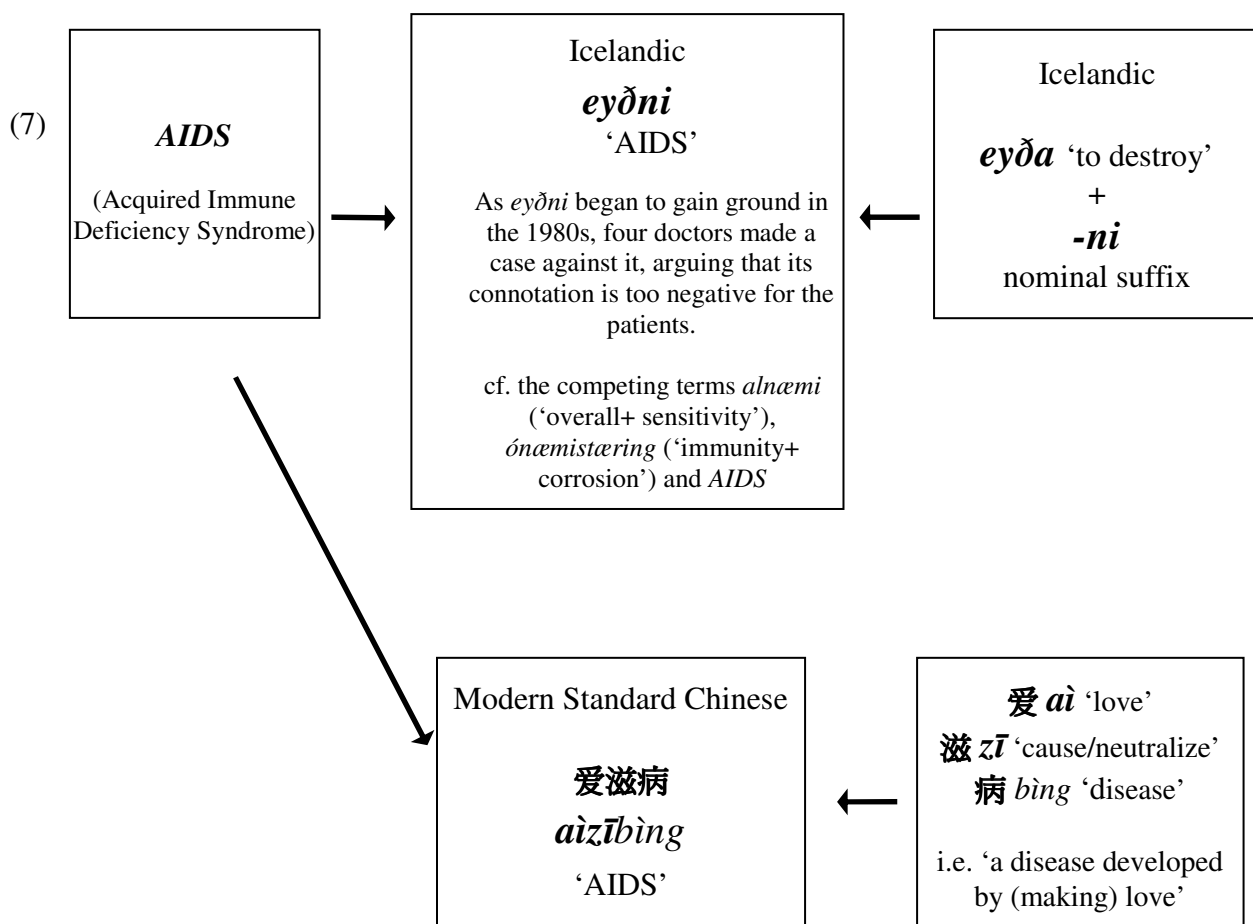


Often in PSM, the source-language not only dictates the choice of root, but also the choice of noun-pattern, thus constituting a camouflaged influence on the target-language morphology. For example, the phono-semantic matcher of English *dock* with Israeli **מבדוק** *mivdók* could have used – after deliberately choosing the phonetically and semantically suitable root **בדק**  $\sqrt{bdq}$  ‘check’ (Rabbinic), ‘repair’ (Biblical) – the noun-patterns *mi△△a△á*, *ma△△e△á*, *mi△△é△et*, *mi△△a△áim* etc. (each △ represents a radical slot). Instead, *mi△△ó△*, which was not highly productive, was chosen because its [o] makes the final syllable of **מבדוק** *mivdók* sound like English *dock*.

As opposed to almost all other features discussed in this article, such ‘lexical accommodations’ (cf. Dimmendaal 2001: 363) are frequently concocted by language planners as a means of camouflaged borrowing. Consider the following examples:



(see Zuckermann 2003: 160-161)



(see Sapir and Zuckermann 2008)

But structurally similar concoctions – albeit usually spontaneous – are also created by laymen (resembling ‘lexical confluents’ in creoles, Zuckermann 2003):



(8)

## الخرشوف

Arabic [ʔalχarʕu:f] > Spanish Arabic [ʔalχarʕofa] > Old Spanish *alcarchofa* >  
 > Italian *alcarcioffo* > North Italian *arcicioffo* > *arciciocco* > *articiocco* >>  
 > International/English *artichoke* > Arabic (e.g. in Syria, Lebanon and Israel)

[ʔarði ʕo:k(i)] < أرضيّ ‘earthly’ + شوكيّ ‘thorny’

أرضيّ شوكيّ

## 2.11 Linguistic gender and noun-template productivity

Morphemic adaptations of English words into American Italian or British Italian often carry the linguistic gender of the semantically-similar word in Italian itself, e.g. British Italian *bagga* ‘bag’ (f), induced by Italian *borsa* ‘id.’ (f). Israeli, which has numerous possible noun-templates, demonstrates the same phenomenon (and it is still to be determined how regular the pattern of such gender adaptations is). Consider Israeli *mivréshet* ‘brush’ and Israeli *mis’éret* ‘(originally) brush, (later) soft brush with long bristles’, both feminine. I suggest that the choice of the *feminine* noun-template *mi△△é△et* (each △ represents a radical slot) was engendered by the (*feminine*) gender of the following words for ‘brush’. Table 2 illustrates *brush* in Israeli and in its various contributing languages:

**Table 2 – The gender of *brush* in Israeli and in its various contributing languages**

Israeli	Arabic	English	Yiddish	Russian	Polish	German	French
<i>mivréshet</i> (f)	<i>mábrasha</i> (f)	<i>brush</i>	<i>barsht</i> (f)	<i>shchétká</i> (f); <i>kíst</i> (f) ‘painting brush’	<i>szczotka</i> (f)	<i>Bürste</i> (f)	<i>brosse</i> (f)

Note that although *mi△△é△et* is indeed used for instruments, there were many other possible suitable noun-templates, cf. *\*mavrésh* and *\*mivrásh*, both masculine. One might argue that the choice of *mi△△é△et* (resulting in *mivréshet*) was accommodating the [t] of Yiddish *barsht* ‘brush’. This does not weaken the hypothesis that the gender played a crucial role, since Ben-

Yehuda's original form of this coinage was Israeli *mivrashá*, fitted into the *mi*⊠⊠*a*⊠*á* noun-template, the latter lacking [t] but still feminine. Israeli *mivréshet*, which might have sounded more elegant to the emerging native speakers, came later.

Similarly, Israeli *sifriá* 'library' was preferred to the construct-state (N-N) *bet sfar-ím*, lit. 'house- books'. Some intra-Israeli reasons could have been the wish to (i) streamline the word for convenience (one word being preferred to two words); (ii) prevent a possible confusion with *bet séfer*, lit. 'house- book', denoting 'school'; and (iii) follow the more general Israeli analyticity (§2.1).

However, there was also a camouflaged external reason: *sifriá* is feminine, thus maintaining the gender of the parallel European words: Yiddish *biblioték*, Russian *bibliotéka*, Polish *biblioteka*, German *Bibliothek* and French *bibliothèque*. Perhaps the feminine gender of Arabic *máktaba* 'library' played a role as well. One might say that this camouflaged foreign influence is only lexical. However, one result of this neologism might have been, more generally, the strengthening of Israeli *-iá* as a productive feminine locative suffix.

Future research should systematically explore the gender of all Israeli coinages vis-à-vis their counterparts in European and Semitic languages which have contributed to Israeli. Zuckermann (2003) has already done so with regard to several hundreds phono-semantic matches.

## 2.12 Calquing

Consider the following greeting:

**Israeli** מה נשמע *má nishmà*, lit. 'What does one hear? / What is heard?' (although some native Israeli-speakers understand it as the homophonous 'What shall we hear?'), i.e. 'How are you?', 'What's up?'

<

- (1) **Yiddish** וואס הערט זיך *vos hert zikh* (usually pronounced *v(o)sértsəkh*), lit. 'What does one hear?', i.e. 'How are you?', 'What's up?'
- (2) **Russian** Что слышно *chto slýshno* 'id.'
- (3) **Polish** Co słychać 'id.'
- (4) **Romanian** Ce se aude 'id.'

Note that whereas most revivalists were native Yiddish-speakers, many first speakers of Israeli spoke Russian and Polish too. So a Polish speaker in the 1930s might have used *má nishmà* not (only) due to Yiddish *vos hert zikh* but rather due to Polish *Co słychać* and so forth. That is a manifestation of the Congruence Principle.

Israelis know that the Israeli word *perestroika* is a borrowing of the Russian-descent internationalism. However, few Israelis are aware that the common Israeli greeting *má nishmà?* is actually a calque. Synchronically speaking, the **forms** in this phrase are 100% Hebrew, there is nothing to betray the non-Hebrew co-sources (Yiddish, Polish, Russian), which provided the **pattern** (cf. calques in Howell 1993). It is no wonder, then, that so many people miss much of the European impact on Israeli.

### 2.13 Portmanteau blending

Word-formation in Israeli abounds with European mechanisms such as blending. Along with *kómpaktdisk* ‘compact disc’, Israeli has the blend *taklitór*, which consists of the Hebrew-descent *taklít* ‘record’ and *’or* ‘light’. Unlike Hebrew, Israeli is full of portmanteau blends such as *arpíakh* ‘smog’, from *arafél* ‘fog’ and *píakh* ‘soot’; and *mídrakhov* ‘(pedestrian) mall’, from *midrakhá* ‘pavement’ and *rekhóv* ‘street’. Furthermore, Israeli has cases of root blending, e.g. *dakhpór* ‘bulldozer’, which hybridizes *d.ħ.p.* ‘push’ and *ħ.p.r.* ‘dig’ – cf. *shiltút* ‘zapping, flipping through the channels’, which derives from *shalát* ‘(remote) control’ and *shitút* ‘wandering, vagrancy’.

## 3 CONCLUSIONS

This article contributes towards recognizing that the revival of a no-longer spoken language is unlikely without cross-fertilization from the revivalists’ mother tongue(s) and towards

understanding Israeli as a hybridic language. In Israeli the impact of Yiddish and other European languages is apparent in *all* the components of the language but usually in *patterns* rather than in forms. Moreover, Israeli demonstrates a split between morphology and phonology. Whereas most Israeli morphological forms, e.g. discontinuously-conjugated verbs, are Hebrew, the phonetics and phonology of Israeli – including the pronunciation of these Hebrew forms – are European (see Zuckermann 2005).

Future research should examine each linguistic feature of Israeli individually vis-à-vis Hebrew, Yiddish and all the other contributing language. The grammatical contact in the emergent language was too complex to fit sweeping models such as ‘revival of Hebrew’, ‘relexification of Yiddish by Hebrew’, or universalist simplification. Such *en bloc* explanations overlook valuable statistics of each grammatical feature in the feature pool, e.g. how many contributors happened to possess it.

I hypothesize that the Congruence Principle is most significant to the study of Israeli: If a feature exists in more than one contributing language (or idiolect), it is more likely to persist in the emerging language. This principle is applicable to all languages, and indeed to linguistic *evolution* in general. It is of particular importance, however, to new languages, i.e. to linguistic *genesis*.

Thus, there are numerous conclusions one could draw from Israeli about language in general for the following reasons: (i) The impact of – and preferences in – language engineering share similarities with contact-induced change; (ii) The role of the European languages in Israeli was not deliberate, i.e. there are many aspects in Israeli which can be regarded as ‘normal’ (given that mixed languages are defined by some as ‘abnormal’). The case of Israeli demonstrates that the reality of linguistic genesis is far more complex than a simple family tree system allows. ‘Revived’ languages are unlikely to have a single parent.

The Hebrew revivalists’ attempt to deny their European roots, negate diasporism and avoid hybridity (as, in fact, reflected in Yiddish itself, which most revivalists despised) failed.

Thus, the study of Israeli offers a unique insight into the dynamics between language and culture in general and in particular into the role of language as a source of collective self-perception. I maintain that Israeli is a Eurasian (Semitic-European) hybrid language. Whatever we choose to call it, we should acknowledge its complexity. When one revives a language, one should expect to end up with a hybrid.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>A</b>	transitive subject
<b>ACC</b>	accusative
<b>AMB</b>	ambitransitive verb of the S=A type
<b>C</b>	consonant
<b>C</b>	(immediately followed by a number) century
<b>CONSTR</b>	construct-state
<b>COP</b>	copula
<b>DEF</b>	definite article
<b>E</b>	extended intransitive
<b>EXIS</b>	existential ('existential copula')
<b>f</b>	feminine
<b>INTR</b>	intransitive verb
<b>m</b>	masculine
<b>n</b>	noun
<b>NEG</b>	negator

<b>NP</b>	noun phrase
<b>O</b>	transitive object
<b>pl</b>	plural
<b>POSS</b>	possessive
<b>PROX</b>	proximal demonstrative
<b>S</b>	intransitive subject
<b>SAE</b>	Standard Average European
<b>sg</b>	singular
<b>TR</b>	transitive verb
<b>V</b>	vowel
<b>X</b>	either a consonant or a vowel

**A note on the transcription: whereas *á* is primary stress, *à* is secondary stress; *kh* stands for [x] and *sh* for [ʃ].**