

Pedagogies, Ideologies, and Secular Jewish Identities in U.S. Hebrew Schools

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

Renana Schneller

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Kendall A. King

December 2014

© Renana Schneller 2014

## Acknowledgements

It is probably appropriate to compare the achievement of completing a dissertation to a journey that ultimately ends when reaching the Promised Land. This was my journey, and it was long and not always easy. As a non-traditional native Israeli student who worked full-time in the Department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies (CNES) in addition to taking courses in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), my voyage was not always stress-free. But I tried to do it the best way I could, learning from each comment made by my peers, attending to each opportunity to learn new material offered by my distinguished professors.

Although this journey seems lonely, it was full with many good people who helped me get to my destination, and there were numerous:

First, I thank my advisor, Professor Kendall King for believing in me and serving as my advisor so ably. Kendall, you were always available for me, reading endless numbers of drafts and offering constructive and thoughtful comments promptly, thank you, Kendall!

I would also like to thank Professors Martha Bigelow, Bruno Chaouat, and David O'Brien for serving in my committee and offering insightful advice and support.

I thank Professors James Bequette, Deborah Dillon, Tim Lensmire, Cynthia Lewis, Diane Tedick, Baskar Upadhyay, and Sashank Varma for giving me the opportunity to benefit from their vast knowledge and experience.

I thank my colleagues at the Department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies and at the Center for Jewish Studies who were there with me when I needed an advice. They always found a way to contribute their knowledge and expertise and offer valuable opinions.

I thank my friends, Julia Steinberger, Michal Garber, Mira Reinberg, Rina Ashkenazi, Liz Altman, Bat Sheva Berman, Sabina Gapany, and Noa Fine who were always available to offer emotional support.

My heartfelt gratitude to Kirsten Jamsen for her constant support all these years, I would not be where I am now without you, Kirsten. I thank Katie Levin for helping me with formatting this dissertation.

To my husband, Amos, and to my daughters, Netta and Gily, who surrounded me with love, and to my parents in Israel, who waited many years for this journey to be completed. I love you all.

**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Amos, and my daughters, Netta and Gily,

## Abstract

Although heritage language teachers' processes of identity formation have been studied in recent years (e.g., Milner, 2007), much of the work on heritage languages has explored foreign language teachers' beliefs (e.g., Nespors, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Williams & Burden, 1997) and pedagogies. Overall, the context behind these heritage language pedagogies, specifically ethnic, religious, and national identities has been under-researched. Addressing this gap, this study explores Hebrew language teachers' beliefs, practices and ideologies and the way these ideologies relate to teachers' Jewish identities. Hebrew language teachers have various beliefs about their roles as teachers and about what needs to be taught in their Hebrew classroom as part the process of fostering students' Jewish identity. These beliefs relate to teachers' lived experience as learners (e.g., Alvine, 2001). Teachers' beliefs and practices suggest teachers' Hebrew language ideologies (e.g., Woolard, 2010), which are affected by teachers' Jewish identity (e.g., Avni, 2011). During a year-long study that included a semester of classroom observation and numerous semi-formal as well as informal interviews, three participating teachers from two schools were observed and classroom documents were collected. Guided by the theoretical framework of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006), data was analyzed and interpreted. Findings suggest that Hebrew teacher beliefs about themselves as learners relate to their beliefs about themselves as teachers. These beliefs map onto classroom practices most of the time. All three of the teachers share similar ideologies about how knowledge of Hebrew and knowledge about Israel are essential for fostering Jewish identities.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	vi
Chapter One—Introduction .....	1
Background and Rationale .....	1
Purpose of Study .....	4
Research Questions .....	6
Overview of Study .....	6
Chapter Two—Review of Literature .....	10
L2 Teachers’ Identity .....	12
Teachers’ beliefs .....	12
Teachers’ professional identity .....	16
Teachers’ classroom decisions.....	18
Foreign language teachers’ identity: the heritage language class .....	23
Theorizing foreign (heritage) language teachers’ community identity .....	26
Language Ideology.....	30
Defining language ideology .....	30
Language ideology in classroom context.....	35
Language ideology as it relates to Hebrew outside of Israel .....	38
Chapter Three—Methodology .....	44
Research Design.....	44
Definition of a case study .....	44
Context.....	46
Data collection .....	54
Data analysis .....	64
Data interpretation and write up .....	67
Researcher role and limitations.....	68
Chapter Four—Findings RQ 1 and 2: “I want them to get addicted to Hebrew”: Rabbi Cohen’s beliefs and practices .....	72
Learning Hebrew as a Founding Element for Forming Identity of Participation .....	75
Fostering Students’ Jewish Identity as a Life-Long Process .....	80
A Hebrew Teacher as a Form-Focused Instructor .....	98
Chapter Five—Findings RQ 1 and 2: “Why do you need to know why and how you are Jewish?”: Dr. Levin’s beliefs and practices .....	107
A Teacher as an Expert .....	109
Learning by Knowing .....	118
Text-Choice as Vehicle for Influencing Students’ Jewish Identity Negotiation.....	124
Chapter Six—Findings RQ 1 and 2: “So many things came to me thanks to Hebrew”: Ms. Abramson’s beliefs and practices.....	140
Learning Hebrew as a Founding Element for Forming Identity of Participation .....	144

Using Language for Cultural Representation of Israel .....	149
A Hebrew Teacher as a Form-Focused Instructor .....	158
Chapter Seven—Discussion RQ3: Secular Jewish Identities and Underlying Hebrew Language Ideologies .....	169
Secular Judaism: a Complex Term Identifying Hebrew Language	
Teachers' Jewish Identity .....	170
Teachers' Beliefs and Secular Jewish Identity .....	174
Teachers as Learners in a Process of Jewish Identity Formation .....	176
Hebrew Language Ideology in the Classroom.....	178
HLI 1: Hebrew connects between Jews, Israel and Israelis.....	179
HLI 2: Hebrew classroom practices should be conducive for enhancing Jewish identity .....	181
HLI 3: Grammatical correctness of Hebrew is important to some teachers .....	184
Hebrew Language Ideology as It Relates to Studies About Language Ideology .....	187
Chapter Eight—Conclusion: Teacher Beliefs and Beyond .....	192
Summary of Findings in Terms of the Research Questions .....	192
RQ 1 .....	193
RQ 2.....	196
RQ 3.....	198
Implications of This Study.....	202
Limitations of This Study .....	204
Contribution of This Study .....	205
References.....	207
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	227
Appendix B: Sample Fieldnotes .....	228

**List of Figures**

Figure 1: Participants' histories .....	49
Figure 2: Data collection time-line .....	55
Figure 3: Data sources .....	56

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background and Rationale**

Teaching Modern Hebrew in Jewish settings in the US is a multilayered experience. When teachers who are a part of a Jewish community use their Hebrew knowledge to enhance students' Jewish identity, they add a layer to what is perceived as a heritage language teaching, when religion is in the background of this language teaching. This context becomes even more complex since the content used in classes pertains to Israel, a country that has been a war-zone for more than half a century in modern times. When teachers teach Hebrew in Jewish schools they might find themselves in a sensitive territory, attempting to connect between Jewish identities, both theirs and their students', and issues pertaining to Modern Israel, including politics. Using their own lived experiences as resources that affect teachers' beliefs, identities and ideologies, different teachers have different contexts that affect their teaching practices.

Hebrew language teachers teach Hebrew in Jewish schools in the US. Modern Hebrew is booming in many circles in North America (Avni, 2011, 2012; Feuer, 2007). Day school students have a steady program of Modern Hebrew taught as an L2 language (Feuer, 2007). Studies about teaching L2 languages focus on various perspectives such as teachers' beliefs (e.g., Kissau et al., 2012; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1993; Williams & Burden, 1997), teachers' professional identity (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), and teachers' language awareness (TLA) (Andrews, 2007), among other things. These research studies of L2 teaching explore L2 teachers who teach

languages, such as Spanish, German or French, or others that are Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL's), such as Hebrew.

Hebrew in the Jewish supplementary school is also a heritage language, and the students in the Jewish supplementary schools learn about the heritage and the culture of their own communities (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Teacher identities in heritage language educational settings have been researched for the last several decades (e.g., Ducar, 2008; He, 2010; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Jo, 2001; Tse, 1998). For instance, there are studies about *indigenous languages* such as Weaver's (2001) study that explores cultural identity as reflected in the values, beliefs and worldviews of indigenous Lacota people, and studies about *ancestral language*, (Henze & Davis, 1999) that associate language to kinship and intimacy, the language that was heard "on grandfather's knee" (p. 10). These studies explore various issues pertaining to heritage speakers such as oral proficiency or identity formation (Swender et al., 2014). Studies about Jewish identity (e.g., Nadler, 2009) explore Judaism, community and Jewish culture in American life, and the connection between Judaism and the State of Israel (e.g., Avni, 2011; Beilin, 2000; Ellis, 2009; Feuer, 2007; Golden, 2001; Rotenstreich, 1993). The bulk of this work focuses on Jewish identity formation and has advanced our understanding of the important role that Israel, both biblical and modern, has on Jewish identity formation among North American Jews. However, none of these heritage language studies are about a connection between religious identity, perceiving Jewish identity religiously, and Hebrew language ideology (HLI) in the classroom, certainly not from the teachers' perspectives, and this is a gap I address. Teachers' perspectives have been overlooked in

this field, yet are critically important because teachers' perspectives uncover the roles of classroom and institutional ideologies in the process of students' identity formation.

This dissertation explores Hebrew cultural, religious, and ethnic identity empirically by looking at the way teachers make connections between Hebrew as the language of students' ancestors and students' current identity. My research interest in Hebrew teachers in Minnesota relates to my background as a former Hebrew teacher in one of the schools I observed, as well as my current position as a College In the Schools (CIS) Hebrew language faculty coordinator at the University of Minnesota (UofM). In this capacity, I oversee the Hebrew classes in the Hebrew schools, the same schools I observe. As the CIS coordinator I share the curriculum I use in my UofM Hebrew classes with the CIS Hebrew teachers and supervise the process of Hebrew teaching in these classes. While discussing choices of teaching material and practices with the teachers, I found that different teachers had different views as to what they perceived as good teaching practices in the Hebrew class. These choices were closely related to these teachers' professional identities as well as their personal backgrounds. As a university Hebrew teacher and a former supplementary school Hebrew teacher, I have an insider view that allows me to explore underlying Hebrew teachers' language ideologies as a part of the Jewish identity negotiation process. This research is about Hebrew as a heritage language, focusing on Hebrew language teachers' beliefs, identities and ideologies in the context of Hebrew schools in the US.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Teachers' perspectives have been studied in contexts of foreign language classes (e.g., Varghese et al., 2005). This body of work points to issues of primacy of agency in identity formation, which understands individuals as intentional beings, thus moving away from a structurally deterministic view of the fashioning of individuals, a point of view found in Marxism, for instance (p. 23). This body of work discusses the relation between *assigned identity*, the identity imposed on one by others, and *claimed identity*, the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). In contrast, my study addresses assigned or claimed identity in a religious Jewish context. By saying that the context is religious, I do not, however, imply to the common practice of teaching a religion, emphasizing the theological aspect of being religious. Taking place in a school that teaches Jewish rituals to young Jewish students, Hebrew classes in this school aim at teaching Modern Hebrew using various content materials about Judaism and Israel. In my study, I observed classes in two schools studying beliefs and practices of three teacher participants. In the classes I observed, teachers taught various Hebrew texts using a multitude of teaching techniques. Some teachers emphasized correct use of Hebrew, demonstrating what scholars describe as *form-focused instruction* (e.g., Ellis, 2001; Andrews, 2007). Other teachers put more emphasis on the communicative use of Hebrew in the classroom, and less about its correct usage. The content these teachers chose to teach was about Israel, both Biblical and Modern, as a geographic territory essential for Jewish identity formation. The connection between Israel and Judaism is multi-layered since the origin of Judaism is historically connected

to the Biblical land of Israel, and the only place where Hebrew is spoken as a native language is the modern State of Israel.

Studying the history of Jews in connection to religious ideology has an element of responsibility to past generations and to future generations as well. Hebrew schools teach recent history of European Jews and the atrocities that they endured during the Holocaust just because of being Jews. Millions of them perished in the Holocaust that eliminated a third of the Jewish people worldwide. Using quotes from Jewish prayer books, which are about the need to continue the Jewish legacy, Hebrew teachers in the US talk about this generation's responsibility to their ancestors and to generations to come not to forget what happened to the Jews in recent or past history. This survival narrative is an essential part of Hebrew teachers' curricula, some of that use this notion of survival when they teach about the modern State of Israel and the regional threats against its existence. This survival narrative is usually studied in a context of language endangerment (Hornberger, 2002), but in Hebrew heritage language classes, survival narrative is studied in the context of genocide, national sovereignty, borders and territory.

Studying Hebrew language teachers' beliefs and practices enables me to uncover teachers' ideologies in context. I observed Hebrew classes, collected artifacts and interviewed Hebrew teachers. Using *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006), a concept that describes an idea of being a member in the community to frame my study, I uncovered underlying language ideologies that pertain to the way Hebrew teachers enhance Jewish identity to the students who are a part of the Jewish community. I studied how in the process of shaping students' Jewish identity, teachers negotiate various

aspects of this identity. This work addresses a gap in the field of heritage learners' study, in which questions of religious identities of heritage learners and teachers are understudied. This work contributes to the broader field of heritage languages by exploring the processes of Jewish identities formation in school contexts, by looking at teachers' perspectives.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are Hebrew language teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building in the context of U.S. Hebrew schools?
2. What are teachers' Hebrew language teaching practices with respect to Jewish identities?
3. What can classroom practices and teachers' beliefs reveal about underlying Hebrew language ideologies?

### **Overview of Study**

In this study, I examine the constructions of three Hebrew teachers' identities and ideologies as they surface in two private supplementary Hebrew schools in Minnesota. The current chapter introduces readers to the subject of this study, reviewing the background, rationale and purpose of this study.

Chapter 2 offers an overview of research on foreign language teachers' identities and the way these identities interact with teachers' beliefs. This chapter focuses on Hebrew language teachers' heritage community identity, exploring Hebrew language teachers' identities that stand behind feelings of legitimacy of membership in the Jewish community at large, and with Israel as the historical, religious and geographic focal point

of this community identity. To support my argument that Hebrew language teachers' beliefs and practices are manifestations of their language ideologies, I present a summary of research on language ideology, specifically in a classroom context, as well as a historical overview of ideologies pertaining to Hebrew outside of Israel, including studies exploring the multidimensional nature of the perspectives American Jews have about Israel and Israelis.

Chapter 3 presents the design and the context of this study. More specifically, this chapter describes the setting and schools where this study was conducted. This chapter offers an overview of the sampling process of the three teachers participating in this study, the process of selecting teaching materials, data collection, analysis, interpretation and write up. This chapter describes my researcher's role, complicating my positionality as member in the Jewish community and a former Hebrew school teacher, therefore an insider, and a university supervisor of these schools' Hebrew programs, hence an outsider.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present findings from the three teachers participating in this study, Rabbi Cohen, Dr. Levin' and Ms. Abramson, addressing research questions 1 and 2 about teacher's beliefs and practices and identity building. Chapter 4 offers findings collected from Rabbi Cohen's class observations, interviews and class documents, illuminating this non-native Hebrew teacher's beliefs and practices and identity building process as a learner and a teacher of Hebrew. This chapter explores themes that emerged from analyzing and interpreting Rabbi Cohen's data as a teacher in East Hebrew School. These themes demonstrate how learning Hebrew serves as a founding element for

forming Rabbi Cohen's identity of participation (Wenger, 1998), first as a learner, then as a teacher of Hebrew. This chapter examines how Rabbi Cohen strives to foster his students' Jewish identity by offering engaging contemporary teaching material and providing a nurturing and supportive learning environment for his students.

Following the structure of chapter 4, chapter 5 explores findings collected from interviewing, observing and collecting documents from a second teacher participating in this study, Dr. Levin, a native Hebrew speaker who teaches Hebrew at West Hebrew School. Findings reveal how a teacher's lived experience as a student impacts his perceptions of himself as a teacher. This chapter demonstrates how Dr. Levin's teacher's identity as a Hebrew scholar influences the way he teaches his students, emphasizing the importance of fact-based and knowledge-based teaching for fostering students' Jewish identities.

Chapter 6 details findings from another West Hebrew School teacher, Ms. Abramson, a non-native speaker of Hebrew. Following the structure of chapters 4 and 5, this chapter highlights Ms. Abramson's journey from a non-participant to an interested learner of Hebrew to finally an enthusiastic full participant teacher of Hebrew and a vibrant advocate for the State of Israel and for Israelis. Themes emerged from this study illuminate how Ms. Abramson's connection with contemporary Israel and Israelis influences her choices as a Hebrew teacher.

Chapter 7 addresses research question 3 about what teachers' classroom practices and teachers' beliefs reveal about underlying Hebrew language ideologies. This chapter uses the term *Jewish identity* to explore motivations behind teachers' beliefs, and *HLLI* to

discuss teacher's classroom practices, including teachers' choice of material to teach in their Hebrew classes. This chapter argues that there is a connection between teachers' religious identity and their teacher beliefs and practices, connecting findings about teachers' underlying Hebrew language ideologies and studies that focus on language ideology in general.

Chapter 8 collectively addresses the three research questions, summarizing and synthesizing the findings from chapters 4, 5, and 6. In addition, this chapter answers each research question separately for each teacher. This chapter then discusses the implications, limitations and suggestions, showing how this study contributes to research about heritage language teachers' professional identity, and to research about language teachers' religious identity and ideology. This chapter concludes by describing how this study relates to the theories that together explain Hebrew language teachers' pedagogies and ideologies in U.S. Hebrew schools that use the Hebrew language to enhance students' Jewish identities. In this dissertation I argue that teachers' lived experiences, intertwined with their various Jewish identities, impact teachers' beliefs and classroom practices thus revealing their Hebrew language ideologies.

## Chapter Two

### **Review of Literature: Hebrew Language Teachers' Identities and Ideologies**

This dissertation argues that Jewish identities are intertwined with Hebrew language ideologies and undergird Hebrew language teachers' beliefs and practices. This research draws from and contributes to three related areas of active research: (a) teacher identity, beliefs and practices, (b) imagined communities (c) language ideology. Contextualizing research questions about Hebrew language teachers' beliefs, practices and ideologies, this chapter provides a review of literature that focuses on teachers' beliefs and identities. In order to conceptualize Hebrew language teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building, and the practices with respect to these identities, this chapter reviews studies that explore teachers' identity, specifically about teachers' *professional identity* that, among other things, illuminates how their experiences in practice and their personal backgrounds shape their professional identities. Suggesting that teachers' choices relating to focus-on-form are yet another layer pertaining to teachers' professional identity, I present studies about professional identities that could be partially explained as a manifestation of teachers' Jewish identities and Hebrew language ideologies. These studies pertain to various perspectives of teachers' beliefs and identities, but none of them are about religious identities and their manifestations in teachers' beliefs, practices and ideologies. This discussion is important because it sheds light on a phenomenon that might exist in other private schools that teach languages in combination with religions, such as Muslim private schools that teach Arabic. For example, Hewer's (2001) study explores the role of teachers in Muslim school in

Birmingham, in which Islamic Studies and Arabic are offered (Hewer, 2001). This school strives to bring out the cultural heritage of Muslims thus fostering identity among its students. When Muslim teachers devise a curriculum unit in this school, the starting point should be the Qur'an and its view about the subject, thus promoting students' religious identity by using texts that go hand-in-hand with Islamic values.

After presenting research on teacher identity generally and foreign language teachers' identity specifically, I review studies that focus on teachers who teach foreign language that is also a heritage language for them and for their students. In order to frame my study about heritage language teachers, I use studies that offer various theories about communities or *imagined communities* (e.g., Cohen, 1985; Anderson, 2006). These studies frame my research questions 1 and 2 because they offer lenses through which this dissertation observes Hebrew teachers who foster Jewish identity as a part of their membership in the Jewish community.

Ultimately, studies about communities and *imagined communities* frame my third research question as well, as the boundaries between teachers' identities and ideologies can sometimes be blurred. Studies about language ideology frame my dissertation in reference to existing research on language ideology. Likewise, this chapter reviews studies that discuss language ideology in a classroom context, and HLI outside of Israel, including a summary of research on Jewish identity and secularism that are fundamental to understanding the multifaceted connection between American Jews and Israel.

## **L2 Teachers' Identity**

Teachers' *identity* has many components that interact with each other to inform these *identities*. These components are described in literature as teachers' *beliefs* (e.g., Aragão, 2011; Green, 1971; Kissau et al., 2012; Richardson, 2003) and teachers' *professional identity* (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), exploring language teachers' pedagogies. Teachers' identities have another component pertaining to the role of communities that are in the background of their teaching (e.g., Coleman, 1996; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Given this body of research, I will focus on teacher *identities*, using examples from Hebrew as a heritage language class in the US (or Canada). I will then describe the theoretical framework as well as methodological approaches to studying foreign (or heritage) language teachers' *identities*.

**Teachers' Beliefs.** *Beliefs* often derive their subjective power, authority, and legitimacy from particular episodes or events. These "critical episodes" then continue to frame the comprehension of events later in time (Abelson, 1979, p. 320). Such critical episodes are probably at the root of the fact that teachers learn about teaching through their experience as students--experiences that have been referred to as apprenticeships to teaching (Lortie, 2002).

*Beliefs* are about physical and social reality and self, and to question them is to question one's own judgment (Nespor, 1987). As such, *beliefs* are deeply personal, rather than universal, and often are unaffected by others' points of view. *Beliefs*, according to Nespor (1987), can be shaped by chance, a powerful experience, or a series of events, and they contain assumptions about what oneself and others are like. For example, a teacher

may believe that students who do not participate in class activities are lazy; another teacher may believe that learning a language is a function of memorizing. These are examples of unchallengeable perceptions that are present beyond individual power (Nespor, 1987).

Teachers' *beliefs* are the basic set of beliefs that each educator has (Song & Andrews, 2009), something we adopted throughout the years, and resistant to change (Nespor, 1987). One example of teachers' *beliefs* is the way language teachers perceive students who are introverted. When such students have difficulties speaking in the target language, some foreign language teachers will understand that this is a natural trait that some students might have, other teachers might see that as a deficiency. These teachers may have studied pedagogy and have learned that not all students are alike; still, this is their *belief* and they are not willing to let go of it. Teachers' *beliefs* might include some biases that are a part of their personal assumptions and are difficult to change.

*Beliefs* can have an episodic nature (Calderhead & Robson, 1991) in a sense that a certain episode in teachers' past experiences influences teachers' current beliefs. Research reveals that teachers are influenced by *guiding images* from past events that created *intuitive screens* through that new information was filtered (p. 4). Pre-service teachers held images of teaching from their experiences as students, images that played an influential function in determining how these pre-service teachers translated and employed the knowledge they possessed and how they determined the practices they would later undertake as teachers

*Different types of teacher beliefs.* Researchers conceptualize several types of teacher *beliefs* (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Williams & Burden, 1997) that have been shown to affect teachers' classroom practices (Pajares, 1992). The *beliefs* are about students or about teaching and learning. Teachers may have *existential presumptions* (Nespor, 1987, p. 318) about their students, which are strong *beliefs* teachers hold about students' ability. These are not descriptive terms; rather, they are markers teachers have for entities thought to be personified by the students. Teachers may meet some degree of confrontation from some of their learners (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 57). If learners are viewed narrowly as resisters, teachers may well use methods involving coercion rather than seeking ways for helping students to want to learn.

An example of a teacher's belief is that learners are often seen as *receptacles* to be filled with knowledge (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 58). For many teachers, instruction and information-giving becomes the natural way of working, particularly if they view intelligence as something in that information is deposited, described by Freire (1970) as "banking" conception of education, where learners are like a bank accounts into that deposits are made and drawn upon later for specific purposes such as examinations. Learners are *raw material* (Williams & Burden, 1997) like clay to be molded into a fine work of art. This *belief* opens a window into manipulating learners and shaping them according to teachers' wishes, thus contrasting the idea of fixed at birth. Perceiving the *learner as a client* puts emphasis on identification of learners' needs (Williams & Burden, 1997). These various *beliefs* held by the teachers influence their teaching practices.

In addition to *beliefs* about students, teachers hold *beliefs* about themselves as teachers and about their teaching (Williams & Burden, 1997). *Beliefs* often include representations of *alternative worlds* or *alternative realities* (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987). Such teachers' *beliefs* come from years of experience as students, observing their teachers. These *beliefs* that are rooted in teachers' experience can leave a positive as well as negative impact on teachers and affect their teacher practices. Ms. Skylark, a teacher mentioned in Nespor (1987), drew her ideal of teaching from a model of what she had wanted classes to be like when she was a child – friendly and fun. She presented a utopian alternative to the sorts of classrooms that she was familiar with. She expressed a desire to spare her students the traumas she had as a child. This negative experience and the attempt to offer a more positive alternative refers to conceptualizations of ideal situations differing significantly from present realities. Teachers are highly influenced by their *beliefs* that in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world and to their conceptions of their place within it (Pajares, 1993).

In conclusion, this literature frames my dissertation in a sense that it conceptualizes various types of teachers' beliefs, which can describe the beliefs among the three Hebrew teachers participating in my study, such as beliefs teachers have about themselves as teachers, about their teaching, and about their students. Studies about teachers' beliefs intertwined with teachers' professional identities frames my dissertation when discussing teachers' classroom practices addressed by my second research question.

**Teachers' professional identity.** In the last decade, teachers' *professional identity* has emerged as a separate research area in education. Drawing on the definition of *identity* used in the social sciences and philosophy, several authors focus on *identity formation* in social contexts and on the stages people pass through: owing to biological and psychological maturation, each stage has its own characteristics regarding the individual's interaction with his or her environment (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

The concept of *professional identity* is related to teachers' concepts or images of self. These concepts or images of self strongly determine the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers, and the way they adjust to educational change (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Other studies of *professional identity* (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Fradd & Lee, 1999; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Skulstad, 2005; Tal, Bamberger, & Morag, 2005; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998; Zanting, Verloop, Vermunt, & Van Driel, 1998) highlight *teachers' roles* in the classroom. *Professional identity* refers not only to the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people, but also to what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their experiences in practice and their personal backgrounds (Tickle, 2000). Both sides of *professional identity* seem strongly intertwined, but researchers give them a different weight. *Professional identity* is not a fixed attribute of a teacher, but a process of construction and reconstruction, sometimes during a whole life (McCormick & Pressley, 1997). Arising in social setting, the self is developed through transactions with the environment. Communicating with others, we learn to assume the roles of others and observe our actions in view of that. Our concept of self can be defined as an organized

representation of our theories, attitudes, and *beliefs* about ourselves (McCormick & Pressley, 1997).

Research on teachers' *professional identity* formation also contributes to the understanding and recognition of what it feels like to be a teacher in today's schools, where many things are changing rapidly, and how teacher has to handle these changes (Beijaard et al., 2004; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Here it is important to pay attention to the personal part of teachers' *professional identity*. An example of this aspect of teachers' *professional identity* is how "university professors, mostly hired during the postwar baby boom expansion, are now disillusioned with their professional lives...and find themselves uncertain about who they are" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 115). What is found relevant to the profession, especially in light of the many educational changes currently taking place, may conflict with what teachers personally wish and experience as good. Such a conflict can lead to resistance in teachers' *professional identity* in cases in that the personal aspect and the professional aspect are too far removed from each other. *Professional identity* is not a stable entity (Coldron & Smith, 1999). This identity is a multifaceted and vibrant balance where professional self-image is balanced with the roles teachers feel that they have to play (Volkman & Anderson, 1998). In this situation, there might be apprehension between the personal dimension in teaching and the given social structure. Historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural factors may all put pressure on the teacher's sense of self as a teacher. In addition, *professional identity* may consist of many sub-identities that may clash or side with each other (Beijaard et al., 2004). This notion of identity as a space for

conflict and change is also found in research of L2 teachers' *professional identity*. For example, L2 teachers who are non-native speakers (NNS) of the target language who experience tension between accent and identity (Levis, 2005). This literature about teachers' professional identity frames my study in a sense that it describes issues that affect Hebrew teachers as well, such as the need to adjust to professional changes in their schools. The findings in this dissertation contribute to this body of literature by presenting cases in which L2 teachers who are NNS of Hebrew reconciled between their background as NNS of Hebrew and their current professional identities by putting less emphasis on correct pronunciation of Hebrew, for example.

As mentioned above, research described up until this point in this review reflects researchers' views about any teacher's *professional identity*, with no specific emphasis on that of L2 teachers. Yet there are some aspects in teachers' *professional identity* that are unique to L2 teachers. L2 teachers make explicit choices while being in the classroom, the choices that pertain to their experience as teachers and to the way they perceive themselves as language teachers. Teachers' *professional identity* is considered a critical component in the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of the classroom and in teachers' professional development (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005).

**Teachers' classroom decisions.** Teaching is viewed as a thoughtful behavior of teachers who are "active, thinking decision makers" (Borg, 2006, p. 7). Teachers' cognition guides teachers' instructional practice and exposes how they conceptualize teaching (Mori, 2011). Researchers study teachers' psychological world as opposed to their teaching activities, stating that teaching is a multifaceted act and should be accepted

as such (Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1981; Mori, 2011). Studies of teachers' thought process demonstrate the difficulty of "interactive decision making in instructional setting" (Bailey & Nunan, 1996, p. 21) and are essential to teacher education (Almarza, 1996; Borg, 1998; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Mori, 2011) in a sense that they explore how teachers' beliefs surface during class time and the way they influence teachers' classroom practices.

Teachers' classroom decisions are divided to three tasks: "The management of content, of participants, and of face" (Bailey & Nunan, 1996, p. 21). Drawing on Bailey and Nunan, I suggest that these three components of teachers' decisions account for *Teachers' Language Awareness* (TLA) in Andrew's study (Andrews, 2007), as well as for *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK) (Freeman, 2002; Shulman, 1987). Since the early 1980s, *language awareness* has become a major concern in language education (Andrews, 2007; Donmall, 1985; Fairclough, 1992; Hawkins, 1984; James & Garrett, 1995; McCarthy, Carter, & McCarthy, 1994; Van Lier, 1995, 1996). Studies about PCK (Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, & Carey, 1988; Gess-Newsome & Lederman, 2001; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Shulman, 1986, 1987; Van Driel, Verloop, & De Vos, 1998) analyze teachers' knowledge as it relates to instruction (see also above, in the section about teachers' knowledge). Based on Shulman (1986), teachers' PCK pertains, among other things, to knowledge of techniques for assessing students' understanding, knowledge of instructional strategies that could increase students' comprehension. Drawing on Bailey and Nunan (1996), this study suggests that the decisions language aware teachers make are included in their management of content task, intertwined with

the management of participants' task. For example, TLA engages with *grammar debates* (Andrews, 2007, p. 48), that discuss the role of grammar in foreign language instruction. In these debates, scholars discuss the importance of implicit vs. explicit knowledge (Ellis, 1989) as important components in language acquisition. The teachers, in this case, engage in two tasks: one is management of content, that is whether to include grammar in their teaching, and the other is management of participants, that is attempting to help students in the process of language acquisition. Studies that conceptualize L2 teachers' classroom decisions, specifically decisions pertaining to Target Language (TL) grammar, frame my study by suggesting various ways of approaching form-focused instruction, an important issue among Hebrew teachers.

Research identifies three types of form-focused instruction: *Focus-on-forms*, *planned focus-on-form*, and *incidental focus-on-form* (e.g., DeKeyser, 1995).

*Type 1: focus-on-forms.* Focus-on-forms implies that the teacher and students are aware that the primary purpose of the activity is to learn a preselected form and that the learners are required to focus their attention on some specific form intensively in order to learn this form. The rule for understanding this preselected form can be addressed deductively by presenting the rule to the students, or inductively by having learners attempt to arrive at a rule themselves by analyzing data containing exemplars of the feature in question (DeKeyser, 1995).

*Type 2: planned focus-on-form.* This type of form-focused instruction involves using enriched input that has been modified to present learners with plentiful exemplars of the target structure. For example, Trahey and White (1993) and Trahey (1996)

developed materials consisting of stories, games and exercises with the aim of exposing learners to adverbs.

*Type 3: Incidental focus-on-form.* The teacher or a learner takes time out from a communicative activity to draw attention to a form that is perceived to be of interest. By doing that, the teacher and learner briefly switch from viewing the language as a communication tool to viewing the language as an object to be taught (DeKeyser, 1995). These types of form focused instruction relate to task 1, which is managing content.

Management of participants as the second task accounts for teachers' attempts to accommodate students' learning styles, or promote students' involvement (Bailey & Nunan, 1996, pp. 29-34). Getting students to respond in the language classroom is not easy (Bailey & Nunan, 1996). Some students might experience anxiety when asked to express themselves in the foreign language. Their fear of making mistakes and being laughed at cause high levels of anxiety, and it is the teacher's role to try and manage students' anxiety by developing activities that would strengthen students' confidence. L2 teachers have to accommodate students who are unable to respond in the target language (Bailey & Nunan, 1996). It is generally agreed that for successful classroom second language (L2) development, the classroom must create an input-rich environment that provides learners with optimal opportunities for meaningful use of the target language (Andrews et al., 2004). Teachers' use of Target Language (TL) is the main source of comprehensible input and a facilitator of meaningful interaction during the instructional process ( Andrews, 2007). In spite of this, there is research evidence of teachers' frequent use of the learners' first language (LI) in foreign language (FL) classrooms ( Andrews,

2007). Another example of teacher task of managing participants relates to Corrective Feedback (CF) and the choices foreign language teachers have when correcting students' errors (Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Chaudron, 1977; Fanselow, 1977; Mori, 2011; Nystrom, 1983).

The third task that relates to teachers' classroom decisions is managing face (Bailey & Nunan, 1996). I perceive managing face as the way teachers establish students' respect by, among other things, demonstrating the subject matter and pedagogical knowledge expected from a teacher. An example to teachers' saving face is taken from Borg's (1999) study. In this study, Borg describes teachers' choices in teaching grammar. These decisions were influenced by their frequently conflicting views about language, students and self (Borg, 1999), exemplifying that the borders between the three tasks as described by Bailey and Nunan (1996), are actually blurred. One teacher in Borg's (2006) study believed it was important to teach grammar, but he taught grammar seldom because of his self-perception—he was unconfident in his own knowledge about grammar and did not want to lose face and be caught out by students' questions. Another teacher taught grammar frequently despite his assertion that grammar “did little to promote students' acquisition of the language” (Borg, 1999, p. 26). Another issue pertaining to L2 teachers classroom decisions is students' possible beliefs system concerning whether teachers who are native speakers of the language (NS) are more desirable role models than teachers who are non-native speakers of the target language (NNS)” (Ferguson, 2005, p. 16) and how these perceived student beliefs affect teachers' classroom choices. These examples emphasize the importance of studying teachers' instructional decisions (Borg, 1999).

In sum, this literature conceptualizes teachers' various approaches regarding teachers' classroom decisions, such as the management of content, of participants, and of face (Bailey & Nunan, 1996), illuminating Hebrew language teachers' decisions pertaining to choices of content to teach in class, for instance, framing the analyses suggested in this dissertation. These classroom decisions Hebrew language teachers make are influenced by their beliefs and their professional identity, similar to other teachers, especially L2 teachers. These classroom decisions are affected by another component of teachers' identity, one that is connected to the fact the Hebrew language teachers teach Hebrew as a heritage language, as a part of teachers' and students' membership in the Jewish community.

**Foreign language teachers' identity: The heritage language class.** Studies about language teachers differentiate between *second language* and *foreign language* pedagogy (Coleman, 1996; Li & Duff, 2008; Kramsch, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). In *foreign language* pedagogy the language teaching occurs somewhere "where the language being taught is not a normal part of the regular life of the learners" (Coleman, 1996, p. 213). In *second language* pedagogy, however, the teaching occurs in the target language community itself (Coleman, 1996). For teachers of *second language* as well as *foreign language*, the decisive objective is to facilitate the pedagogy that will enable the students to function in the target language community (Coleman, 1996). In contrast with both *second* and *foreign language* pedagogies, the heritage language being taught is *normal* to the community where teaching takes place, although in many cases, not all community members actually

speaking the language. Instead of being socialized into a language, the students in a heritage language class learn about the heritage and culture of *their own community*. Teachers in these classes are members of that same community in many cases. For some students heritage language education starts in class, for others it starts at home (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). In a heritage language class, teachers foster their students' identities. Students are constantly developing their identities based on their experience and what they learn about themselves (Milner, 2007). Teacher educators have recognized the importance of the individual lived experience as relevant to the development of what they will bring to the classroom (Alvine, 2001). Thus, the life histories of teachers have come to be seen as grounded experience for knowledge of teaching. Teachers have the potential to transform the curriculum to such a degree that they *become* the curriculum (Milner, 2007). Proposing that "a curriculum can be seen as a verb in this sense, not only as a noun" (p. 586), Milner asserts that the curriculum actually does something. If teachers are the curriculum, what they teach, how they live, what they model and where they focus have the potential to shape students' learning (Milner, 2007). In contrast, the Chinese heritage language teachers in Wu, Palmer and Field (2011) express weak appreciation of themselves as 'legitimate' teachers due to the fact that they are not certified to teach a foreign language, among other things. In the Jewish community of which the Hebrew teachers are members, many community members do not speak Hebrew but expect their children who attend Hebrew schools to acquire this language the potential to transform or even become the curriculum (Milner, 2007) in a sense that in many cases they create their own curriculum.

When teachers become the curriculum, they create an *image* of their own identities as educators (Cummins, 2001) thus poertraying an imagined community (Anderson, 2006) for their students. Teachers highlight identity options for their students; they create an *image* of the society they hope their students will help form (Cummins, 2001). A crucial component here is that of the primacy of *agency* in identity formation (Varghese et al., 2005) . Identity is not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political context (Duff & Uchida,1997). An important aspect of this is the relation between *assigned identity*—the identity imposed on one by others—and *claimed identity*, the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). Identity is constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse ( Gee,1996; MacLure,1993). In the Hebrew *heritage* class in the US, for example, teachers’ objective is to foster their students’ Jewish identity by teaching Modern or Biblical Hebrew (Bekerman, 2001). They teach the Israeli culture as a part of their Hebrew pedagogy. At this point, teachers’ beliefs and identities interact to inform how they approach the teaching of Hebrew language and Israeli culture. Opinions about Israel’s geography and history are closely related to teachers’ own political views and identities. Geography of Israel is not neutral because of the debates about the borders between Israel and the West Bank Palestinian territories. Teaching the history of Israel brings about opportunities to teach it using different points of view that are closely related to teachers’ own storylines (Davies, 2003). Teachers’ identities in these language classes relate to nationalism (Byram & Risager, 1999; Hornberger, 2002; Kramersch, 1995; Kramersch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 1996; Kubota, 2002; Shabad &

Gunther, 1982). Sense of nationalism is apparent in the Ulpan (Hebrew immersion class) in Golden's study (2001). This Hebrew immersion class is offered in Israel and has the identity issues similar to the issues in Avni (2011), demonstrating links between nationalism and nurturing of national language. Although heritage language teachers teach a foreign language, their context is different from other foreign language teachers as it contains various aspects of community identity.

**Theorizing foreign (heritage) language teachers' community identity.** In order to study the concept of *heritage* language teachers' *identity* and *context*, I examine Benedict Anderson's concept of *imagined communities* (IC) (Anderson, 2006) as it pertains to the way Hebrew teachers foster Jewish identities in the classroom. In line with Anderson, who suggests that *imagined communities* are dissimilar from real communities because they are not built on daily contact between their members (Anderson, 2006), I suggest that the teachers discussed in this dissertation are members in several communities, some of which are *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006). Teachers have common beliefs and these beliefs are manifested in their classroom practices. These US teachers may never communicate with one another, yet they belong to a community with similar goals and beliefs, the community of US Hebrew teachers. They celebrate shared festivals, hold shared symbols and are loyal to a community that can be considered, in Anderson's words an imagined community (Anderson, 2006; Safran, 2008). These teachers share a language, myths of origin and common history, strong connections to a piece of territory which is the homeland, and a shared knowledge and taste for particular forms and styles in the arts, food and dress that are believed to be important components

for the existence of this cultural community (Regev, 2000). This does not mean that the existence of this community is a phantom of one's imagination; rather, the individuals perceive others (the vast majority of whom they will never meet) as their *brethren* (Yadgar, 2003). For example, Hebrew teachers see *community* as a value (Hoggett, 1997). As such, this value may well be used to bring together a number of factors, such as solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust. By teaching their students Hebrew as heritage language, a language that connects them all to the origins of Judaism, teachers enhance students' mutual commitment to one another, and to the Jewish community at large.

Besides teaching Hebrew as a mutual language to Jewish community members, Hebrew teachers engage in teaching the history of the Jewish people, passing images of Judaism the way they perceive it to their students, and connecting past events to students' future trajectories, "suggesting a strong affinity with religious imagining" (Anderson, 2006, p. 10). These identities give meaning to events and offer a context in which to decide what things actually become significant learning. This imagined Jewish community, from this perspective, is a field of possible trajectories. Thus, this community encourages creation of an identity that encompasses possible pasts and futures, which are available for participants to engage with. As members in a community with mutual origins, teachers engage in making these origins known to their students, and at the same time, create expectations for continuity, namely, for students' sustained membership in the Jewish community. Current activities that promote membership Jewish community members at large include attending community lectures or engaging in charitable acts to

support one another.

Teachers in Hebrew school foster modes of belonging, in which “Jews, the seed of Abraham, [are] forever Jews, no matter what passports they carry and what languages they speak” (Anderson, 2006, p. 153). In a process of identity formation, Hebrew teachers create images of the world they want their students to feel they belong to, and develop an association to somethings or someones in this imaginary community. Hebrew school teachers teach the mutual history of the Jewish people and Hebrew as the mutual language of the Jewish people in the past and in present days. They also teach about Israel, a place which is the center of Judaism in the past and present, a place where Jews form a majority, and the only place in which Hebrew is spoken as a native language. Students study modern Israeli culture and are made aware of current events taking place in Israel. Teachers create connections between students’ current lives in Minnesota and the lives of young Israelis, thus enhancing students’ imagination. These national and religious alliances are with imagined social communities in which members might never see one another but feel solidarity among those they imagine to hold similar principles and characteristics (Feuer, 2007). These processes of identity investment can lead to discussions in which identities are negotiated. These negotiations can pertain to current events in Israel, a conflict-driven country in the Middle East, or to other perspectives pertaining to students’ religious views or their affiliation with local Jewish organizations.

In a process of fostering students’ Jewish identities, Hebrew teachers negotiate their own identities as well. In line with Wenger’s concept of *participation* (1998), Hebrew teachers’ perceive their lived experience as a building block for forming identity of

participation in the community of Hebrew speakers and in the Israeli community at large. Teachers show various degrees of participation that are connected to their experiences as Hebrew learners. Unlike Wenger's *communities of practice* (1998), which involves real communities where people interact in person, the teachers in this dissertation help students form *imaginary communities* (Anderson, 2006) with the Jewish people and Israel that are based on images created or passed on by the teachers.

The defining of a boundary places some people within, and some outside the line. The definition of *community* can, thus, become an exclusionary act. The benefits of belonging to a specific group are denied to non-members (Blakely & Snyder, 1997). When people are asked about what *community* means to them, it is such networks that are most commonly cited. "For most of us, our deepest sense of belonging is to our most intimate social networks, especially family and friends. Beyond that perimeter lie work, church, neighborhood, civic life, and [an] assortment of other ties" (Putnam, 2001, p. 274). Such informal relationships also enable community members to steer their ways around the demands and contingencies of everyday living. Heritage language teachers face a multitude of decisions that are connected to the identity of the community to that they (students and teachers) belong. These decisions are a part of teachers' context and are thus essential to shaping teachers' *identity*.

The geographic center of the teacher's context in Avni's study (2011), as well as in Golden's study (2001), is in Israel; therefore their teachers' *identity* is centered on the state of Israel. Cohen (1985) argues that boundaries may be marked on a map (as administrative areas), or in law, or by physical features like a river or road. The State of

Israel has official boundaries that were decided upon by law (UN resolution, 1948).

These boundaries have some physical boundaries that are the Jordan River on the east and the Mediterranean on the west. Yet some boundaries may be religious or linguistic (Cohen, 1985), like the border of Biblical land of Israel, that are not so obvious: “They may be thought of, rather, as existing in the minds of the beholders”(Cohen,1985, p. 12) thus being imaginary.

To summarize, teaching students their heritage language and culture requires teachers to teach about past communities history, inserting meanings and artifacts that would make this history accessible for students, providing emotional legitimacy to seemingly controversial events. In the process of Jewish identity formation, teachers create opportunities for students to align with others in the imagined Jewish community at large and to identify with people and with ideas that pertain to students’ identity. A process of Identification leaves room for negotiability, which makes the process of identities negotiation more complex, and involves the process of identities’ renegotiation among students, as well as teachers. The specifics of teaching Hebrew as a heritage language relate to teachers’ identities as detailed above, and to teachers’ Hebrew language ideologies.

### **Language Ideology**

**Defining language ideologies.** In his book length study, Silverstein (1985) posits that language is a “focal point” of social concern (p. 514) and identifies three perspectives of language ideology: the *structural*, the *pragmatic* and the *ideological* (p. 514). The *structural* perspective defines the norm of categories of linguistic form as they

interact in a system or grammar, connecting these categories to Saussure's concepts of *langue* and *parole*. An example of this perspective would be the English grammatical categories such as *singular* vs. *plural* signifying representational value of linguistic communication. The second *pragmatics* perspective (Silverstein, 1985, p. 514) looks at how "appropriate" linguistic forms occur. Such study looks at language as discourse, rather than as an abstract propositional structure and includes principles of cohesion, including "speech acts" that are explained as "doing something with words" (p. 515), such as promising, insulting, etc. *Pragmatics* looks at social identity markers of participants in the communication act (p. 515). The third *ideological* perspective is about understanding *pragmatics* and *structure* as rationalization in the paradigm of interested human social action. This perspective pertains to reflexivities of the actors, thus presenting notions of inequality. Following Silverstein (1985), who uses the terms *language ideology* and *linguistic ideology* interchangeably, studies from mid-seventies and particularly since the mid-eighties discuss various terms that relate to *language ideology*, such as *grammatical ideology* (Hill, 1985) *linguistic standardization* (Milroy, 1999, 2001; Milroy & Milroy, 1999) and *ideology/ies of language* (Haviland, 2003; Joseph & Taylor, 1990).

*Language ideologies* can associate language with people, essentializing associations between national or regional groups and linguistic practices and analyzing collective linguistic performance. Blackledge and Pavlenko suggest that "If you are a speaker of language X, you must be an X sort of person" (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 246), creating an obvious link between the language one speaks and the attributes of

this person. Spolsky (2009) mentions a study that looks at immigrant parents who are sometimes disappointed when their children do not know some words in their heritage language. These parents do not recognize that they themselves tend to replace these words with borrowed words from their new language. This is an example for what Silverstein (1985) would name *structural* perspective.

Current debates around language ideology have four fundamental features (Woolard, 1992). The first relates ideology to consciousness, beliefs and notions (Friedrich, 1989; Woolard, 1992), such as notions that members of certain societies have about honor (Woolard, 1992). A second feature in language ideology debates perceives ideological notions to be responsive to the interests of particular social groups (Woolard, 1992). A third feature of ideology entails the notion of “distortion and falsity” (Woolard, 1992, p. 238), and the fourth feature connects language ideology to legitimating social power (Thompson, 1984; Woolard, 1992). In comparison with Silverstein’s definitions (1985), current definitions of language ideology tend to lean towards the social aspect more than they do towards the structural (more neutral) aspect. *Linguistic ideologies* have impact on our perspectives of what is normal; they outline a collection of *common sense* beliefs about language and language use (McGroarty, 2010). As these beliefs hold sway, they become more powerful and taken for granted, regardless of their precision or connection to current realities, creating a *hegemonic pattern* (p. 5), in that the ideological claims become regular ways of thinking and behaving.

Drawing on a study by Woolard and Schieffelin (1994), McGroarty posits that *language ideologies* justify academic examination because they, at the same time,

replicate and form “links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology” (2010, p. 5). Language awareness is formed, uttered and consolidated in a variety of settings, not all of the settings are equally accessible to all members of any group (Kroskrity, 2004) which bring about issues of social justice. These questions of social justice are about “relationship between language and power, language and identity, language and different access to social goods” (Janks, 2010, p. 40). These questions promote social justice and challenge existing power structures by raising our awareness of language as representation of power (Blommaert, 1999; Shohamy, 2006; Silverstein, 1998; Spolsky, 2004, 2009). Connections between *language ideology* and identity have been recognized as essential in coming to terms with ethnic relations and nationalism (Fishman, 1989; Woolard, 1992), but the concerns of these ethnic national views are usually less about linguistic forms (Woolard, 1992). This connection between language and identity has been recognized in studies about language communities:

“Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world” (Norton, 2010, p. 350). We rearrange that connection across time and space. Many of our characteristics are affected by the negotiation of identity (Norton, 2010). This negotiation of identities can include “religious sermons and related speeches and discursive forms”(Silverstein, 1998, p. 410) that create or enhance cultural allegiances. These allegiances can be inclusive, but at the same time can exclude those who do not fit the norm.

Fitting the community norm means fitting the community standards. *Language Ideologies* can be connected to ideologies of standardization (Lippi-Green, 1994, 1997;

Milroy, 1999, 2001; Milroy & Milroy, 1999; Woolard, 1992) “ Indeed, the standard/non-standard dichotomy is itself driven by an ideology-it depends on prior acceptance of the ideology of standardization and on the centrality of the standard variety” (Milroy, 2001, p. 534). Dialects cannot be marked non-standard unless a standard variety is first acknowledged as definitive and central (Milroy, 2001). In this manner, dialect becomes “satellites that have orbits at various distances around a central body—the standard” (Milroy, 2001, p. 534). Standardization, as such, affects many areas and is bound to lead towards biases that pertain to privilege and prestige. People who speak the standard language might be perceived as more prestigious than those who speak the non-standard dialect. Language ideology is therefore a concept that can bring people together when people share similar identities, pragmatics, beliefs, and standards. Ideology is likely to refer to a larger system of beliefs, standards, or principles (King, 2000), and language ideology is a combined system of beliefs concerning a language (King, 2000).

In summary, the studies about language ideology conceptualize various perspectives of language ideologies such as distortion, inequality, difference in access to settings among various members of a group or a representation of power. Some perspectives of language ideology are useful for framing my study, such as the connection between language ideology to ethnic national views and to identity (e.g., Fishman, 1989; Norton, 2010; Woolard, 1992), and language ideologies which relate to religious sermons which create cultural allegiances (Silverstein, 1998). These perspectives are understudied and could benefit from my study by addressing the connection between religious identities and language ideologies.

**Language ideology in classroom context.** A large body of work examines *language ideology* in classroom contexts (e.g., Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Duff, 2010; Fishman, 2001; Hornberger, 1988, 2010; Janks, 2010; Kubota, 1998; Lantolf, 2000; Lippi-Green, 1997; Norton, 2000). As Hornberger (2010) posits, “All teachers are language planners in the classroom and the decisions and actions educators take around language have profound implications for learners’ future “ (p. 552). I suggest that the classroom is a space in that *language ideologies* surface. This is where teachers’ beliefs are manifested. For example, teachers choose to teach certain material based on their beliefs about their role as Hebrew language teachers. Language ideology is a combined system of beliefs concerning a language (King, 2000), and the classroom is a space where these language ideologies surface. In order to study how *language ideology* is researched, identified and analyzed in classroom discourse, I will examine key studies about various aspects of *language ideology* in various classrooms, illustrating my discussion with examples from several language classes (Avni, 2011; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Ducar, 2008; Feuer, 2007, Golden, 2001; Mertz, 1998).

Research on *language ideology* in a classroom setting mostly tends to use qualitative, interpretive approaches (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014). There are numerous theoretical perspectives that undergird studies about *language ideology* in classroom settings. Feuer (2007), for example, uses multiple theories, such as identity theory (Norton, 1997), which defines identity as “the way in that people understand their relationship with the world and how this relationship affects their possibilities in the future” (Feuer, 2007, p. 10). Emotion about Hebrew is entwined with

beliefs about how Jewish identity is expressed and executed (Avni, 2011). Studying language attitudes, Ducar (2008) posits that attitude not only affects language acquisition, but may also result in linguistic prejudices and social discrimination (Baker, 1992; Cho, 2000; King, 2000; Lippi-Green, 1997). Mertz (1998) draws on several studies (e.g. Hill, 1985; Woolard, 1985) that suggest ways in that *linguistic ideology* is a crucial part of the social grounding of language use. Guided by the *language socialization* research paradigm (Duff, 2010; Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), Feuer (2007) describes how students enrolled in the Hebrew class become socialized into particular identities (Duff, 2010). This connection to Hebrew is based on bonding between group members who view themselves as Jews. The students have a vital personal connection with the language and represent their communities' investment in maintaining the language for future generations (Fishman, 2001)

*Language ideology* can be related to power dynamics in the classroom (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Janks, 2010). Such power was apparent in Golden's (2001) Hebrew immersion class (*Ulpan* in Hebrew). While celebrating difference of opinions in her class, Adina (the teacher) "was teaching them what could or should not be said...although apparent was the newcomers' consistent refusal to comply with Adina's attempts to curtail talk" (Golden, 2001, p. 62). Demonstrating some notions of power, a Hebrew student in Avni's (2011) study expressed discontent about using Hebrew for prayer, resisting the community and institution's expectation that prayers would be held in Hebrew (Avni, 2011). Avni analyzed this student's discourse, in that he felt uncomfortable to say that he had actually looked at the English translation of the prayer

book, not at the Hebrew. Exploring notions of power, Ducar (2008) studied *language ideologies* in a Spanish heritage language program at the University of Arizona. Offering surveys to the students, Ducar (2008) aimed at uncovering notions of power by asking if “students feel that their language is respected in the classroom in spite of correction and feedback from the teacher” (p. 418). Ducar (2008) suggests that successful language learners are those who have mastered the standard language privileging speakers of standard languages over those who do not master it (e.g. Lippi-Green, 1994, 1997; Milroy, 1999, 2001; Milroy & Milroy, 1999).

Linguistic ideology can distort or misrepresent and yet shape and reflect linguistic practice (Mertz, 1998). Mertz’s study examines the language of US law school classrooms, where “socially powerful role of linguistic ideology intersects with and regiments linguistic practice” (Mertz, 1998, p. 325). Using “Socratic method” in that the professor addresses a series of questions to a single student in that it is frequently expressed that there is “no right answers,” it is clear that there are wrong answers. Drawing on Woolard (1985), who posit that linguistic ideology is vital to social grounding of language use and structure, Mertz (1998) asserts that linguistic ideology is not merely “a false frame that distorts our vision of reality, but rather it is part and parcel of the linguistic structure and praxis that we study” (p. 325). A linguistic ideology can be overt when speakers discuss aspects of language use, or it could be more subtle by having a set of meta-linguistic structural features (Silverstein, 1985)

Studies like those of Avni (2011), Feuer (2007), Blackledge and Creese (2010), Ducar (2008), Mertz (1998) and Golden (2001) help us understand the complexity of

*language ideology*. The same people can hold contradicting views about their language and their identity as learners of that language (Avni, 2011; Feuer, 2007). *Language ideology* is therefore identified and analyzed by exploring the choices made by the speakers based on models accepted by the language speech community (Spolsky, 2009), exposing the official and unofficial conventions and codes that relate to language choice (McGroarty, 2010) and the inequality that is related to the lack of these standards (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Ducar, 2008; Lippi-Green, 1994). *Language ideology* is analyzed by dividing data to descriptive topics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001), or categories (Maxwell, 2005) that provide insight to what is going on in the study (Avni, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Feuer, 2007 ; Golden, 2001, Mertz, 1998). Power is apparent in different contexts (Janks, 2010). In order to identify and analyze *language ideology* in classroom context, it is essential to explore the relationship between language and power (Avni, 2011; Golden, 2001), the relationship between language and identity (Feuer, 2007) linguistic ideology and praxis (Mertz, 1998), or the need for standardization (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Ducar, 2008).

**Language ideology as it relates to Hebrew outside of Israel.** Researchers study the association of HLI with Judaism as its main overarching theme (e.g., Avni, 2011; Bekerman,1999). Hebrew is perceived as the “linguistic glue that has sustained Jewish life across the millennia” (Avni, 2011, p. 54). Other perspectives derive from this main theme of the connection between Hebrew and Judaism, such as Hebrew language revitalization (Fishman, 2001; Spolsky,1991, 2009), or Hebrew as a vehicle for

enhancing ethnic identity to refer to a sense of group belonging based on ancestral group (Beilin, 2000; Feuer, 2007; Rotenstreich, 1993).

The first perspective of HLI outside of Israel is often related to religious ideology (Avni, 2011). In many Jewish communities worldwide, children learn to read Biblical and prayer book Hebrew in an attempt to be a part of the local and global Jewish community (Avni, 2011). Jewish students learn Biblical Hebrew reading and writing in private schools in order to become fluent readers of Hebrew. Similar to other heritage language learners, Jewish students learn about their own common origins. In many Jewish communities, this religious heritage education is supplemented by learning about cultural life in Israel, the only place where Hebrew is the native language. This linguistic ideology that connects between Jewish communities worldwide manifests itself first by maintaining Biblical Hebrew for prayers, blessings and literacy purposes (Avni, 2011; Spolsky, 1997), allowing Jewish cultural and religious practices to be carried out across time and space (Avni, 2011). Hebrew is not a singular, monolithic code; rather, it is an umbrella term that includes Biblical, Mishnaic, Medieval and Modern—each connected to a different historical era and each contributing to a collective *language ideology* (Avni, 2011; Mintz, 1993). Along the same line, Judaism as a religious ideology is not a monolithic code either. While American Judaism has a number of branches pertaining to various levels of religiosity and observance, Israeli Jewishness is largely defined as Orthodox or Secular, but defining it based on parameters of adherence to religious observances is complex (Liebman & Yadgar, 2009; Nadler, 2009; Sarna, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Although this discussion of Hebrew language ideology pertains to settings that are outside of Israel, this study looks at the three teacher participants' religiosity through lenses of Israeli secularism.

Discussing ideologies of secular Judaism, research defines between various types of secular Jews, such as persons who are ideologically secular for whom their secularism is a matter of principle, and those whose secularism is a kind of default position (Liebman & Yadgar, 2009). Jewish secularism provided the ideological justification for an emphasis on “Jewishness” rather than “Judaism,” opposing religious coercion and insisting that both religion and anti-religion were “private affairs” (Sarna, 2004).

The second perspective of research on HLI relates to Hebrew revitalization. Just before and during World War I, Hebrew was seen as an effective vehicle for the revival of the Jewish people (Mintz, 1993). Nationalistic Jews in Europe and the US read Hebrew literature and were fascinated by a vision of revitalized Hebrew culture. Indeed, Jewish *culture* as well as Jewish *heritage* were foundational in the Jewish schools that flourished in the US, especially in New York City after World War One (Mintz, 1993). The ideology of the Zionism accounted for the switch from Yiddish to the vernacularized Hebrew that they chose as a new language of identity (Fishman, 2001; Spolsky, 2009). Traditionally, the Jewish People learned Biblical Hebrew as a tool for reading the Bible and for praying, and Yiddish was used for every day local communications among community members. As a part of Hebrew revitalization, Modern Hebrew became the local language of communication among various parts of the Jewish communities worldwide.

The third perspective that relates to HLI outside of Israel is the explicit use of language to connect to Israel. HLI serves as a tool for strengthening ethnic identity by referring to a sense of group belonging based on ancestral group (Beilin, 2000; Feuer,

2007; Rotenstreich, 1993). Since Israel is still a central focus in Jewish life, the identity and identification with the Jews of Israel are important (Beilin, 2000; Rotenstreich, 1993). The dialogue between Jews who insist that they are at home wherever they live and Jews who assert that Jews can only truly be at home in the land of Israel goes back to the time of the Babylonian exile (Auerbach, 2001). One of the more thriving achievements of Hebraic Zionist power was the founding of Hebrew camps (Schiff, 2002). In some of these camps the campers learn Modern Hebrew from camp counselors who are carefully selected Israelis who were brought to the US to work with Jewish youth. This idea of Israelis teaching Hebrew and Israeli culture in Jewish camps worldwide is an example for the way HLI manifests itself outside of Israel.

Feelings towards a language can be viewed as implicitly expressing the way people feel about the society in that the language is used: “To love one’s language means to love one’s tribe, people, or nation” (Hoffman, 2006, p. 60). This form of *language ideology* is common among various Jewish youth campers worldwide. Teaching Hebrew as a *heritage language* is signified by using sets of ethics and meanings, together with feeling, memory and common knowledge (Smith, 2006). Teaching the history of a minority group evokes interest among its members who had a particular interest in their own history (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Many Jewish families worldwide opt to enroll their children in private Jewish day schools that offer a variety of Jewish education. Teaching and learning Hebrew language in Hebrew schools worldwide acts as “sites at that *heritage* values may be transmitted, accepted, contested, subverted, appropriated and otherwise negotiated” (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 166). Jewish students worldwide

have to know about their own roots, and, in order to know that, they need to know Hebrew.

Others, however, are in the opinion that while the theories place language at the center of identity development, Jewish educational programs in recent years tend to minimize language and emphasize culture (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). Yet there is little research that examines the significance of Hebrew in transmitting Jewish identity across communities or how knowledge of Hebrew or the re-emphasis of that knowledge affect Jewish identity formation (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). Hebrew, according to Shohamy, has not become the Jewish *lingua franca*. Thus, Hebrew in the diaspora did not become the language of communication, but just a symbol, among many, of Jewish identity (1999). Israeli and American Jews may have approximately the same Jewish symbols, but American Jews have some symbols that Israelis do not. The opposite is less true: almost everything that Israelis do tends to be understood in both societies as having significances for Judaism, and much of what they do and believe is perceived both by themselves and by Jews in the diaspora as resulting from an authentic Judaism, past and present (Liebman & Cohen, 1985). In contrast, other studies discuss changes of American Jews perceptions of modern Israel. One change is the loss of the factor that has served to fuel attachment to Israel; the once-threatened Jewish state no longer appears to require the financial and political aid it once did. Israel's army is strong; the economy is thriving, and the long-lasting Arab-Israeli conflicts make it harder for liberal American Jews to relate to Israel (Cohen & Eisen, 2000). The connections between American Jews and

Israel are, as shown above, multifaceted, and we need to study this aspect further because it is more complicated than mere symbolism.

To sum up, in this review of literature, I present an overview of studies that together help me frame my study epistemologically and theoretically and help me address my three research questions that pertain to teachers' beliefs and practices and identity building, as well as underlying Hebrew language ideologies that relate to Jewish identities. Discussing foreign language teachers' identity issues, I focus on heritage language classes, examining the way teachers foster students' identities by using their own lived experience as resource. Using the concept of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006) enables me to understand teachers' sense of belonging to the Jewish community at large and their efforts to create or pass on an image of this imaginary community attempting to continue students' membership in this imaginary Jewish community. Studies about language ideology, specifically about HLI add another perspective to this complex idea of identity formation by introducing the reader to the complexities of Hebrew language ideologies intertwined with various Jewish identities, arguing that Hebrew cannot be taught when separated from Judaism, but that including Judaism in Hebrew language teaching is a multilayered experience, taking into account teachers' non-orthodox, Jewish identities.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study as its methodology. I chose a qualitative approach over quantitative measures because this was a better way to address my research questions, as underlying ideologies can be better uncovered qualitatively than quantitatively. In line with Patton (2002), the differences between quantitative and qualitative methods “involve trade-offs between breadth and depth” (p. 227). I selected qualitative methods to inquire about language ideologies in great depth with careful attention to detail, context and nuance (Patton, 2002), because I am studying how teachers’ identities are negotiated, and this is not data that can be counted. To get a detailed rich picture of these practices and ideologies I intentionally use a small number of participants but I examined their practice in great detail. This chapter starts with a description of the research design, including the definition, purpose and characteristics of qualitative multiple case studies. This chapter includes an explanation about the sample selection, the setting and the participants. It elaborates on the various forms of data collection, including interviews, informal talks, class observation and document collection, followed by a description of data analysis.

#### Research Design

**Definition of case study.** A case-study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Yin, 2014). The process of conducting a case study brings together both the unit study and the product of this type of research (Yin, 2009). For example, a case study by Sparks and Ganschow (1993) illustrates the Linguistic Coding Deficit

Hypothesis (LCDH) by describing five learner “prototypes” that have somewhat dissimilar foreign language processing differences, each showing a different language profile. Another example is a case study in the field of Foreign Language teaching (Ryan, 1998), which reports on a study carried out in Mexico with two bilingual teachers, a native speaker of English and a native speaker of Spanish, exploring teachers’ beliefs about the dimension of culture in their teaching and the relationship of these beliefs to teacher instruction. A single case study is expected to catch the complication of a single case (Stake, 1995). While the definition of case study is fuzzy, most studies emphasize that case study involves a single entity, a unit around that there are boundaries (Merriam, 2009). The case could be, among other things, a community, a program or an institution that is a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In my study, I define the Hebrew schools in the US as my bounded case study, and the three teachers participating in my study as the “units of analysis” (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009), in that each single teacher is a separate unit. This qualitative approach enables me to uncover the teachers’ underlying language ideologies more effectively than a quantitative approach would as it would be difficult to count anything pertaining to language ideologies in teachers’ discourse or by observing their classes. In addition, case study research methodology helped me get close to my participants by enabling me to observe them in their natural setting, with their students (Merriam, 1998), allowing me to engage in fieldwork thus providing me with rich data. Experiments and surveys that are quantitative in nature are less likely to provide the data I need for exploring teachers’ beliefs and practices and revealing their underlying language ideologies, similar to Iddings (2005), for example, who conducted an

investigation to explore the ways in which English language learners (ELL's) gained access to classroom activities using lens of imagined community and employing qualitative methodologies.

### **Context**

*Setting and Schools.* Many Jewish parents enroll their children in Hebrew schools in Minnesota, expecting that the children will learn both the Hebrew language and Jewish practices. These private schools offer curriculum that is similar to that of public schools, but they teach Jewish practices and Hebrew in addition to their regular curriculum. Many students leave these schools after their Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13, but some students, roughly 100-200, enroll in both Hebrew schools in Minnesota that are supplementary schools who meet twice a week on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings (West Hebrew School), or on Monday and Wednesday evenings (East Hebrew School). Students continue to attend these schools until they graduate from high school. The classes I observed have high school students, males and females, between the ages 15-18. The teachers in these schools are either native speakers of Hebrew or American born teachers who spent time in Israel and who demonstrated near-native fluency in Hebrew.<sup>2</sup> All of them have bachelor degrees; some have graduate degrees as well.

My class observations took place in two schools, East Hebrew School and West Hebrew School.<sup>3</sup> East Hebrew School is an old building in the middle of a large metropolitan area. The building houses a few day school classes that meet every day of

---

<sup>2</sup> If the teachers teach a university curriculum they demonstrate their Hebrew knowledge in an interview with me as a representative from the university who oversees that program. If they teach other Hebrew classes which are not connected to the university, they demonstrate their knowledge of Hebrew in interviews with the school administration.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms

the week during the day, as well as evening supplementary classes that meet twice a week. The door is always locked but the students can buzz and then they are let in when the person in the office sees their faces in the system. The office administrators seem to know the students by name as well as by face; after all, most of the students have been enrolled in this school for many years. The walls in the hallway are covered by many of students' drawings, some made by younger students who attend this school building in the morning hours. All drawings and pictures have Jewish themes. There are many pictures of modern Israel as well as phrases taken from the Hebrew Bible or the Jewish prayer book. When I step in on Mondays I can always smell that something is cooking in the oven. During break students can go to the kitchen and help themselves to a treat or to a cooked dish. The long hallway that leads to class has long tables and chairs where students sit and chat or prepare for the next class. Teachers in the hallway greet me in a very friendly manner whenever I come to observe classes.<sup>4</sup>

West Hebrew School is a new building located in a west suburb of a large metropolitan area. This building is a home for various Jewish organizations, including a fitness center, a community center and a Jewish Day School. When I come in on Wednesday evenings I present my ID to a person at the entrance and then I walk down or up the stairs to the classes I observe. The hallways of this school are lively with students, staff, and teachers always there. On the walls there are photos of former presidents of this school as well as various drawings made by younger students. I usually start my

---

<sup>4</sup> I observed one teacher from this school, see chapter 4.

observation in the upper level starting at 6pm every Wednesday, and then I go to another class downstairs from 7pm until 8pm.<sup>5</sup>

*Sampling.* I conducted a qualitative pilot study in two Twin Cities Hebrew schools three years ago. These two schools teach College In the Schools (CIS) courses that I oversee as a state role. When I discussed the possibility of conducting my bigger study in these schools-- a study that will involve extensive class observation, recording, document collection, and interviews-- I sensed that only four teachers felt comfortable to have me in their classes for a lengthy duration of time, while the others were somewhat reluctant to allow me to observe their classes for an extended amount of time. As the CIS coordinator I observe all CIS teachers, but I felt that numerous visits in their classes would not be welcome. I opted, then, to choose the four teachers who were enthusiastic to help me with my study. Before I started to collect data, one of the teachers resigned, so I was left with a sample of only three teachers. It became clear to me, however, that even these three teachers would not feel comfortable to have me video-tape classes, fearing of how the parents of their students might react. I, therefore, opted to audio-tape classes. Using a maximum variation purposeful sampling strategy allows me to select information-rich cases for study in depth, those from that one can learn a great deal about questions of great significance to the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). This strategy permitted case selection prior to data collection and analysis based on pre specified criterion. In this purposeful sampling (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2011). These participants are central to the key concept being explored in this study, HLI.

---

<sup>5</sup> I observed two teachers from this school, see chapters 5 and 6.

**Participants.** The three teachers who were willing to work with me in the past were also willing to be my participants for the dissertation study. I have known these participants for many years and I assume that they were willing to participate in my study in order to help me and because they were interested in the outcome of this study. These three teachers are diverse individuals who hold different perspectives on teaching Hebrew. They represent maximized differences in gender, level of schooling, religious background, and personal histories (see figure 1 below)

Figure 1: Participants' histories

Participant	Gender	Level of Schooling	Type of Schooling/degree	Religious Background	Personal Histories
Rabbi Cohen <sup>6</sup>	M	MA	Rabbinical	Conservative	American Born
Dr. Levin <sup>7</sup>	M	PhD	Hebrew Bible	Secular <sup>8</sup>	Israeli Born with American citizenship
Ms. Abramson <sup>9</sup>	F	BA	Nutrition and Hebrew	Conservative	American Born

*Rabbi Cohen (East Hebrew School)*

Rabbi Cohen is a male Hebrew instructor in his late sixties at East Hebrew School. Rabbi Cohen has a loud voice, a white beard and a grandfatherly personality. He has been teaching at East Hebrew School for many years, some of them as this school's director.

---

<sup>6</sup> Although students address him by his first name, I decided to mention his title (pseudonym) throughout this study out of respect.

<sup>7</sup> This is also the way students address him.

<sup>8</sup> In Israel there is a clear distinction between religious and non-religious or secular Jews. Because of the small number of people who have other religious affiliation categories in Israel, secular Israelis are perceived by Israelis as people who are not orthodox. In the US, however there are other categories (e.g. conservative, reform) which are determined by synagogue affiliation. Many Israelis who live in the US choose not join any synagogue, which makes it hard to determine their religious affiliation.

<sup>9</sup> Although students address her by her first name, I decided to use a last name (pseudonym) throughout this study out of respect.

In addition, Rabbi Cohen taught at other Hebrew schools and universities in the area, and also served as a rabbi at Hillel at times. Rabbi Cohen earned a BA at a large University in the Midwest, earned a rabbinical degree and was a doctoral student in Pedagogy but did not complete his studies towards the doctoral degree. Rabbi Cohen learned basic Hebrew as a child and improved his Hebrew skills once enrolled at a University. For many years Rabbi Cohen has traveled to Israel in the summers to participate in various programs to enrich his Jewish experience and spend time in Israel speaking Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen's class is a large room at the end of the hallway. The class has several large tables with chairs around them. The walls are covered by book shelves with many books about Hebrew and Judaism. There are some posters on the walls with some quotes from the Hebrew Bible or the Jewish prayer book. Rabbi Cohen teaches many classes, that all meet in this room. Rabbi Cohen's desk has a computer and a very large screen. Rabbi Cohen sits by his desk during break, during class he sits at the table together with his students, (about 12 of them). There is a whiteboard in class, but no one seems to use it during class. If students ask about a word, Rabbi Cohen would write it on his iPad, and this word would appear on the large screen on his desk for all the students to view.

*Dr. Levin (West Hebrew School)*

Dr. Levin is a male Hebrew teacher in his mid-sixties. Dr. Levin is a native Israeli who came to the US over twenty years ago and joined West Hebrew School after spending some years in Germany as a School Head. While teaching in Germany, he also taught at the University as well as in many other venues in the community. Dr. Levin has undergraduate degrees in many fields, as well as a doctoral degree in Hebrew Bible. Dr.

Levin taught in universities in Israel and is considered an authority in Hebrew grammar among Hebrew teachers locally and internationally. In his school he is known for the multiple colorful grammar charts he produces, and many teachers are happy to use these charts with his support. Lately Dr. Levin spent much time on acquiring new skills in technology, and he has been happy to share his innovations with Hebrew teachers. Dr. Levin's class is located on the lower level of West Hebrew School. A large room with chairs and desks and many grammar charts on the walls. On one side of the room there is a Smart Board that Dr. Levin uses from time to time for his teaching. For example, he uses Smart Board when he wants the students to watch YouTube clips that pertain to the material he is teaching, such as songs of an important Israeli singer who passed away recently. At other times, I was a substitute teacher in Dr. Levin's class and observed his students using Smart Board to access material from Dr. Levin's web site to prepare for an exam. The class I observed every met every Wednesday from 7pm-8pm. This was a very small class, 2-3 students. They all sit together and go through material given to them during class time or brought from home. Dr. Levin sits with the students and they all discuss the articles. This class has a whiteboard, but I have not seen anyone using it. When students inquire about a Hebrew word Dr. Levin explains it in Hebrew and will resort to English only if the students don't understand what he said in Hebrew.<sup>10</sup>

*Ms. Abramson (West Hebrew School)*

Ms. Abramson is a female Hebrew teacher; I assume she is in her mid-fifties. Ms. Abramson has an undergraduate degree in nutrition, and a decade ago she pursued another undergraduate degree, this one in Hebrew from a local university. Ms. Abramson

---

<sup>10</sup> More about observations and classroom material below

has been teaching Hebrew in a Jewish day School located in that same building, but a few years ago, she opted to teach at West Hebrew School that has classes just twice a week, on Sunday morning and on Wednesday evening. Ms. Abramson goes to Israel very often and has strong connections with various Israeli families. In these visits she travels a lot to visit tourist sights, but she also visits people and is immersed in Hebrew and Israeli culture while being there. Ms. Abramson is knowledgeable about Israeli current music and is happy to share it with her students.

Ms. Abramson's classroom is located on the third floor. It is a large room with several tables put together, and the students (about 12 of them) sit around this table. Ms. Abramson does not sit. She is extremely active and moves about during class monitoring her students' various activities. She, too, has a Smart Board in class that is used extensively throughout class time. When students enter class, there is always a quiet, relaxing Israeli music clip from YouTube. The students bring a sandwich and they eat it silently while listening to the music. Slowly, with a quiet voice, Ms. Abramson eases the students into classroom activities. Ms. Abramson uses Smart Board to write Hebrew on the board or to show the students' photos pertaining to her lesson plan in order to start Hebrew conversation.<sup>11</sup> Ms. Abramson is involved in an organization that advocates for Israel. She writes articles about her perspective of current events in Israel. Once in a while she sends these articles to me, and I have the opportunity to read them. She also teaches a class about Israel, but this class is taught in English and I did not have the chance to observe it.

---

<sup>11</sup> More about Cindy's teaching practices below.

*Classroom Materials and Level of Teaching.* In order to understand the teachers' context, it is important to know more about the level of Hebrew they are teaching and the type of material they are using for their teaching.

All three teachers teach College In the Schools (CIS) classes, and I am the CIS faculty coordinator. Rabbi Cohen and Dr. Levin teach advanced level fifth semester Hebrew classes (Dr. Levin teaches intermediate level class as well, but most of my observations took place in the advanced level class). Unlike beginning and intermediate level classes that use certain books as a part of a uniformed curriculum dictated by the university, the material for advanced level classes is open to teachers' choice. Teachers opt what texts they are using, based on their personal preference. Teachers have to maintain rigor similar to classes at that level at the university. I suggest material I use at the university and the teachers decide if they want to use it or not. Throughout the semester, Rabbi Cohen and Dr. Levin sent me the texts they were teaching in their classes.

For example, Rabbi Cohen taught a text about a Pew survey of American Jews, taken from an Israeli daily newspaper. The text was brought in Hebrew, and Rabbi Cohen added glossary for scaffolding. At the end of the text, Rabbi Cohen asked questions to be answered at home and discussed in class.<sup>12</sup> Other texts in Rabbi Cohen's class are taken from Israeli literature (short stories and poems). Rabbi Cohen also taught some songs. Dr. Levin taught various texts about the history of the Jews, some about groups whose history and connection to Judaism were controversial. For example, Dr. Levin taught a text about Samaritans, a group who hold a belief about being Jewish, or a text about the

---

<sup>12</sup> A more extensive discussion about the choice of text and type of questions asked in my discussion chapter.

Marranos, who were Jews who lived in the Iberian Peninsula in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and were forced to abandon Judaism. Dr. Levin also showed some current movies and brought material about it.

Ms. Abramson's class is a beginning class (second semester). Unlike Rabbi Cohen and Dr. Levin, Ms. Abramson has a textbook for this class, and the content she is teaching is supposed to align with university's content at this level. Still, Ms. Abramson has some choices to make, as to what reading sections she would like to elaborate on, or what texts she prefers to skip. She can decide what songs she would like to teach or which pictures she would use to make her teaching more authentic. In addition to the textbook, every class I observed had activities that pertained to the grammar or the content she taught in that chapter. For example, Ms. Abramson brought Israeli currency to be used in an activity, in which students were expected to practice counting, or Israeli stamps for a different activity, when students were expected to describe colors. All of the activities were student centered and had a purpose of practicing a new Hebrew construct the class has learned that week.

### **Data Collection**

The figure below explains my timeline of data collection. I sought IRB during the months of July and August 2013 and collected data from the end September 2013 until mid-January 2014. Because of Jewish holidays, Hebrew schools were not in session most of September, so I started towards the end of the month and finished in January, when students came back from winter break.

Figures 2 and 3 below present the formal interviews and observation timeline.

There were, however, many more informal observations and interviews that happened during the specified timeline below, but also before and after that specific time-frame. As an insider, I kept talking to the teachers about their positionalities before collecting data and long after data-collection officially ended. Some teachers shared some of their teaching materials with me months after data collection ended. Moreover, two teachers asked me to teach for them when they needed it, and that was an opportunity to use materials they left for me to teach as yet another data from that I could draw conclusions.

Figure 2: Data collection timeline

Months/ Activities	July and August 2013	September 2013	October 2013	November 2013	December 2013	January 2014	February- June 2014
IRB	X						
Class Observation		X	X	X	X	X	
Teacher Interviews		X	X	X	X	X	X
Document Collection		X	X	X	X	X	

I traveled to East Hebrew School every Monday afternoon to observe Rabbi Cohen's class. On Mondays he teaches for two 50-minute classes (6:40pm–7:30pm and 7:40pm–8:30pm). On Wednesdays I traveled to West Hebrew School to observe Ms. Abramson's classes from 6:10pm-7:00pm and Dr. Levin's class from 7:10pm–8:00pm, as summarized in figure 3.

Figure 3: Data sources

Data Types/Participants	Rabbi Cohen	Dr. Levin	Ms. Abramson
Participant Observation and Classroom Audio-recording	26 class sessions 9/30/13-1/13-14	13 class sessions 9/25/13-1/15/14	13 class sessions 9/25/13-1/15/14
Interviews	1 face-to-face and 1 phone interview for a total of 2 hours, and 1 email interview Many informal interviews	1 face-to-face and 1 phone interviews for a total of 2 hours, and 1 email interviews Many informal interviews	1 face-to-face and 1 phone interviews for a total of 2 hours, and 1 email interviews Many informal interviews
Documents	Class material: Three poems, two short stories with questions, two newspaper articles with questions, a list of casual discussion topics	Class material: Students' exams and essays, six articles with questions, two poems	Class material: Games, verb charts, student exams, blog

The interviews and the observations allowed me to negotiate my role as a researcher who is non-judgmental and an investigator who looks for rich data, in contrast with my role as CIS coordinator who observes Hebrew classes to oversee schools' Hebrew curriculum and supervise teachers. I had to reconcile my insider positionality as a Jewish community member and a former teacher in one of the schools I observed with my outsider positionality as someone who is no longer a teacher there and serves as a supervisor who oversees the program. In line with the positivist tradition, the outside perspective was considered ideal for its "impartial" and "precise" account of the field, while insiders who possessed deeper insights about the people, place, and events, were believed to hold a biased position that complicated their ability to observe and interpret (Chavez, 2008). Others (e.g., Banks, 1998, as cited by Chavez, 2008) argue that the outsider-insider division is a wrong dichotomy since outsiders and insiders have to cope with similar methodological issues around positionality, a researcher's sense of self, and

the situational knowledge they possess as a result of their location in the social order (Chavez, 2008). On one hand, my insider positionality gave me access to classes and material and made it easier to get the teachers to participate. On the other hand, my insider positionality might have caused me and the participants to take for granted some important topics about Jewish identity as they are “common sense” for me and for the participants.

*Seeking approval.* I obtained an IRB during July and August 2013. Initially I had four participants, but by July I found out that one of the participants would no longer teach, so I amended the IRB and resubmitted it. The IRB consent form explains the voluntary basis of the study, and offers information about me as the investigator. The participants are the three teachers mentioned above. Although I had already received the teachers’ approval for my pilot study a few years ago, I met with the teachers individually to ensure that they still agree to participate in my study. I interviewed them using the form at the end of this study (see appendix I). At this time I asked the teachers to allow me to audiotape their classes. After gaining support from the teachers in each school, I scheduled a date that will be convenient to each teacher and visit the class in order to explain the study to the students. I gave the students the assent and consent forms with my contact information in case they have questions or concerns. I explained that students, whose parents disagree to their participation in the study, will not be included and if they are captured during class audio-recording I will not use these data in my study. All students returned the consent and assent forms to their teachers, and I collected them at a later stage.

*Class observation and documents collection*<sup>13</sup>. Fieldwork is the central activity of qualitative research. “Going into the field means having direct and personal contact with people under study in their own environment” (Patton, 2002 p. 48). I collected data by observing the three teachers’ classes 4 hours a week during one semester. I collected data that pertained to classroom practices, especially the way Hebrew is taught. I wrote my field notes in Hebrew on my iPad, describing the physical environment, the objects in the room the resources and technologies in the setting (Merriam, 2009). I described who was in the scene, the interactions and the content of conversations. I also described subtle factors (Merriam, 2009) such as informal and unplanned activities, as well as my own role as an observer. I looked for instances that confirm or disconfirm what teachers shared with me in the interviews. For example, some teachers believe that Hebrew should be taught in Hebrew, but when they teach they actually switch to English, especially when they explain new grammatical issues in Hebrew.

The extent to which I was involved in the setting varied. In Rabbi Cohen’s class I was an “onlooker” (Patton, 2002, p. 265) or “an observer as participant” (Merriam, 2009, p. 124) most of the time. I was never “a complete observer” (Merriam, 2009, p. 125) because I was always a part of the group, and the setting was not in a public place. At times I had the urge to participate more, but I managed to restrain myself because I was aware of the fact that I might affect what is being observed (Merriam, 2009). Because I have close relationship with Rabbi Cohen, in some occasions he asked me some questions during my observation that made me feel like a participant. That did not happen very often. Once when he attempted to answer a question about a certain vocabulary

---

<sup>13</sup> See chart above

work he turned to me for help, knowing I am a native speaker of Hebrew. Also, when Rabbi Cohen had recently graduated students as guests from other universities, he asked me for input knowing that I teach in a university setting. Most of the time, though, I was an onlooker.

Discussing Rabbi Cohen's teaching practices, I highlight the fact that I was not present when some of this material was taught. Since I observed Rabbi Cohen's class two hours a week (Mondays 6:45pm-8:30pm), and he taught his class three weekly hours (one hour on Wednesday), I was not there to observe the entire process of teaching the material Rabbi Cohen shared with me. I assume that some of these readings were also taught as a part of Rabbi Cohen "flipped lesson," that is one of the items discussed in his narrative about technology. I observed discussions that were related to the articles that Rabbi Cohen sent to me. Not once did I observe the class reading and translating the articles, yet all of the students were knowledgeable about the articles. The process of reading and translating the article, as I mentioned, probably took place on Wednesdays when I was not present, or it was included in Rabbi Cohen's flipped lesson, that I was not a part of.

Similarly, in Ms. Abramson's class, I was an onlooker most of the time, but as the study progressed, I gradually became "an observer as participant" (Merriam, 2009, p. 124) and was involved in classroom activities. For example, I helped Ms. Abramson with some games she had planned. Like in Rabbi Cohen's class, more than once I had the urge to participate, but I limited myself. For example, when Ms. Abramson taught a certain verb construct and answered students' questions, I felt that I, as a native speaker who

teaches this exact material at the university, could have explained it better. I knew that by interjecting my comment during class without being asked to do it, I would be offending Ms. Abramson in front of her students and affecting what I observed in an unethical way. More specifically, I knew that by offering my explanation to the student, my positionality as CIS coordinator that was meant to be secondary at this setting would become my primary one. I avoided my urge and was very happy about that.

In Dr. Levin's class, however, I was a "participant as observer" (Merriam, 2009, p. 124) most of the time. I was involved in the setting's central activities, assuming responsibilities that contribute to the group, but without fully obligating myself to students' and teacher's goals (Merriam, 2009). As mentioned above, Dr. Levin's class was very small, 2-3 students. Dr. Levin used to ask me questions about the texts in an attempt to know what my opinion was. I was happy to answer, knowing that I would not be undermining Dr. Levin's positionality among his students. I knew that with his background as a native speaker of Hebrew who holds an advanced degree in Hebrew, I would not be offending him in front of his students in case I had a different opinion regarding some of the things he shared with the students. Sometimes Dr. Levin asked me to read aloud some sections from the text, possibly attempting to advance the class a bit faster. One time Dr. Levin planned his lesson based on the possibility that I would contribute to his lesson using my personal background as someone with an advanced degree in Arabic. Dr. Levin taught his students Hebrew slang that, at times, is derived from Arabic. He asked me during class to express my opinion and confirm what he shared with his students. Being so active in Dr. Levin's class, I was unable to write many

field-notes while being in class and had to work from memory afterwards, trying to summarize what I observed. In addition to that, as mentioned above, I was a substitute teacher in both Ms. Abramson and Dr. Levin's classes. I did not audiotape these classes, nor did I take field notes, but I was still able to use my participation as data, because I used the detailed lesson plan left for me by the teachers.

Besides taking field notes, I also voice-recorded the classes. In Rabbi Cohen's class, I put the voice-recorder on the desk, capturing Rabbi Cohen and his students' verbatim. However, I knew that when students discuss casual topics in small groups in the other sides of the room, these discussions were not to be recorded. In these discussions, students were expected to engage in Hebrew conversation without anyone monitoring them, without anyone listening to them or correcting their errors. During these times, Rabbi Cohen would talk to me or read his notes. Sometimes students would switch to English, but that is something that Rabbi Cohen could easily hear. He would raise his voice and, with a smile on his face, ask them to speak in Hebrew. They all would switch back to Hebrew. This activity was similar every Monday, but the topics of conversation differed. For example, one topic was: what do you take for granted? Another casual topic was sharing their best memories from when they were young. Rabbi Cohen explained to me that since all of them have known each other since early childhood, they enjoy discussing memories that several of them share. One student leader selected by Rabbi Cohen would assess students' engagement in Hebrew and give them Hebrew stickers at the end of the casual conversation. This activity was not graded, and the students seemed to like this unmonitored activity. This is how Rabbi Cohen engaged

his students in enjoyable activities--all in Hebrew. In Dr. Levin's class, as well as Ms. Abramson's class, I voice-recorded entire lessons by placing the voice-recorder on the desk and letting it record.

I collected documents from the three participants. In Rabbi Cohen's case, I was a part of his "Drop-Box" on-line group and as such I received the articles he was planning to teach ahead of time. In addition, Rabbi Cohen gave me hard copies of these documents at the beginning of each class. Ms. Abramson shared some of her documents with me during class time. Some of her documents included activities to practice grammar constructs newly taught, or some verb charts. Dr. Levin gave me hard copies during class time, and also sent them to me again long after the official observation period was over. All teachers were happy to share their materials with me. When I asked to see exams, they all shared their blank exams as well as some graded exams in order to allow me to see how they graded the exams. The names of the students whose work I was allowed to see-were erased.

I collected classroom data addressing my research question about classroom practices mentioned above. I used various documents such as teachers' lesson plans, classroom artifacts such as posters, description of teachers and school mission statements as they appeared on schools' web sites, and more, enabling me to address various issues that pertain to HLI in these two schools.

**Interviews.** One of the most significant sources of case study evidence is the interview (Yin, 2009). "Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton,

2002, p. 341), in order to find out what is in and on the interviewee's mind. Interviews have been used for years in empirical study addressing a range of topics and yielding insights into research participants' identities, experiences, and beliefs. A study by Talmy (2010) argues that although researchers use interviews to generate research data for the purpose of analysis, they treat interviews themselves as the topic of investigation. By *activating* the subject behind the respondent, the interviewee is transformed from a *passive vessel of answers* to someone who constructively transforms the facts and details, thus potentially have issues of bias and distortion (p. 131). By contrasting what is referred to as an *interview as research instrument* perspective with a *research interview as social practice orientation*, Talmy (2010) argues for greater reflexivity about the interview methods that qualitative applied linguists use in their studies (Talmy, 2010). The possibility of distortion is always in the background, according to Talmy (2010), and this dissertation takes that into account. However, when corroborated by other data and research instruments, the possibility of distortion becomes less of a problem.

My teachers' interviews took place continuously. Some of the interviews were informal and some were formal. I prepared an interview protocol (below), knowing that it is helpful to have an interview guide in order to use the limited interview time efficiently (Patton, 2002). I used semi structured interview questions (Merriam, 2009) to allow more flexibility. I prepared a set of questions, attempting to anticipate a normal flow of questions that would resemble a normal conversation, knowing that if needed, I would ask questions that were not included in my interview guide, using a conversational strategy (Patton, 2002). Looking at the types of questions suggested by Patton (2002), I

formulated a variety of questions, such as experience, opinion, values and feelings questions (pp. 348-351). I refrained from asking *why* questions knowing that *why* questions “can imply that a person’s response was somehow inappropriate”(Patton, 2002, p. 365). Instead, I worded the questions in a way that would enable me to get rich data by using *what* and *how* instead of *why*. Attempting to maintain *emphatic neutrality* (Patton, 2002, p. 369), I had presupposition questions that would help me create rapport by assuming shared knowledge. I deliberately avoided leading questions (Merriam, 2009), knowing that this type of questions reveal a bias I might have, that might not be shared by the interviewees. With each participant I had one semi- formal face-to-face interview and one semi-formal phone interview. Each interview took about an hour and was conducted in Hebrew. In addition, I sent some questions in English to all three participants that they answered in English. After every recording I listened to the recording again, noting to myself some points of interest and the exact place of these points in the recording. I knew that I would not transcribe the entire interview, so I allowed myself to pick what I perceived as important verbatim; I transcribed it and then translated it to English. Interviews were either face-to-face, on the phone (in Hebrew) or via email (in Hebrew and in English).

### **Data Analysis**

In this study I undertook the approach of inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) because I aimed to explore, discover and eventually build towards general patterns, as opposed to engaging in a deductive approach that requires specification of main variables and statement of specific hypotheses before data collection begins (Patton, 2002). Analyzing

data is an overwhelming task, probably the most difficult part of the entire process (Merriam, 2009). I engaged in a process of making sense of the data, and that involved consolidating and interpreting what people said (Merriam, 2009, p. 171). Researchers say that the much preferred way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it concurrently with data collection (Merriam, 2009). At the beginning of a qualitative study, I knew what the problem was and have selected a purposeful sample (Patton, 2002) to collect data in order to address the problem. But I did not know what I would discover. I recognized that without continuing analysis, the data might be fuzzy and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needed to be managed (Merriam, 2009).

Every Monday and Wednesday, when I returned home after collecting the data, I read through my field notes that I wrote during observation. Sometimes there were some class incidents that I did not have time to record in my notes, especially those that happened during the break when Rabbi Cohen talked to me and it was impossible to record it at that time, or those that happened during class when I was a participant observer, like in Dr. Levin's class, when, again, I could not step aside and record my observations. I knew that I might miss important data if I didn't record what I saw and heard right away, in the same night. A day after, usually while driving to work, I listened to the voice recording of classes, attempting to find some incidents that were not captured in my field notes, or incidents that I sensed might be important for my study. I noted the exact timing of the recording and transcribed it that day (in Hebrew). I compared the recorded data with the notes I wrote during observation (Patton, 2002). While reading through all my field notes, I made comments in the margins and wrote Post-it notes that

contained my notions about what I can do with the different parts of the data. I organized all of these data into topics and files. I conducted several interviews with all three participants, some were semi-formal and others were informal. These interviews provided “thick data” (Patton, 2002) that enabled me to triangulate data I had from other sources. I read the documents that I collected in class and found myself overwhelmed with the amount of raw material I had to process. “The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. That involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance” (Patton, 2002, p.432). Following Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Merriam (2009), I forced myself to make decisions that narrow the study, disciplining myself not to pursue everything. Class observations and field notes enabled me to address my research question #2 that was about teacher practices. At the same time, I wanted to study teachers’ beliefs, attempting to address research question #1. In order to make sense of my data and help me focus, I began to code my data.

With my research questions in mind, I used what researchers name *values coding* (Gable & Wolf, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). *Values coding* is the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect, among other things, a participant’s belief, representing his or her perspectives or worldview. A belief is part of a system that includes our personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretive perceptions of the social world (Gable & Wolf, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). “Beliefs are embedded in the values attached to them” (Wolcott, 2002, p. 97) and this notion set the foundation for coding my findings. *Values Coding* helped me explore cultural values and intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and

actions. I used *Values Coding* to analyze interview transcripts, field notes, observation notes and documents. For example, when I asked Rabbi Cohen about the type of community he would like to form, he replied that he would like his students to be addicted to Hebrew. I coded this first as “thirst for Hebrew.” In another question about a disappointing student, he gave an example of a student who dropped Hebrew because of what seemed to Rabbi Cohen as a negative sentiment towards Israel. I coded this as “deep connection to Israel.” In another reply, Rabbi Cohen described his own background as a Hebrew learner, telling me how he tried to adopt an Israeli accent when speaking Hebrew. I coded that as “attempting to sound Israeli.” After reading the example again, a theme emerged, and I concluded that these three codes were ideologically related in a sense that Israel is a place where Hebrew is spoken natively, and that Israel is the territorial center of the Jewish people. This ideology was the essence of this theme, thus combining all three codes together.

**Data interpretation and write up.** Attempting to differentiate between data analysis and interpretation, Wolcott (2002) suggests that “analysis, used in a narrow sense, follows standard procedures for observing, measuring, and communicating with others about the nature of what is ‘there.’ Interpretation, by contrast, is not derived from rigorous, agreed - upon, carefully specified procedures, but from our efforts at sense making” (p. 33). Data interpretation involves intuition, past experience, emotion—personal attributes of human researchers that can be argued endlessly, but cannot be proved nor disproved to the approval of all (Wolcott, 2001). The act of coding that leads to interpretation of the data, as suggested by Saldana (2009) requires that you “wear your

researcher's analytic lens. But how you perceive and interpret what is happening in the data depends on what type of filter covers that lens" (p. 6). I used my past experience as an insider throughout my study, but at the same time attempted to use my researcher's analytic lens. <sup>14</sup>

In my dissertation research, I interpreted data that was explained using language ideology ( Kroskrity, 2000, 2004; Silverstein, 1998; Woolard, 1992; Hill, 1998), and *Imagined communities* (IC) (Anderson, 2006) . Using the term *participation* (Wenger, 1998), I explained the positionality of Hebrew teachers in the context of American schools, and the way the concept of community, as a part of teacher beliefs about students, underscores teachers' attempts to foster students' Jewish identity, emphasizing what this community has in common and what differentiates them from others (Cohen, 1985). Looking at Hebrew teachers' linguistic ideology (e.g., Silverstein, 1985), I explored Minnesota Hebrew teachers' collective frames of commonsense philosophies about the Jewish identity formation. All of the face-to-face and phone interviews were conducted in Hebrew, and the email interviews were conducted in English. Excerpts from interviews in Hebrew are brought in Hebrew, then transliterated and translated into English. <sup>15</sup>

**Researcher role and limitations.** Attempting to interview Hebrew school teachers posed some problems with regard to my subjectivity as well as my positionality. I used to work in one of these schools years ago. The experience of teaching in that context was not new to me. Although teachers trust me, I feel that this background I have

---

<sup>14</sup> More discussion about my researcher positionality below

<sup>15</sup> In some interviews the interviewees did not follow the rules of Hebrew pronunciation. The transliteration reflects these "errors."

might have hampered my study in more than one way: Since my interviewees knew me from before, they considered me an insider. As such, I might not have been able to ask my interviewees the questions I needed to ask in order to write for my audience that is people from academia who are not necessarily knowledgeable about the way Hebrew is taught in a Hebrew school. Knowing that I actually have to show evidence, not just assume it exists, I realize that I might have failed to get the interviewees to speak about things that are “common sense” for us. Even if I were able to have the teachers ignore my “insider position”, I still had my biases that are founded in my background as a teacher in this school. My subjectivity is like “a garment that cannot be removed” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). It is present in the process of collecting data as well as in the process of analyzing that data. This might stand in the way of analyzing my data, maintaining as much objectivity as possible.

My subjectivity is not the only problem I am facing while observing the Hebrew school teachers’ classes. My positionality as a fellow Hebrew teacher and a faculty coordinator of Hebrew College In the Schools (CIS) could be problematic as well. This predicament is apparent in several aspects: One aspect that relates to my background as a former Hebrew teacher in this school is my multifaceted positionality as a (former) teacher, an advocate and a (current) case researcher (Stake, 1995). I knew that as a researcher I was supposed to point out how the findings might be extrapolated and how they can be interpreted in a range of situations. I feel though, that as a former teacher in that school and a current Hebrew instructor at the University, I might cross my limits as a researcher and would lean towards a role of an advocate by attempting to ply the readers

to agree with my assertions. My positionality as a University instructor poses a problem in another aspect as well.

The Hebrew school teachers teach the university curriculum and the students can earn university credits as a part of College In the Schools (CIS) program. I oversee this program from the university side. When I obtained the IRB for this study I emphasized that the fact that I oversee this school CIS curriculum will not put the teachers in an awkward position according that teachers would feel that they were forced to participate in my study. When I asked the directors of the two schools for permission to conduct the study in their schools, I reiterated that the teachers would not be obliged to participate. Four teachers agreed to participate (one was no longer teaching so I was left with three teachers) and that was the way I determined whom to include (Maxwell, 2005). As for class observations, I assured the teachers that if some parents objected to including their children in this study-they would not be included. When I audio-taped classes, I planned to omit any entries that pertained to these students. However, since all the parents signed the consent forms, that was no longer a problem.

My insider positionality gave me the opportunity to understand the complexities of these settings much better and enabled me to uncover more layers pertaining to Hebrew teachers' language ideology. For example, my insider positionality helped me understand one of the participants better. When she described how she was not given the opportunity to have Bat Mitzvah like her brothers, I knew that she did not mean for this to sound as if it were a case of gender discrimination, rather a different gender role in

traditional Judaism. With all the drawbacks of my insider positionality, I still believe that this positionality contributed more than hampered my study.

## Chapter Four

### **“I want them to get addicted to Hebrew”: Rabbi Cohen’s beliefs and practices**

This chapter analyzes my findings with respect to the first of the three participants, Rabbi Cohen. Rabbi Cohen teaches Hebrew in a Hebrew school, but his teaching is not just about language acquisition. Rather, Rabbi Cohen uses Hebrew to cultivate Jewish identity among his students through a process in which he, as well as the students, form an *imagined community* (Anderson, 2006), in which both Rabbi Cohen and his students are invested as full participants, where identities are negotiated in a process that contains what is said and what is left unsaid, what is represented and what is assumed. For instance, Rabbi Cohen and his students share the same goal of sustaining Jewish identity by studying the Hebrew language in the context of modern Israel. No one in class asks about the logic behind studying about Israel, because this is common sense that is left unsaid in this community. This process of identity negotiation includes the language, tools, documents that many practices make explicit, but also all the implicit relations, unspoken conventions, subtle cues, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. Most of these may never be voiced, yet they are unmistakable signs of membership in Rabbi Cohen’s *imagined community* in *East Hebrew School* class.

Specifically in this chapter, I look at Rabbi Cohen and his classroom through of the following research questions<sup>16</sup>:

---

<sup>16</sup> Although I mention these research questions only in this findings chapter about Rabbi Cohen, I use the questions to study Dr. Levin (chapter 5) and Ms. Abramson (chapter 6) as well.

1. What are Hebrew language teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building in the context of U.S. Hebrew schools?
2. What are teachers' Hebrew language teaching practices with respect to Jewish identities?

Many of the themes discussed below pertain to both research questions. For example, when Rabbi Cohen describes how he teaches and the material he chooses to teach, these choices are connected to his beliefs about teaching and learning as well as to his teaching practice, since preparing texts for classes are an essential part of teaching practices.

Therefore, I will often discuss both research questions together.

Researchers conceptualize several types of teacher *beliefs* (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1993; Williams & Burden, 1997), that are destined to affect teachers' classroom practices. The *beliefs* are about students or about teaching and learning. I start by discussing Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about learning Hebrew from his point of view as a Hebrew learner, suggesting that these beliefs have an episodic nature (Calderhead & Robson, 1991) in a sense that they are influenced by Rabbi Cohen's *guiding images* from past events that created *intuitive screens* through that new information was filtered (p. 4). I explore Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about teaching Hebrew as another layer in Rabbi Cohen's own identity building process, this time as a teacher in East Hebrew School, and his deep desire to influence his students' Jewish identity building to the extent that they will be "addicted to Hebrew."

In line with Cummins (2001), my analysis suggests that communications between Rabbi Cohen and his students can be viewed through two lenses: the lens of the *teaching-*

*learning relationship* in a narrow sense, represented by the strategies he uses to provide the comprehensible input vital to promote Hebrew language content knowledge, and the second lens of *identity negotiation*, that is represented by the messages communicated to students regarding their identities—that is, who they are in teacher’s eyes and who they are capable of becoming in terms of their Jewish identity. I demonstrate how Rabbi Cohen attempts to promote his students’ Jewish identity, especially how his approach pertains to the modern State of Israel and to Modern Hebrew.

Following Buzelli and Johnston (2002), I examine ways in that “other cultures” are represented in Rabbi Cohen’s curricular material—that is, how representations of Israeli cultures are treasured in the content of teaching and learning. This part of my work pertains to both research questions 1 and 2. The choice of material is a product of Rabbi Cohen’s beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building and choosing teaching materials is a teaching practice that results in classroom activities, some of that are observable also explore Rabbi Cohen’s thinking process while choosing what to teach in his classroom as representative of his beliefs about teaching and identity building. I learn about Rabbi Cohen’s priorities in selecting a Hebrew text, priorities that pertain to the way the author is, in Cohen’s words, an “authentic representation” of “Israeliness.” Exploring how Rabbi Cohen makes the connection between Judaism and the State of Israel (Beilin, 2000; Ellis, 2009; Feuer, 2007), I find how determined Rabbi Cohen is to teach the students material that would broaden their horizons into the world of Modern Israel, giving contemporary texts a higher priority than teaching canonized authors.

After discussing the content Rabbi Cohen considers appropriate to teach, I write about the manner in that Rabbi Cohen teaches, uncovering his beliefs (thus answering research question 1) and practices (thus answering research question 2) within the context of debates that are common among many teachers (and scholars) in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). One of the debates L2 teachers and scholars deliberate is in the area of “form based instruction.” While some teachers believe that L2 teachers should use the communicative approach that favors fluency in all L2 skills to correctness, other teachers pay more attention to grammatical form and linguistic correction (Schulze 1996, 2001). Rabbi Cohen encourages his students to speak Hebrew, but it seems to me that the actual engagement in speaking Hebrew is a higher priority for Rabbi Cohen than speaking it correctly. Attempting to help his students to engage in Hebrew beyond his classroom’s limited time, Rabbi Cohen also connects with his students outside of class using technology.

### **Learning Hebrew as a Founding Element for Forming Jewish Identity**

Teacher educators have recognized the significance of the individual lived experience as germane to what they will bring to the classroom (Alvine, 2001). Thus, the life histories of teachers have come to be seen as a grounded experience for knowledge of teaching. Teachers have the potential to transform the curriculum to such a degree that they *become* the curriculum (McCutcheon, 1995). If teachers are the curriculum, what they teach, how they live, what they model and where they focus have the potential to shape students’ learning (Milner, 2007) . Reflecting back on his beliefs as a Hebrew language learner, Rabbi Cohen describes how he first learned Hebrew as a foreign

language in summer schools, as Hebrew language was not offered in his home town in the Midwest:

Excerpt 1 (October 6, 2013)

אני גדלתי בכפר קטן עם מעט מאוד יהודים. תמיד ידעתי שיש עולם יהודי נרחב שאין לי קשר אליו, מה שנקרא The deprivation syndrome. הבטחתי לעצמי: כשתהיה לי ההזדמנות, אני אכלע הכל בבליעה אחת גדולה. חיפשתי הזדמנות והיה קשה, לא היה אינטרנט ולא היו לי ספרים עבריים. הלכתי למחנה "רמה" ורציתי ללמוד עברית.

Ani gadalti bikhfar katan'im me'at me'od yehudim. Tamid yadaa'ti sheyesh 'olam Yehudi nirḥav she'eyn li keshet elav, ma shenikra "deprivation syndrome." hivtaḥti le'atmi: kshetihye li hahizdamnut, ani evla hakol bivli'ah aḥat gdolah. ḥipasti hizdamnut vehaya kasha, lo haya Internet velo hayu li sfarim 'ivriyim. Halakhti lemaḥane rama veratsiti lilmod 'ivrit

I grew up in a small village with very few Jews. I always knew that there was a large Jewish world with that I had no connection; I felt what is called "deprivation syndrome." I promised myself that when I have the opportunity, I'll swallow it in one big gulp. I was looking for an opportunity, and it was hard; there was no Internet and I had no Hebrew books. I went to camp "Ramah" and I wanted to learn Hebrew.

As someone who grew up in a small village that had very few Jews, Rabbi Cohen longed to be a part of a large Jewish community. His deprivation, as he describes it, was about Judaism and the Hebrew language. This desire to learn Hebrew surprised me. I expected to hear about his desire to be exposed to Judaism, and Hebrew as a part of this religion and culture, but for Rabbi Cohen the language was primary. Describing one of the moments that influenced his quest for Hebrew, Rabbi Cohen recalls his experience as a camper in a summer Jewish camp. In this camp, he met two camp counselors who were bilingual in Hebrew and English. On Rabbi Cohen's first night at this camp, he heard them speaking Hebrew to each other.

Excerpt 2 (October 6, 2013)

שמעתי מה שלא שמעתי אף פעם. שני מדריכים עומדים ומדברים בעברית. ואז בא מישהו מהמטבח ושאל אותם משהו באנגלית. הם ענו לו באנגלית אמריקנית. נדהמת. זה היה המקרה הראשון שלי. נשבעתי לעצמי בו במקום שאני אלמד עברית.

Shama'ti ma shelo shama'ti 'af pa'am. Shney madrikhim 'omdim 'umedabrim be'ivrit. Ve'az ba mishehu mehamitbah vesha'al 'otam mashehu be'anglit. Hem 'anu lo be'anglit 'amerikanit. Nidhamti. Ze haya hamikre harishon sheli. Nishba'ti le'atsmi bo bamakom she'ani elmad 'ivrit

I heard what I had never heard before. Two counselors are standing and talking in Hebrew. Then someone came from the kitchen and asked them something in English. They responded in American English. I was shocked. It was the first time for me. I vowed right there that I will learn Hebrew.

When approached by someone from the kitchen the counselors switched from Hebrew to English and sounded American. Back in those days, it was not common to find people who spoke both Hebrew and English at a native speaker level with an authentic accent in both. For Rabbi Cohen, then a young boy from a small city with very few Jews, listening to other youngsters who spoke Hebrew and English so fluently was a memorable moment.

While at that camp, Rabbi Cohen remembers sitting together with his camp mates in a circle, around a famous professor who gave a class all in Hebrew.

Excerpt 3 (October 6, 2013)

לא הבנתי כלום, אבל ההרצאה הזאת השפיעה עליי מאוד. את מבינה אותי?

Lo hevanti klum, aval hahartsa'ah hazot hishpi'ah alay me'od. 'at mevinah 'oti?

I did not understand anything, but this talk has affected me greatly. Do you understand me?

Evidently, a language that Rabbi Cohen could not understand had such a great effect on him. The craving for learning Hebrew became an essential part of Rabbi Cohen's Jewish

identity, and he attempted to find a way to learn this language that had such a profound influence on him. I understand that he had to look for ways outside of his hometown to learn Hebrew, so when Rabbi Cohen enrolled at the university, he searched for ways to acquire Hebrew and indeed he found them. At the university, he checked out children's Hebrew books from the library and memorized them. He talked to himself in Hebrew all day long. Then he received a scholarship to study in Israel, where he knew he could be immersed in Hebrew.

Excerpt 4 (October 6, 2013)

בשבילי ללמוד עברית זה לא היה כדי להיות יהודי טוב. להיות יהודי טוב זה כדי שתהיה לי  
ההזדמנות לדבר עברית.

Bishvili lilmod 'ivrit ze lo haya kedey lihyot yrhudi tov. Lihyot Yehudi tov ze  
kdey shetihye li hahizdamnut ledaber 'ivrit.

For me, to learn Hebrew was not to be a good Jew. It's good to be a Jew to have a chance to speak Hebrew.

Surprisingly, Rabbi Cohen's thirst for this language surpassed his thirst for Judaism. What he missed was not Judaism and Jewish community; he missed Hebrew, Modern Hebrew, and the language of modern Israel. According to Rabbi Cohen, Hebrew language comes first and being Jewish gives him an opportunity to speak Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen believes that language-- not religion--is the center of his identity, which is striking when considering his role as a community rabbi.

An outsider might take Rabbi Cohen's quest for Modern Hebrew for granted, knowing that Hebrew is the language of the Bible and the Jewish prayer books. No wonder, then, that Rabbi Cohen is interested in advancing his knowledge in this modern

language. Rabbi Cohen's approach to learning Hebrew, especially his affinity for Modern Hebrew should be viewed more deeply. As an insider I point out that this yearning for the modern language is not very common among American Conservative rabbis I know. The language of the Bible is indeed Hebrew and so is the language of the prayer books, but it is not the same language. The Hebrew Bible is written in ancient Hebrew, a language that has no native speakers. Similarly, the Hebrew in the prayer books is also not modern and never spoken. Modern Hebrew is a living language spoken in Israel as a native language. American rabbis usually speak Modern Hebrew at various levels, but I cannot imagine them emphasizing the importance of Modern Hebrew in the way Rabbi Cohen does.

Learning Hebrew outside of Israel has been definitely a challenge for Rabbi Cohen. As he described, it involved memorizing children books in order to increase vocabulary. Rabbi Cohen believes that knowing Modern Hebrew means, among other skills, also speaking the language with an Israeli accent. In one of the interviews he describes how he decided to improve his accent by working with an Israeli Jew on improving his accent.

Excerpt 5 (October 6, 2013)

החלטתי לשפר את המבטא ועבודתי עם סעדיה שרעבי. החלטתי שממנו אני אלמד לדבר כמו ישראלי.

hehlateti leshaper 'et hamivta ve'avadeti 'im se'adya shar'abi. Hehlateti shemimenu 'ani 'elmad ledaber kmo yisra'eli.

I decided to improve pronunciation and worked with Saadia Sharabi. I decided that from him I will learn to speak like Israelis

Speaking Modern Hebrew with an Israeli accent was a difficult goal to attain, but Rabbi Cohen believed he was able to do it. Not only did Rabbi Cohen want to speak Hebrew like an Israeli, he wanted to pass as an Israeli as well. Not only did he believe, as a learner of Hebrew, that he should speak the same language as modern Israelis, but also that he should sound like an Israeli, even to Israelis.

As a Hebrew learner, Rabbi Cohen makes an effort to go to Israel every summer and take courses in a variety of subjects, all taught in Hebrew. The courses serve as an important tool for enhancing Rabbi Cohen's Hebrew. During these summers Rabbi Cohen strives to immerse himself in Hebrew speaking Hebrew exclusively, living in Israel as an Israeli, not as an American tourist. Rabbi Cohen usually rents an apartment for the entire summer in the heart of Jerusalem, where he immerses in Hebrew for the entire summer. This has been a very enjoyable way to spend his summers, says Rabbi Cohen. Clearly, at almost seventy years young, Rabbi Cohen never stops learning Hebrew, very atypical compared to people in his age.

### **Fostering Students' Jewish Identity as a Lifelong Process**

For most of us, our deepest sense of belonging is to our most intimate social networks, especially family and friends. Beyond that perimeter lie work, church, neighborhood, civic life, and [an] assortment of other ties" (Putnam, 2001, p. 274). Rabbi Cohen's class is a place where students gather as a community of learners, a place where Jewish identity is enhanced. Teachers highlight identity options for their students; they create an *image* of the society they hope their students will help form (Cummins, 2001). Rabbi Cohen creates an image of a society he wishes his students to form. A central

element here is that of the preeminence of *agency* in identity formation (Varghese et al., 2005). Identity is not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political context (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Replying to my question about the type of community he would like to form, Rabbi Cohen answers:

Excerpt 6 (October 6, 2013)

אני רוצה לא רק שיזכרו. אני רוצה שיתמכרו. שיהיו ממש מכורים לשפה ולספרות העברית, לתודעה היהודית הישראלית. אני רוצה שברגע שיתרחקו מהעברית ומהישראליות הם ירגישו כמו אדם מכור לסמים שמתרחק מהסם. שזה יהיה בלתי נסבל. שירגישו שבלי ישראל והתרבות היהודית, כולל הדת-הם ירגישו שהם לא שלמים. שהם יכולים לעצב את כל העולם לפי הייחודיות שלהם. שכל מה שהם, הם יכולים להכניס לעולם: הישראליות, העבריות היהדות.

‘ani rotse lo rak sheyizkeru. ‘ani rotse sheyitmakru. Sheyihyu mamash mekhurim lasafah velasifrut ha’ivrit, latoda’ah hayehudit hayisra’elit. ‘ani rotse sheberega sheyitraḥaku meha’ivrit umehayisra’eliyut hem yargishu kmo adam makhur lesamim shemitraḥek mehasam. sheze yihye bilti nisbal. Sheyargishu shebli yisra’el vehatarbut hayehudit, kolel hadat- hem yargishu shehem lo shlemim. Shehem yecholim le’atsev ‘et kol ha’olam lefi hayiḥudiyut shelahem. Shekol ma shehem, hem yecholim lehakhnis la’olam: hayisra’eliyut, ha’ivriyut hayahadut.

I want them not only to remember. I want them to get addicted. Be literally addicted to the Hebrew language and literature, Jewish-Israeli consciousness. I want that the minute they move away from Hebrew and from Israel, they will feel like a person addicted to drugs being distant from the drug. I want it to be intolerable for them. I want them to feel that without Israel and Jewish culture, including religion - they will feel they are incomplete. They can shape the world according to their uniqueness. They can bring their identity, who they are to the world: their Israeliness, Hebrew, and Judaism.

Foreign language teachers usually wish for their students to immerse in the foreign language, to find their own niche in this foreign language and culture. Rabbi Cohen wants more than that from his students. He wishes for the students to be literally addicted to the Hebrew language and literature and to Jewish-Israeli consciousness. This is an unusual metaphor that normally has a negative connotation. When people are addicted they can

no longer control themselves and they surrender to the thing to which they are addicted. But addiction is usually related to chemicals, to drugs, even to negative perceptions of the body like in the case of anorexia. For Rabbi Cohen, however, addiction to Hebrew and to Jewish awareness is a positive thing. For him, being addicted to Hebrew and Israel means that they would never feel comfortable abandoning this part of their being. Rabbi Cohen wants his students to own this need for Hebrew and Judaism so that it will be a part of their existence, their identity.

Through this shared identification, Rabbi Cohen wished his students to enhance their “common identity” (Bloom, 1990) as Jewish people. Cultivating common identity, Rabbi Cohen desires that his students would have the power to belong and to claim a place with the legitimacy of membership and to claim their Jewish identity (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002) in other contexts of their life. Through Hebrew language, Rabbi Cohen fosters modes of belonging no matter what language they currently speak (Anderson, 2006). Rabbi Cohen’s students belong to many *imagined communities*: some past, some current. Some communities are central to their identities, such as the Jewish imagined community, while others, such as the non-Jewish people with whom they interact—are more incidental. Rabbi Cohen wishes for his students to reconcile their different forms of membership by finding ways of engaging in practice to reflect their different forms of individuality. Rabbi Cohen’s students have a unique identity as American Jews who are connected to Israel as a territory and to being Israeli as a value. This unique “Jewish-Israeli consciousness”, according to Rabbi Cohen, should always prevail and should guide their choices even when interacting with other *imagined communities*.

Teachers possess various beliefs about students and teaching (Williams & Burden, 1997). Rabbi Cohen's perception of his students and their connection to Israel is apparent when I ask him about students who surprised him and others who disappointed him. In an example about a student who surprised him, Rabbi Cohen mentioned a student who was very enthusiastic to read a story that was assigned to her.

Excerpt 7 (November 3, 2013)

יש כמה תלמידים שהיו צריכים להחסיר בגלל התנגשויות בתוכניות שלהם. הם צריכים לבוא לשיעור שמונים ומשהו אחוז מהזמן. כשהם מחסירים הם לפעמים צריכים לעשות עבודה משלימה במקום העבודה בכיתה. קריאה בבית. אם אחרים קוראים ארבעה דפים ומשוחזים בכיתה, אלה שהחסירו קוראים שמונה עמודים. מה שמפתיע אותי זו ההתלהבות לקרוא סיפור נוסף. תלמידה התבקשה לקרוא את הסיפור "יד ושם" של אהרון מגד-אמרה תודה לא פעם ולא פעמיים.  
 Yesh kama talmidim shehayu tsrikhim lehaḥsir biglal hitnagshuyot batochnitot shelahem. Hem tsrikhim lavo lashi'ur shmonim vemashehu 'aḥuz mehazman. Kshehem maḥsirim hem lif'amim tsrikhim la'asot 'avodah mashlimah bimkom ha'avodah bakitah. Kri'ah babayit. 'im 'acherim kor'im 'arba'ah dapim 'umesoḥeḥim bakitah, 'ele sheheḥsiru kor'im shmonah 'amudim. Ma shemafti'a 'oti zo hahitlahavut likro sipur nosaf. Talmidah hitbakshah likro 'et hasipur yad vashem shel aharon meged 'amrah todah lo pa'am velo pa'amayim.

There are some students who have been missing because of conflicts in their programs. They have to come at least eighty-something percent of the time. When they are absent they sometimes have to do additional work to supplement class work. They have to read at home. If others read four pages and talk about their reading in class, those who miss have to read eight pages. What surprises me is the enthusiasm to read another story. A student was asked to read the story "Yad Vashem" by Aaron Megged [an Israeli author] - said thank you more than once.

Rabbi Cohen expected to feel some resentment from the student who was assigned twice as much reading as her classmates who attended class, read and discussed only four pages. Yet the student, according to Rabbi Cohen, was grateful. This student did not complain, and as a matter of fact—she was thankful. Rabbi Cohen was surprised at this, but was not clear as to what could be the reason for this student's unexpected attitude.

Could it be that the specific story they were reading happened to be one the student happened to like? Could it be the student's positive stated beliefs regarding Rabbi Cohen's class? He was not clear about it, but he was thrilled with her interest in Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen believes that a student who misses class should be assigned more work to compensate for the class-time this student has missed. This belief about teaching is reflected in his practice of assigning more work to this specific student. Rabbi Cohen believes that students usually resent the requirement to engage in extra work beyond what their classmates were asked to do. This student surprised Rabbi Cohen by showing enthusiasm. I sense that Rabbi Cohen takes pride in the notion that this student's enthusiasm to do more work relates to the kind of work that was assigned, reading another story by Aharon Megged, an Israeli author. Like Rabbi Cohen as a learner who travels to Israel to continue learning that is above and beyond what is expected of him as a teacher and a rabbi, this student was going above and beyond what was expected from her, enjoying the extra Hebrew reading and sharing this joy with her teacher. This connects to Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building, as well as Rabbi Cohen's teaching practices with respect to Jewish identities, as reflected in research questions 1 and 2 in how it sheds a new light on Rabbi Cohen's context.

Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about students and about teaching are reflected in his disappointment that he expresses to me when asked to talk about students who disappointed him. A student who joined Rabbi Cohen's imagined community (Anderson, 2006) changed his trajectories with respect to this specific imagined community. From being a non-participating outsider, he became a full-participating insider, and then,

because of a change in trajectories—became a non-participant again. Unlike the student whose possible strong connection to Israel might make her grateful to do more reading, the other student disappointed Rabbi Cohen by dropping Hebrew after rapid shift in attitude in the class. Rabbi Cohen's voice suddenly changes when he describes the following student:

Excerpt 8 (November 3, 2013)

בשנה שעברה היתה כיתה מאכזבת. היה שם תלמיד שלמד בבית הכנסת שלו והחליט בגיל 15 ללמוד עברית. לא ידע כלום והתחיל ללמוד. למד ולמד והצטיין. בא לכיתה בהתחלת השנה והיה המנהיג של הכיתה ובמשך השנה הדרדר, במיוחד כשדיברנו על ישראל. היה ממש אנטי ישראל. אנטי ישראלים. אני הבאתי חדשות מישראל, אפילו משהו סתמי כמו גשמים, מדע-הוא היה מלא זעם. ניסיתי בכיתה לאזן, לא להגן על ישראל כל הזמן-הוא לא קיבל את זה. ביקשתי שנצא לשתות קפה ונדבר. הוא עסוק מאוד. סיים את השנה במה שקוראים B Gentlemen's ולא נרשם לבית הספר השנה. דיברתי עם ההורים והם אמרו שאין מה לעשות, הוא מעוניין יותר במוסיקה שלו. הוא מנגן רוק ולא שש להשתתף בדברים יהודיים בכלל. כזה ילד חמד!

Bashanah she'avrah haytah kitah me'akhzvet. Hayah sham talmid shelamad beveit hakneset shelo vehekhilit begil 15 lilmod 'ivrit. Lo yada klum vehithil lilmod. Lamad velamad vehitstayen. Ba lakitah behathalat Hashanah vehayah hamanhig shel hakita 'uvemeshekh Hashanah hitdarder, bimuyhad kshedibarnu 'al yisra'el. Hayah mamash 'anti yisra'el. 'anti yisra'elim. 'ani heveti hadashot miyisra'el, 'afilu mashehu stami kmo gshamim, mada, hu haya male za'am. Nisiti bakita le'azen, lo lehagen 'al yisra'el kol hazman-hu lo kibel 'et ze.bikashti shenetse lishtot kafe venedaber. Hu 'asuk me'od. Siyem 'et Hashanah bema shekor'im Gentlemen's B velo nirsham leveyt hasefer Hashanah. Dibarti 'im hahorim vehem 'amru she'eyn ma la'asot, hu me'unyan yoter bamusika shelo. Hu menagen rok velo sas lehishtatef bidvarim yehudiyim bikhlal. Kaze yeled hemed!

Last year I had a disappointing class. There was a student who attended his synagogue and decided at age 15 to study Hebrew. He knew nothing and started to learn. He studied and studied and excelled. He came to class at the beginning of the year and was the leader of the class and during the year deteriorated, especially when talking about Israel. He was really anti- Israel, anti-Israelis. I brought news from Israel, even something as banal as rain, science - he was furious. I tried to balance class, not to protect Israel all the time - he did not get it. I requested that we go to drink coffee and talk. He was very busy. At the end of the year he got what is called Gentlemen's B and did not enroll in school this year. I talked with his parents and they said that nothing could be done, as he was

more interested in his music. He played rock and was not happy about participating in Jewish things at all. Such a lovely boy!

Rabbi Cohen was very saddened by this student because after actively choosing to join the class at a later age than other students, the student transformed from enthusiastic to angry, all in a course of one year. Rabbi Cohen's other students have taken Hebrew since they were young, probably since first or second grade. After Bar or Bat Mitzvah at the age of thirteen, some of them stopped attending East Hebrew school and others continued. They formed their own group, their own community. They are all members in a synagogue, oftentimes the same synagogue. Most of them go to a Jewish camp in the summer and have shared experiences from there. Their families know each other and they are very close to one another. This student was not a part of this group, having joined Rabbi Cohen's class at the age of fifteen, much later than the rest of the class. Although this student developed an interest in Hebrew school at the age of fifteen and had excelled in class both socially and academically, something had changed during a single year. From a good student in Hebrew class who was also a leader, this student became "uninterested" in the subject matter and left after a year. Rabbi Cohen noticed throughout the year that the student was furious whenever Israel was mentioned. Even when Rabbi Cohen taught noncontroversial topics such as science or rain in Israel, the student was still upset. That was so difficult for Rabbi Cohen up to a point that it changed his perception of the entire class and caused him to say that he had a "disappointing class." Rabbi Cohen tried to arrange a meeting with the student outside of school and discuss the problem. The student was not interested, saying he was too busy. The parents of this student were also contacted by Rabbi Cohen. They, too, were reluctant to say why their

son chose to drop Hebrew. They chose to say that he was too busy with his music instead of discussing the possible reason alluded to in Rabbi Cohen's narrative- their son's negative sentiment towards Israel.

Rabbi Cohen does not describe the situation fully, but I understand this as a part of his frustration. At the same time, a student dropping Hebrew because of a negative sentiment towards Israel is something that parents in this community will find hard to tolerate, let alone admit, so using this student's busy schedule as an excuse for dropping Hebrew makes it easier for the parents especially when communicating with Rabbi Cohen. Rabbi Cohen's concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit. It includes what is said and what is left unsaid. Supporting Israel is an embodied understanding in Rabbi Cohen's imagined community, having negative feelings towards Israel raises some sensitivity that is clear in Rabbi Cohen's discourse. These beliefs are common sense among Rabbi Cohen's imagined community.

Rabbi Cohen changed his teaching practices in an attempt to bring the student back from his "non-participation" (Wenger, 1998) status. He brought news from Israel, even something as ordinary as rain, science, but the student was still furious. He tried to balance class, not to protect Israel all the time – but the student remained a non-participant outsider, and dropped the class, despite Rabbi Cohen's effort.

Interestingly, both students Rabbi Cohen mentioned have either disappointed him or surprised him for what could be broadly perceived as the same reason, their connection with Israel as a part of their Jewish identity building process. The text the surprising student was appreciative to read was about an Israeli family who was affected by the

Holocaust. The reason the disappointing student dropped Hebrew was connected to Israel as well. Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about teaching and learning include the untold tacit expectation that students feel and show support for Israel. These beliefs are reflected in his practices. When a student misses class, the extra work (in this example) pertains to Israel, and when a student shares this trajectory with Rabbi Cohen and expresses enthusiasm, that represents another step in Rabbi Cohen's identity formation process, both as a teacher and as a learner. In contrast, when a student shows discontent with the way the topic of Israel is handled in class, Rabbi Cohen attempts to change his practice and brings a more balanced, sometimes even banal approach to the topic of Israel. When this practice proves to be not useful and the student ends up leaving his imagined community, this represents another step in Rabbi Cohen's identity formation process, a negative one.

Selecting material for teaching is one of teachers' practices that relate to their beliefs about teaching. It is interesting to see what material Rabbi Cohen chooses to teach in his classes. Rabbi Cohen's curriculum is based on the need to teach Modern Israeli literature in Hebrew. This College In the Schools (CIS) advanced level class is for students who had beginning and intermediate level Hebrew. The curriculum for the beginning and intermediate level courses is dictated by the university and all classes use the same books that are used at the University for similar Hebrew Levels. Yet the curriculum in the advanced level Hebrew classes is open and teachers can choose the type of literature that fits their interest. This choice of material is therefore influenced by the

teachers' identity. This choice can reveal many aspects in this identity, some that pertain to teachers' HLI. I ask Rabbi Cohen about his choice of material for his class.

Excerpt 9 (October 6, 2013)

אני: אילו חומרי לימוד אתה חושב שתלמיד בבית הספר שלך צריך לדעת?  
 הרב כהן: אילו הייתי אומר: תלמיד לא יכול לסיים את בית הספר מבלי שיכיר את טשרניחובסקי—  
 לא הייתי מגיע לתוכנית לימודים. אני שואל אם החומר מרחיב את האופקים של התלמיד לתוך  
 העולם היהודי האותנטי. החומר אומר לתלמיד: אתה יכול לגדול ולהעשיר את העולם שלך בתוך  
 העולם היהודי ישראלי עברי.  
 לפני שנים לימדתי סיפור של נתן זך. הסכין. אני לא מלמד אותו עכשיו. חוץ מעברית נהדרת אני לא  
 מוצא בזה תרבות ישראלית. יכולתי לקרוא אותו גם בשפה אחרת. לא מוצא בזה שום דבר... לעומתו,  
 אתגר קרת, אפילו מהדברים הגסים ביותר, הפואטיקה שלו היא פואטיקה יהודית ישראלית. אפילו  
 אנטון שמאס כותב בפואטיקה ישראלית.

'ani: 'eylu ḥomrey limud 'atah ḥoshev shetalmid beveyt hasefer shelkha tsarikh lada'at?

Harav Kohen: 'ilu hayiti 'omer talmid lo yakhol lesayem 'et beyt hasefer mibli sheyakir 'et tsherniḥovsky—lo hayiti magi'a letokhnit limudim. 'ani sho'el 'im haḥomer marḥiv 'et ha'ofakim shel hatalmid letokh ha'olam hayehudi ha'otenti. haḥomer 'omer latalmid: 'atah yakhol ligdol 'uleha'ashir 'et ha'olam shelkha betokh ha'olam hayehudi yisra'eli 'ivri.

Lifnei shanim limadeti sipur shel natan zakh. Hasakin. 'ani lo melamed 'oto 'akhshav. ḥuts mi'ivrit nehederet 'ani lo motse beze tarbut yisra'elit. Yakholti likro 'oto gam besafah aḥeret. Lo motse beze shum davar.le'umato, etgar keret, afilu mahadvarim hagasim beyoter, hapo'etika shelo he po'etika yrhudit yisra'elit. Afilu 'anton shamas kotev bepo'etika yisra'elit.

I: What material does a student need to know when graduating from school?

Rabbi Cohen: If I say a student cannot graduate without any knowledge the Tchernichovsky [an Israeli author] - I would not be able to have curriculum for teaching. I ask if the material expands the horizons of the student into authentic Jewish world. The material tells the students: You can grow and enrich your world within the Jewish Hebrew and Israeli world.

Years ago I taught the story of Nathan Zach. "The Knife." I do not teach it now. Apart from wonderful Hebrew, I cannot find there anything about Israeli culture. I could have read it in another language. I cannot find anything there. On the other hand, Etgar Keret [an Israeli author], even the most offensive things, his poetics is Israeli poetics about Israeli Jews. Even Anton Shammas [a Palestinian-Israeli author] writes Israeli poetics.

As Hebrew CIS faculty coordinator, I know that Rabbi Cohen does not have to follow any specific curriculum in third year Advanced level Hebrew, as long as he teaches Israeli literature, any literature. That leaves a broad space for third year Hebrew teachers to teach what they think is appropriate for their specific classes. These choices have a lot to do with teachers' own identities as Jews and as teachers. These choices are subject to change based on the varying stated beliefs of the students they teach. Different students have different attitudes towards the material they are asked to read. Sometimes, as shown above, the same students change their attitude towards the material they read and Rabbi Cohen attempts to address these changes and act upon them by always questioning his own choices as their teacher. This choice of material is also driven by the extent to that the material can broaden students' horizon into what Rabbi Cohen calls "authentic Jewish world." The authenticity of this world pertains to the content of the material and its engagement in Jewish, Hebrew and Israeli world.

Rabbi Cohen mentions four Israeli authors: Tchernichovsky, Zach, Keret and Shammas. Rabbi Cohen speaks to me knowing that I am an insider, an Israeli who is familiar with all of these authors' work, and a Hebrew instructor who sometimes teaches these authors' books in my university classes. He, therefore, does not elaborate on the reasons for mentioning these authors and not others, but I feel I have to explain more in order to familiarize the reader with the significance in what Rabbi Cohen is telling me.

Tchernichovsky and Zach are two poets who were born in Europe and immigrated to Israel at the beginning of the last century. Their poems are considered as a part of the Israeli literary cannon. Keret, however, is a young author who writes short stories. His

language is definitely more vulgar than the language of Tchernichovsky and Zach, and could be considered controversial because of its vulgarity and sexuality. Rabbi Cohen does not shy away from teaching Keret, despite knowing that Keret's short stories have some provocative content. What Rabbi Cohen considers worthy of teaching is material that expands the perspectives of the students' knowledge, material that teaches them authentic Jewish content. Sometimes authentic material has some vulgarity in it, still, Rabbi Cohen who teaches teenage Jewish students considers having authentic Jewish content as being important and "worth teaching" even if these books have a content that might embarrass him during class because of their explicit language and sexuality. That shows Rabbi Cohen's deep commitment to teaching his students what he perceives as authentic Jewish material. He knows that some students might be offended. He knows that some parents might complain to the administration of this school about some inappropriate phrases in Keret's work. At the same time, he knows that the students, parents and the administration in his school usually trust his judgment with regards to the way he conducts his classes.

Rabbi Cohen explains that his parameters in deciding what to teach in his classes are the existence of Jewish and Israeli content in what he is teaching. What I find interesting is that despite Rabbi Cohen appreciation for Zach's usage of the Hebrew language in Zach's poem "Hasakin," he no longer teaches this poem because it does not offer enough Israeli content. Rabbi Cohen prefers to teach Keret's stories even though he has little appreciation for their Hebrew language. Teaching Israeli culture is therefore more important than teaching "good" Hebrew. This emphasis on the importance of

teaching Israeli culture is emphasized even more when Rabbi Cohen mentions Anton Shammas as one of the Israeli poets Rabbi Cohen chooses to introduce to his students. Shammas is an Israeli Arab who writes poems in Hebrew. By teaching Shammas' poems Rabbi Cohen introduces a different aspect of Israeli culture, one that is Israeli, not Jewish. This, according to Rabbi Cohen, is yet another means used to broaden students' horizon within the Israeli world. I view this as yet another example that highlights Rabbi Cohen's priorities in selecting material to teach his students. Authentic Israeli material, as he pointed out before, is not necessarily equivalent to Authentic Jewish material. Anton Shammas is an Israeli Arab who might consider himself Palestinian. Choosing to teach his poems sheds light and underscores the extent to that Rabbi Cohen is ready to go in order to expand his students' horizons. As I see it, whatever Rabbi Cohen deems interesting and authentically Israeli can be immediately considered worth teaching.

Highlighting the Israeli world, Rabbi Cohen explains his decision to teach text about research conducted by the Pew Research Center on American Jews about their views on Judaism. This article first appeared in English then was translated to Hebrew.

Excerpt 10 (November 24, 2013)

אני: כשלימדת את המאמר האחרון של Pew איך הרגשת?

הרב כהן: זה מאמר חשוב. זו נקודת מבט יהודית-ישראלית על החיים היהודיים באמריקה. אני רוצה שהתלמידים יראו שהישראלים מתעניינים בנו. יש בזה פרספקטיבה ישראלית. כולם קראו על המחקר, אבל רציתי שיקראו אותו בעברית מתוך נקודת מבט ישראלית. זה מה שאני מנסה להבליט.

'ani: kshelimadeta 'et hama'amar ha'aḥaron shel Pew 'eikh hirgashta?

Rabbi Cohen: ze ma'amar ḥashuv. Zo nekudat mabat yehudit-yisra'elit 'al haḥayim hayehudiyim beamerika. 'ani rotse shehatalmidim yir'u shehayisraelim mit'anyenim banu. Yesh beze perspective yisra'elit. Kulam kar'u 'al hameḥkar,

‘aval ratsiti sheyikre’u ‘oto mitokh nekudat mabat yisra’elit. Ze ma she’ani menaseh lehavit.

I: How did you feel when you taught last article about Pew research [an article about current situation of Jews in the US and their Jewish stated beliefs]?

Rabbi Cohen: This article is important. This is a Jewish- Israeli perspective about Jewish life in America. I want the students to see that the Israelis are interested in us. There's an Israeli perspective in this article. Everyone read about the study, but I wanted the study to be read in Hebrew from the Israeli perspective. This is what I'm trying to highlight.

This article, according to Rabbi Cohen, brings a Jewish-Israeli perception about Jewish life in America. This article was published in English and translated to Hebrew, and is thus obviously not authentically Israeli. Rabbi Cohen feels that it is important for the students to read this article in Hebrew so that the students will see that this article and the Judaism in America is important to Israelis. The only Israeli aspect in this article is the fact that it was translated to Hebrew and published in the Israeli media. Teaching this article serves several purposes for Rabbi Cohen: The mere fact that it was translated to Hebrew and published in a prestigious Israeli newspaper encourages Jewish American students to see that the Israelis care about them. Another purpose is Rabbi Cohen's desire to expose the students to contemporary issues pertaining to their community, all of it in Hebrew. This attempt to expose the students to this important debate serves Rabbi Cohen's HLI and reveals his teacher's beliefs that are connected to his desire to shape their Jewish identity by negotiating aspects of this identity in class.

Rabbi Cohen's desire for his students to remain connected to their Jewish identity does not cease when they graduate from high school and enroll at the university. Rabbi Cohen invited three recently graduated students during their universities' winter break to

join his current students and talk about being Jewish on campus. Rabbi Cohen asks a student who studies in California about her campus. He starts by asking the student about the campus and about the Jewish presence on campus. After that, Rabbi Cohen asks about Hillel on campus and about the religious denomination of Hillel:

Excerpt 11 (January 13, 2014)

הרב כהן: יש יהודים בקמפוס?  
 שרה: יש אבל הם לא רוצים לעשות הרבה.  
 הרב כהן: ספרי על בית הלל.  
 שרה: זה רפורמי לא מה שחשבתי אבל אני שמחה שיש משהו.  
 הרב כהן: יש תפילות?  
 שרה: כן. קצרות. לחוד רפורם וקונסרבטיב. לא הרבה קונסרבטיבי .

Harav Cohen: yesh harbeh yehudim bakampus?

Sarah: yesh 'aval hem lo rotsim la'asot harbeh.

Harav Cohen: sapri 'al beit hilel

Sarah: zeh reformi lo ma shehashavti 'aval 'ani smeḥah sheyesh mashehu.

Harav Cohen: yesh tfilot?

Sarah: ken. Ktsarot. leḥud Reform veConservative. lo harbeh Conservative

Rabbi Cohen: Are there Jews on campus?

Student A: There but they do not want to do much.

Rabbi Cohen: Tell me about "Hillel."

Sarah: It is Reform, not what I thought, but I was glad to have something.

Rabbi Cohen: Are there prayers?

Sarah: Yes. Short. Reform and Conservative separately. Not many Conservatives.

Jews predominantly affiliate with Orthodox, Conservative or Reform branches of Judaism. Orthodox Jews are considered more "religious" than Conservative Jews, and the Reform Jews are considered even less religious than the Conservative Jews. Synagogues are usually orthodox, conservative or reform and people usually choose their synagogue affiliation based on the synagogue's denomination and the way it meets their own religious beliefs. Rabbi Cohen is a conservative Rabbi and his school, although open to

all Jewish denominations, is mostly conservative. Hillel at the universities usually caters for the needs of all branches of Judaism. This can sometimes be problematic when students perceive Hillel's activities as being "too religious" or "not religious enough," in comparison with what they were used to in their synagogues at home.

Rabbi Cohen worries that when no longer "under his wings" this student will forget about her Jewish identity. As someone who used to be a Rabbi at Hillel at a large university, he is familiar with what Hillel has to offer to Jewish university students, so he asks about Hillel because he has his own local experience with Hillel's activities. It seems to me that Rabbi Cohen was hoping to hear that this student was continuing her Jewish activities while on campus, away from home. The student sounded apologetic while saying that although the prayers are reform, suggesting that they were obviously not religious enough for her.

Rabbi Cohen asks the student about another component in what he perceives as Jewish identity: the connection to Israel. He also asks how the topic of Israel and the conflict in the Middle East are addressed at that college.

Excerpt 12 (January 13, 2014)

הרב כהן: איך רואים את ישראל?  
 שרה: לא כל כך טוב. היה סטודנט בכיתה שתומך בפלסטין. יש אפרטהייד וויק. הלל לא עושה הרבה.

Harav Cohen: 'eikh ro'im 'et yisra'el?

Sarah: lo kol kakh tov. Hayah student bakitah shetomekh bePalestine. Yesh Apartheid Week. Hillel lo 'oseh harbeh

Rabbi Cohen: What do they think about Israel?

Sarah: Not so good. There was a student in class who supported Palestine. There is Apartheid Week<sup>17</sup>. Hillel does not do much.

<sup>17</sup> Organizations which support the Palestinian cause organize events in which they describe Israel as an apartheid state, similar to South Africa's apartheid.

Knowing the importance of staying connected to Israel and Israeli culture in Rabbi Cohen's class, this student emphasizes her disappointment at the fact that in her campus there are students<sup>18</sup> who support Palestine. She also expresses discontent with the way Hillel is acting, namely by not doing anything. Mentioning Hillel in this dialogue is significant for various reasons: Hillel is the place where Jewish students visit when they are in college. It serves as a place where Jewish students feel as a community, maybe as an extension of Rabbi Cohen's class. But Hillel at the university is not active enough in expressing solidarity with Israel, according to this student. This student likely knows how connected Rabbi Cohen is to Hillel's activities. For several years, Rabbi Cohen worked as a rabbi at Hillel at a large university in the Midwest as a side job in addition to his work at East Hebrew School. I sense that this student's critique about Hillel's activities is therefore very meaningful for Rabbi Cohen.

Rabbi Cohen appears frustrated, especially when he speaks about his own background as a Hebrew learner. Looking at his past experiences, he acknowledges the difference between his student's Jewish identities in college versus his own Jewish identity while being in college years ago. In this same conversation, he shares his concern that this student is not getting the opportunity to explore scholarly perspectives of Judaism, the ones found at university level courses:

Excerpt 13 (January 13, 2014)

הרב כהן : גדלתי במקום קטן במערב התיכון ובקיץ למדתי במחנה יהודי. באוניברסיטה למדתי על יהדות וזו היתה מתנה. אתם באתם ממקום שבו אפשר ללמוד והלכתם למקום שבו אי אפשר ללמוד על יהדות. מדאיג אותי שאתם גדלים כאנשים לומדים אבל לא כיהודים לומדים.

---

<sup>18</sup> She does not say if these students are Jewish or not.

דינה: אולי אחרי זה.  
 הרב כהן: אני דואג שהיהדות תיראה כמשהו ילדותי לאחר מכן.  
 דינה: אולי לא מושלם אבל זה טוב.

Harav Cohen: gadalti bemakom katan bama'arav hatikhon 'uvakayits lamadti bemaḥaneh Yehudi. Ba'universita lamadeti 'al yahadut vezo haytah matanah. 'atem batem mimakom shebo 'efshar lilmod vehalakhtem lemakom shebo 'I 'efshar lilmod 'al yahadut. Mad'ig 'oti she'atem gdelim ke'anashim lomdim 'aval lo keyehudim lomdim.

Dina (student): 'ulay aḥrei zeh.

Harav Cohen: 'ani do'eg shehayahadut tera'eh kemashehu yalduti le'aḥar miken.

Dina (Student): 'ulay lo mushlam 'aval zeh tov.

Rabbi Cohen: I grew up in a small place in the Mid-West and in the summer I learned at a Jewish camp. At the university I learned about Judaism and that was a gift. You come from a place where you can learn (about Judaism) and went to a place where it is impossible to learn about Judaism. It worries me that you grow up as educated people, not as educated Jews.

Dina: Maybe after that.

Rabbi Cohen: I am worried that Judaism will appear as something childish after that.

Dina: It might not be perfect but it's good.

Unlike Rabbi Cohen who was born in a small place and looked for ways to be exposed to Judaism, this student is content with the fact that there is very little exposure to Judaism in her college. She acknowledges that it might not be perfect, but at the same time she asserts that it is good.

In a private unrecorded conversation I have with Rabbi Cohen after class, Rabbi Cohen seems to be in pain. Looking back on his childhood and appreciating the

opportunity he had to learn Judaism at the university, he finds it hard to understand how a student chooses to go to a college where there is no possibility to learn Hebrew. He is worried that the students will no longer be Jewish. The student does not seem to share Rabbi Cohen's pain. She feels for Rabbi Cohen, her beloved teacher, but apparently she does not share his affinity for Judaism. Just to end this dialogue she says: "I might get back to studying about Judaism after I graduate from college." Rabbi Cohen fears it would seem childish then. The student adheres to her views and says: "It is not perfect, but it is good." And this is the end of this conversation. I view this student's agency as heavily connected to being Rabbi Cohen's former student: she can be so strong-minded in front of her teacher and his current class just because she feels confident enough to express these opinions because she feels safe to express them in Rabbi Cohen's class, a place that is still home for her, a place that is open to many opinions, including opinions that undermine the importance of staying connected with Judaism. She also has the benefit of not being his student anymore. Rabbi Cohen really wishes for his students to view Judaism the way he does, but the reality is different. Rabbi Cohen's students share his connection to Israel, yet their priorities are different from his, and choosing a college based on its variety of Jewish Studies classes is not a high priority for them.

### **A Hebrew Teacher as a *Form-Focused* Instructor**

Another practice pertaining to Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about learning and teaching and identity building is the way he deals with well-known debates in the area of foreign language instruction. An example for this debate is the question of *form based instruction* (Andrews, 2003; Borg, 2006; Burgess & Etherington, 2002). This debate is present in

many L2 teacher conferences, in that some teachers feel that a language should be taught focusing on its grammar, while others feel that language teaching should be communication-based and teaching form is not as important. When I ask him about his view regarding form based instruction, Rabbi Cohen talks about the way he teaches grammar in his Hebrew classes.

Excerpt 14 (October 6, 2013)

אני לוקח שגיאות שהם עושים בכיתה. אני נותן דוגמאות ומסביר. אני אוהב דקדוק. לפעמים אני עושה זאת בהשוואה לאנגלית. למשל: I have לעומת "יש לי". אני לא מעוניין בכל ההסטוריה של הדקדוק.

‘ani loke’ah shgi’ot shehem ‘osim bakitah. ‘ani noten dugma’ot umasbir. ‘ani ‘ohev dikduk. Lif’amim ‘ani ‘she zot behashva’ah le’anglit. Lemashal: I have le’umat yesh li. ‘ani lo me’uynan bekhoh hahistoria shel hadikduk.

I take errors they make in the classroom. I give examples and explain. I love grammar. Sometimes I do it compared to English. For example: "I have" vs. "there is to me" [a better construct in Hebrew]. I'm not interested in the whole history of grammar.

Rabbi Cohen talks to me as a Hebrew teacher who talks to another Hebrew teacher, using an insider perspective. We both know that teaching the possessive in Hebrew to American students is difficult and he uses it as an example for the way he teaches new grammar. Rabbi Cohen’s last remark about how he is not interested in the history of grammar is closely related to our mutual insider background. Rabbi Cohen, as stated before, teaches a CIS class and I oversee this program. In our group of CIS teachers, we have some teachers who like to teach their students about the history of grammar, Rabbi Cohen is apparently not one of them. Then, along that line, I continue and ask him about another issue that is widely discussed among L2 teachers, and that is error correction.

Excerpt 15 (October 6, 2013)

אני: כשסטודנט מדבר בשטף ושוגה, אתה מתקן? מתי ואיך?

הרב כהן: אם זה דבר שסטודנט יודע ואני יכול כך בלחש, אם תלמיד אומר "שנים אחרים" אני יכול ללחוש "משהו אחר" אני יודע שהוא מייד יבין וזה לא יפגע בשטף הדיבור. אבל רק פעם פעמיים. או שאני יושב בשקט ורואה אם הטעות חוזרת על ידי מספר תלמידים, אם הטעות פוגעת בהבנה ובתקשורת, לפעמים אני מפסיק את השיחה לרגע ואז אני עובד קשה להחזיר את התנופה של השיחה. אני אף פעם לא מרגיש שאני צריך לתקן כל דבר. וגם כשהם עושים שיחות חופשיות אני לא יושב איתם. אני רוצה שתהיה להם ההזדמנות לדבר באופן חופשי. הם מתרגלים לדבר חצי שעה או יותר בעברית.

'ani: kshestudent medaber beshetef veshogeh, atah metaken?

Harav Cohen: 'im ze davar shestudent yode'a va'ani yakhol kakh belahash, 'im talmid 'omer "shanim aherim" 'ani yakhol lilhosh "mashehu aher." 'ani yode'a shehu miyad yavin veze lo yifga beshetef hadibur. 'aval rak pa'am pa'amayim. 'o she'ani yoshev besheket vero'eh 'im hata'ut hozeret 'al yedey mispar talmidim, 'im hata'ut poga'at bahavanah uvatikshoret, lif'amim 'ani mafsik 'et hasifah lerega' ve'az 'ani 'oved kashev lehaizer 'et hatnufah shel hasifah. 'ani 'af pa'am lo margish she'ani tsarikh letaken kol davar. Vegam kshehem 'osim sihot hofshiyot ani lo yoshev 'itam. 'ani rotseh shetihyeh lahem hahizdamnut ledaber be'ofen hofshi. Hem mitraglim ledaber hatsi sha;ah 'o yoter be'ivrit.

I: when students speak fluently and make a mistake, do you correct them? When and how?

Rabbi Cohen: If it's something students know and I can whisper softly, if a student say "other years "[a mistake in Hebrew] I can whisper "other..." I know they immediately understand and it does not hurt their fluency but only once or twice. Or I sit quietly and see if the error is made by a number of students, if the error affects the understanding and communication, sometimes I stop the conversation for a moment and then I work hard to restore the momentum of the conversation. I never feel like I need to correct everything. And when they have free conversations I do not sit with them. I want them to have the opportunity to speak freely. They get used to talking for half an hour or more in Hebrew.

Rabbi Cohen does not want to interrupt students while they engage in speaking Hebrew.

According to Rabbi Cohen's HLI, it is more important to speak the language "freely" than to speak it correctly. He avoids stopping his students' flow of conversation while speaking Hebrew, correcting his students while they speak only by whispering and hinting to them that they made a mistake, without deliberately interrupting their flow.

Only when he finds that a mistake is repeated by several students would Rabbi Cohen be willing to interject and correct the mistake. I see clearly that Rabbi Cohen does not like this teaching practice of error correction. As he mentioned, it takes him a long time to restore the momentum of the conversation.

One of Rabbi Cohen's classroom activities is having the students move their groups to a part of the classroom away from his desk to discuss everyday issues in Hebrew without interruption. By doing that, Rabbi Cohen enables his students to speak Hebrew freely without being monitored by a teacher. Rabbi Cohen lets his students engage in Hebrew speaking without any error correction that goes hand in hand with his beliefs about error correction being secondary to the actual practice of speaking Hebrew as discussed below.

After discussing Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about correcting his students' errors while speaking, I learn about Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about correcting his students' errors in their writing, another issue that relates to teachers' language ideology. Different teachers have various degrees tolerating students' errors when it pertains to students' Hebrew communication, both in writing and in speaking. Some teachers tolerate errors while students speak the L2 just to maintain the flow, and when they grade students' written assignments they correct all of the grammar mistakes. Other teachers might choose differently. A dilemma that many L2 teachers have is when students try to use complex structures in their written assignments and while doing that make mistakes, while other students write simple errorless essays and "play it safe" avoiding any complex sentences. Oftentimes L2 teachers are not sure how to assess students' essays, reflecting

appreciation for students who try using complex sentences, sometimes making mistakes using new vocabulary, in comparison with other students who use simple known sentences in their L2 essays. Demonstrating his beliefs about teaching Hebrew, Rabbi Cohen discloses how he grades Hebrew essays, putting equal emphasis on form and content, thus pushing students to write more thoughtfully:

Excerpt 16 (October 6, 2013)

הרב כהן: כל חיבור שווה אצלי 10 נקודות. 5 נקודות עברית ו- 5 נקודות תוכן. אם כתבו תוכן עשיר במילים דלות, יכול להיות שהעברית היא 5 אבל זה יבש ובסיסי-התוכן יהיה 2-3. אני רוצה שהחיבור יהיה מעניין.  
כולם אצלי יודעים ששווה לכתוב מילים עשירות.

Harav Cohen: kol ḥibur shaveh ‘etzli 10 nekudot. 5 nekudot ‘ivrit ve 5 nekudot tokhen. ‘im katvu tokhen ‘ashir bemilim dalot, yakhol lihyot sheha’ivrit he 5 ‘aval ze yavesh ‘uvsisi—hatokhen yihyeh 2-3. ‘ani rotseh shehaḥibur yihye me’anyen. Kulam yod’im etsli sheshaveh likhtov milim ‘ashirot.

Rabbi Cohen: Any essay is worth 10 points: 5 Points for Hebrew and 5 points for content. If they used only simple words they might get 5 points for Hebrew and 2-3 points for content. I want the essay to be interesting.  
Everyone in my class knows that it is worthwhile to use rich words.

Rabbi Cohen encourages his students to use “rich words” in their Hebrew essays. He does not give exact definition to what counts rich in his view. It could be essays that have new words from the dictionary, or it could be essays that contain complex, as opposed to simple sentences. What I notice is that Rabbi Cohen does not mention correctness. For Rabbi Cohen, using rich Hebrew is important and error correction, although he did not say that specifically, is probably secondary. Looking at the way Rabbi Cohen assessed his students’ Hebrew writing; I could clearly see that Rabbi Cohen gave higher grades to students who used more complex Hebrew constructs. Although Rabbi Cohen corrected grammar mistakes, at times, he deducted very few points because of these errors, a

practice that correlates with his beliefs about language teaching. This belief mapped onto his classroom practices as well. Going through my recordings, I could hardly find recordings in that Rabbi Cohen corrected his students' mistakes. I remember an incident when Rabbi Cohen had a mistake in Hebrew; he noticed this mistake, looked at me and smiled. None of the students noticed it. Rabbi Cohen saw no need to correct the mistake, which is yet another practice that maps onto his teacher's beliefs.

In sum, the interviews, class visits and documents I discussed in this chapter serve as an indication for Rabbi Cohen's beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building in the context of U.S. Hebrew schools. Rabbi Cohen is influenced by his beliefs that are closely related to his values, to his interpretations of the world and to his ideas of their place within it (Pajares, 1993). Rabbi Cohen's classroom activities underscore what he expressed in the interviews pertaining to his perception of Jewish identities. What is characteristic of Rabbi Cohen's Jewish identity as a teacher as well as a learner is his connection with Israel as his focus of identification (Rotenstreich, 1993), that is the center of his belonging beyond the space of his day-to-day life. This mode of identification is of sentimental character that encompasses the feeling of solidarity with the State of Israel and its people. For Rabbi Cohen, this solidarity with Israel is an inseparable part of his Jewish identity. Speaking Hebrew is one part of this identity; attempting to speak the language like an Israeli is yet far deeper than mere solidarity. This is a strong desire to be a part of the collective of Jews, whose center of belonging is the State of Israel. Rabbi Cohen's specific lived experience is germane to what he brings

to the classroom (Alvine, 2001). Thus, the life history of this Hebrew teacher has become essential for his knowledge of teaching.

As a teacher in East Hebrew School, Rabbi Cohen tries to convey his desire and strong connection to Israel to his students by creating an environment that will make it possible for this process to happen. In order to help create a community of Jewish learners, students must feel connection to this religion. For some students, this connection starts in class, for others it starts at home (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007).

Rabbi Cohen chooses carefully what he deems appropriate to teach his community of learners. Adhering to his goal of creating community of learners who share some unique aspects of Jewish identity, Rabbi Cohen chooses texts that would enhance this process of broadening the horizons of students into the world of Israel. Jewish identities in Rabbi Cohen's classroom are continually being formed through experiences and interactions (Cummins, 2001). In order to enhance Jewish identities, the texts Rabbi Cohen teaches, as well as his other activities, have to be what he views as authentic material to that his students would connect. The process of teaching this material has to be in an environment that provides support and inclusion.

Enhancing learners' identity is a process that does not start at the beginning of class and ends after two hours when class-time is over. Rabbi Cohen uses technology to give his students access to authentic Hebrew material outside of class as well. Even when students graduate from East Hebrew School, they are still a part of this community. They visit Rabbi Cohen's class; they share their Jewish experiences from their colleges with their peers and their teacher, continuing the process of Jewish identity building. Identity

is not context-free but is critically related to social, cultural, and political context (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Students' exposure to political debates pertaining to modern Israel can sometimes make them question their own identity by viewing it as an *assigned identity*—the identity imposed on one by others—and *claimed identity* (see chapter 7 below), the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). The relationship between these two perceptions of identity forms yet another layer in this complex process of fostering Jewish identities in Rabbi Cohen's class. While he hopes that his students claim their Jewish identity in and outside of his class, some students, like the former student in the example above, view this as an assigned identity that can be questioned and reshaped again and again. That leaves Rabbi Cohen worried about the way this community of students view themselves and their Jewish heritage in the future.

This analysis of Rabbi Cohen is framed by the research questions about Hebrew language teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building in the context of U.S. schools (RQ1), and about teachers' Hebrew language practices with respect to Jewish identities (RQ2). As a rabbi who is also a teacher in East Hebrew School, Rabbi Cohen holds beliefs that relate to himself as a learner, as well as to his students and teaching, as discussed throughout this chapter. Rabbi Cohen claimed his Jewish identity as a learner by working meticulously on his Hebrew knowledge and his Hebrew accent. As a teacher, he believes in creating a nurturing environment to allow his students to engage in Hebrew conversation, thus forming their own identity of participation (Wenger, 1998). This conversation is on casual topics, without monitoring their Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen believes that his teaching should include authentic materials that pertain to

various layers in the Israeli society. These beliefs, all intertwined together, clearly map onto his classroom practices, as observed in class and shared in his interviews and classroom documents. Identifying his students' needs, in his view, Rabbi Cohen is a creator of a nurturing imagined community that is fundamental to his students' Jewish identity building process.

## Chapter Five

### “Why do you need to know why and how you are Jewish?”

#### Dr. Levin’s beliefs and practices

Dr. Levin is a former professor of Hebrew who taught Hebrew Bible in Israel. Currently he teaches Hebrew in West Hebrew School, as such, he positions himself as an expert of Hebrew in his school as well as in local, national, and international communities of Hebrew teachers. Dr. Levin is a native speaker of Hebrew who holds secular views about Judaism. This expert and secular positionality is the drive behind Dr. Levin’s beliefs and practices in the context of Hebrew school, as well as in other contexts beyond this school. Dr. Levin’s secularity, combined with his lived experience (Alvine, 2001), especially his academic experience, determines the way he views his role as a Hebrew teacher. As a secular Jewish academic, he *becomes* the curriculum (McCutcheon, 1995). Unlike other teachers in my study<sup>19</sup> as well as in Milner’s (2007) study, who use their lived experience as a model in their heritage language class, Dr. Levin uses the academic aspect of his individual life experience while teaching his students, and he expects them to follow in his footsteps only in the way he uses his knowledge about Judaism to shape his Jewish identity. Dr. Levin has well-defined boundaries between his personal and professional lives. An example for this boundary is the fact that students address him as Dr. Levin, and not by his first name, the way other teachers in this institute are addressed. Dr. Levin’s other boundaries pertain to his choice of teaching content he deems appropriate for his students. In a process of enhancing students’ Jewish identity, he prefers to teach

---

<sup>19</sup> See chapters Four and Six

about past events, distancing himself and his students from present events that might turn into political debates.

Dr. Levin's expert positionality defines the way he teaches his classes. Unlike the history teachers in Nespor's study (1987), who felt that "teaching the 'facts' and details of history should not be a primary goal of their courses because, in their evaluation, students could not be expected to remember such information for any significant length of time" (p. 319), Dr. Levin believes that his role as a teacher is to teach facts. This importance that Dr. Levin attributes to teaching facts also determines the way he views his own experience as a learner. When asked about teachers who influenced him as a learner, Dr. Levin pointed out that he was influenced by his Biology teacher who taught biology using "hands-on" methods by observing nature, that is, the facts of nature. Dr. Levin is still a learner. He has taken technology workshops in order to learn how to develop software for teaching Hebrew. He notes that he is always happy to share what he learned with his colleagues, fellow teachers at East and West Hebrew Schools. He suggested sharing his knowledge about technology with me as well. Interestingly, Dr. Levin's beliefs about teaching mapped onto his classroom practices most of the time, not all of the time, as is evidenced by my findings. It is important to mention that Dr. Levin teaches mostly junior and senior high school students, who come with their own Jewish background, such as Jewish summer camps, synagogue affiliation and several years of classes at West Hebrew School. It is also important to note that Dr. Levin's students are all post Bar-Mitzvah age (older than 13). By leading prayers in Hebrew during their Bar Mitzvah (for boys) or Bat Mitzvah (for girls), they have already earned their rite-of-

passage to be members of the Jewish community. This study assumes that these students continue their Hebrew School studies because they are interested in that, not necessarily in order to satisfy any expectations coming from their Jewish community. After examining the findings, several themes emerged inductively, and I chose to concentrate on three of them as the focus of this chapter: A teacher as an expert, learning by knowing, and text-choice as a vehicle for influencing students' Jewish identity negotiation. These three themes overlap as is evidenced in this study. Dr. Levin uses his secular positionality, combined with his vast knowledge and expertise to influence his students' identity negotiation process.

### **A Teacher as an Expert**

My study suggests a connection between Dr. Levin's perceptions of self as a learner to his perception of himself as a teacher, in a sense that his beliefs are connected to his views of the world and his place within it (Pajares, 1993) as a learner and as a teacher. In a phone interview Dr. Levin describes himself as a serious student who always did his homework. He notes that his nature as a student influenced the way he appreciated his teachers.

Excerpt 17 (December 29, 2013)

אני : אני רוצה לשאול אותך עליך כסטודנט. איזה סטודנט היית ואיזה מורה היווה לגביך מודל חיקוי?

ד"ר לויין: אני הייתי סטודנט רציני, עשיתי שיעורים וזה היה קדוש. במיוחד באוניברסיטה הייתי יסודי ותמיד מוכן. חקרתי, הלכתי לספרייה, ולכן בגלל האופי שלי הערכתני מורים יותר קשוחים כמו המורה להסטוריה, המורה לעברית והמורה לביולוגיה, שבגללו הלכתי לעשות תואר ראשון בביולוגיה. היינו הרבה בנסיעות, צפינו בציפורים ובצפרדעים ועבדנו עם בעלי חיים מסוכנים כמו שועלים ונחשים. זה לימוד לחיים.

‘Ani: ‘ani rotzah lish’ol ‘otkha ‘aleikha kistudent. ‘eyze student hayita ve’eyze moreh hivah legabeykha model hikuy?

Dr. Levin: ‘ani hayiti student retsini. ‘asiti shi’urim veze haya kadosh. bimiyuḥad ba’universitah hayiti yesodi vetamid mukhan. ḥakarti, halakhti lasifriyah, velakhen biglal ha’ofi sheli he’erakhti morim yoter kshuḥim kmo hamoreh lehistoryah, hamoreh le’ivrit vehamore lebiyologya, shebiglalo halakhti la’asot to’ar rishon bebiyologyah. Hayinu harbeh binsi’ot, tsafinu betsiporim uvitsfarde’im ve’avadnu ‘im ba’aley ḥayim mesukanim kmo shu’alim uneḥashim. Ze limud laḥayim.

I: I want to ask you about yourself as a student. What kind of student were you and what type of a teacher served as a role model for you?

Dr. Levin: I was a serious student, I did my homework, and it was sacred. Especially at the university I was thorough and always ready. [I]researched, went to the library, so because of my nature I appreciated teachers who were tougher, like my History teacher, my Hebrew teacher and my Biology teacher, [who motivated me] to pursue a BA in biology. We [spent a lot of time on] traveling, we watched birds and frogs and worked with dangerous animals such as foxes and snakes. This is learning for life.

Dr. Levin was a diligent, hard-working student. Because of that, he was looking for similar traits in his teachers and found these traits in his History, Hebrew and Biology teachers. His Biology teacher left an even stronger mark on Dr. Levin, described as “learning for life.” Dr. Levin remembers his Biology teacher who took him [and others] to field trips in that they watched birds and frogs, and also worked with dangerous animals like foxes and snakes, suggesting that the “hands-on” activity of watching animals in their natural habitat left an important mark in Dr. Levin’s perception of what he considered good teaching. From this example, as well as from his choice of bringing a teacher/Samaritan to class (below), I suggest that showing things as they are and not settling for what is in the books was highly appreciated by Dr. Levin who strives to do

the same as a teacher. In this excerpt, Dr. Levin shows his appreciation for rigor and appreciation as important qualities of teachers.

Maintaining his perspective as an expert in Hebrew, Dr. Levin explains his positionality as a Hebrew grammar scholar, as shown in excerpt 2 below:

Excerpt 18 (December 29, 2013)

אני : האם קרה מקרה בו סטודנט שאל שאלה ולא ידעת את התשובה?

ד"ר לוין: זה תמיד קורה. בדרך כלל בעניינים של אטימולוגיה, לא דקדוק. דקדוק זה החיים שלי. זה השטח שלי. בארץ לימדתי סטודנטים דקדוק עברי ברמות גבוהות. גם שם, בענייני דקדוק, אני לא זוכר שזה קרה, רק בענייני אטימולוגיה.

‘Ani: ha’im karah mikreh bo student sha’al she’elah velo yada’ta ‘et hatshuvah?

Dr. Levin: Ze tamid koreh, bederekh klal be’inanim shel etimologyah. Lo dikduk. Dikduk ze haḥayim sheli. Ze hashetaḥ sheli. Ba’arets limadeti studentim dikduk ‘ivri bergamot gvohot. Gam sham, be’inenyey dikduk’ ‘ani lo zokher sheze karah, rak be’inenyey ‘Etimologyah.

I: Have you ever had a case where a student asked a question and you did not know the answer?

Dr. Levin: It always happens. Usually it is in matters of Etymology, not grammar. Grammar is my life. It is my field. In Israel I taught students high levels of Hebrew grammar. Even there, in matters of grammar, do not remember that it ever happened, only in matters of Etymology.

In excerpt 18 we see how Dr. Levin maintains his perspective as an expert in Hebrew grammar. In his West Hebrew School class, he says that there has never been a case in that a student asked him a question about grammar when Dr. Levin was not able to answer. Moreover, even in Israel, where he taught high levels of Hebrew, he cannot recall any event in that he was not able to answer a question about Hebrew grammar. This is his field, this is his life. But, Dr. Levin admits, there were many cases in that students asked questions he was not able to answer, all of these questions pertained to Etymology, out of

Dr. Levin's specialty. Dr. Levin, therefore, does not claim to be an expert in this field. Interestingly, unlike his strong stance regarding expertise in grammar (and technology, below), as well as in many other fields (including mine), he does not claim to be an expert in Etymology, although this field can be viewed as related to grammar.

Another field in that Dr. Levin exemplifies his positionality as an expert in the field of technology, as illustrated in excerpt 19 below:

Excerpt 19 (December 29, 2013)<sup>20</sup>

ד"ר לויין: מי שלא משתמש בטכנולוגיה מצוי בימי הביניים. זה עוזר, זה מעניין, זה מחייה. במיוחד בשעות שבהן אני מלמד [שעות הערב], זה הרבה יותר מאיר עיניים מבחינת התוכן ומבחינה ויזואלית. אפשר להכניס משוב מידי לשיעורים. התלמידים יכולים ללמוד את הדברים באופן אישי. אני הולך לכנסים של טכנולוגיה כדי ללמוד יותר.

Dr. Levin: mi shelo mishtamesh betekhnologya matsuy biymey habeynayim. Zeh 'ozet, zeh me'anyen, zeh mahyeh. bimyuhad basha'ot she'ani melamed [she'ot ha'erev], zeh harbeh yoter me'ir 'eynayim mibhinat hatokhen 'umibchinah visu'alit. 'Efshar lehakhnis mashov miyadi lashi'urim. Hatalmidim yekholim lilmod 'et hadvarim be'ofen 'ishi. 'ani holekh likhnasim shel tekhnologiyakedey lilmod yoter.

Dr. Levin: Those who are not using technology are in the medieval times. It helps, it's interesting, and it's refreshing. Especially at the times that I teach [evening hours], it is much more enlightening content-wise and visually. It is possible to bring immediate feedback to classes. Students can learn things individually. I go to conferences on technology to learn more.

In an interview, Dr. Levin states that teachers who do not use technology in the classroom are behind, possibly in the middle ages. Proclaiming his expert perspective, he elaborates on the advantages for using technology in the classroom, especially when classes are offered late in the day. Dr. Levin makes an effort to improve his knowledge

<sup>20</sup> This email interview was conducted in English and I present it as it was transmitted to me.

about technology by attending conferences about technology twice a year. In an email interview Dr. Levin shared his views about the benefits of using technology.

Excerpt 20 (December 29, 2013)

Technology today in education is an extremely vital tool in (any) teaching. It helps students learn and teachers teach. Students are more engaged, more interested... The classroom is now connected to the whole world... My students have the chance to interact with their classmates and people anywhere. This excites students more than anything else. After all, today's students have grown up with technology constantly since babyhood and they are more tech-inclined than the teachers. You can see them constantly sending an instant message, take pictures, email and text any type of information they would like.

In the last few years, my role as a teacher shifted from the center of teaching and learning to become more a coach and advisor, supervising, supporting and facilitating, rather than simply listened to. It is not just based on a textbook – reading and writing... My students can find my (large number of) handouts on my website, and access them from anywhere without claiming “I didn't have the handout.

In this email, Dr. Levin explains why technology is important. His reply reads like a lecture about using technology in the classroom, a typical reply from an expert. Looking at students in general, not just his own students, Dr. Levin asserts that students grow up with technology constantly since babyhood. Describing his role as a teacher in a world that is based on technology, Dr. Levin aligns himself with the widespread trend to include technology in the classroom. As this email suggests, Dr. Levin discusses technology with similar conviction as he would discuss other subjects he has studied, such as the rules of Hebrew.

Dr. Levin compares his beliefs with those of teachers who are reluctant to use technology in their classes.

Excerpt 21 (January 5, 2014)

Some teachers think that if they visit the computer lab every other week, they have done their job to integrate technology. In our school, teachers generally use

technology more for communication and administrative purposes than for instruction, and are still clinging on to the traditional ways. I hear from colleagues in many schools that many veteran teachers shy away from technology because they are afraid of it, or because they stick to their old ways and are afraid of changing what they have been teaching for decades. Just because they are uncomfortable with technology, teachers should not feel uncomfortable. Teachers can learn alongside their students, and there is no shame in admitting that. The shame is NOT integrating technology. Again: Teachers who are not technologically comfortable cannot use technology or change their teaching ways, unless they are offered the keys to incorporate it – technology person and training. Dr. Levin compares his practices with those of other teachers in general and teachers from his school more specifically. He mentions teachers who perceive themselves as integrating technology into their curriculum simply by visiting the language lab twice a week. More specifically, he mentions teachers at West Hebrew School who use technology for administrative purposes, but are reluctant to use technology in the classroom because of what he views as fear or intimidation, or because of convenience, as they prefer to stick to “what they have been teaching for decades.” Dr. Levin shares his expert positionality and expresses his belief that teachers “should not feel uncomfortable” using technology. By doing that, he establishes himself as an expert in using technology in the classroom, thus distancing himself from those teachers (generally and more specifically in his school) who do not use enough technology in his view.

Dr. Levin’s classroom practices, especially in light of his strong stance on the need for technology, had very little technology. The classes I observed included very little technology, if at all. Classes usually had a very similar format: Two or three students sitting in a semi-circle and Dr. Levin sits in front of them. I usually joined this semi-circle and contributed to these classes as was asked of me. Students brought articles they had discussed the previous class, and Dr. Levin engaged in discussing these articles

with the students again. The Smart Board was hardly used and I could not notice any use of other technological tools in the classes I observed, with two exceptions: Once was when a famous Israeli singer and an icon in the Israeli society passed away unexpectedly. Dr. Levin used his Smart Board to have the students listen to one of his songs. On another occasion Dr. Levin used the Smart Board to teach about a prominent Israel poet whose poems became songs. To clarify, these were two observed class sessions with some technology, out of thirteen class sessions I observed. There was another occasion in that I observed Dr. Levin's students using technology, and that was when I taught Dr. Levin's class as he was absent. Students used Dr. Levin's website to download articles and worksheets and studied them together as they were preparing for an exam. Dr. Levin's strong expertise in technology did not map onto his classroom activities, at least not the ones I observed.

When I asked Dr. Levin, why I did not get the chance to observe this technology put to practice in his classroom, he replied that there were special circumstances that prevented him from using much technology that semester, such as some physical problems he himself was experiencing as well as an unusually small number of students (just 2-3) who participated in his class that semester, that prevented him from using technology to enhance a group work. In another occasion, I watched Dr. Levin demonstrating his software in a College In the Schools (CIS) teacher workshop, in that he shared his software with other teachers.

It is worth mentioning, though, that Dr. Levin's website that is constantly updated has everything he shares with his students, including homework assignments and other

material that can serve as scaffolding for students outside of class. It has links to other websites that enhance student ability to access authentic material such as Israeli media. The ability to know exactly what homework is assigned is extremely helpful for parents and administration personnel who are capable of following Dr. Levin's classroom progress. This strong conviction Dr. Levin has, that technology is an important tool, is also apparent in the way he persuaded other teachers in West Hebrew School to come up with their own websites. He also offered his technical help to those who were intimidated by this expectation.

Maintaining expert positionality by using explicit declarative factual knowledge (Andrews, 2007) is important to Dr. Levin even when it is not he himself who is the expert. For example, when I visited his class one evening he taught the students some slang Hebrew expressions that were derived from Arabic. Knowing that I engaged in scholarly work in Arabic in the past, earning a graduate degree, he emphasized to his students that I was an expert in Arabic:

Excerpt 22 (November 13, 2013)

רננה היא המומחית לערבית . היא למדה ערבית באוניברסיטה והיא כמעט כתבה דוקטוראט בערבית.

Renana he hamumhit le'aravit. He lamdah 'aravit ba'universita vehe kim'at katvah doktorat be'aravit.

Dr. Levin: Renana is an expert on Arabic. She studied Arabic at the university and she almost wrote a Ph.D. in Arabic.

This time Dr. Levin's expert positionality is centered on me. Dr. Levin tells the students that I know Arabic, and from this point I became the teacher in this class. The students have a list of Arabic phrases that are also used in Hebrew, and I was expected to explain

them to the students, moving me from the role of observer to “participant as observer” (Merriam, 2009, p. 124). Throughout this class session, students continued asking me about the way these expressions are used in Hebrew.

When we discussed our role as teachers, Dr. Levin asserted his expert status in the area of Hebrew pronunciation. In one of our interviews Dr. Levin highlighted the fact that our students have very little exposure to Hebrew pronunciation and they rely on what they hear from us, Hebrew teachers, for learning Hebrew pronunciation. But Dr. Levin’s pronunciation is not like mine, in his view, as illustrated in excerpt 7 below:

Excerpt 23 (November 22, 2013)

צריך לזכור שאנחנו המקור היחידי כמעט. מצד שני, אנחנו לא מייצגים את כל העברית. אני לא מדבר בסלנג. מצד שני-זו השפה ואנחנו צריכים ללמד שפה אותנטית. גם מבטא, אני הוגה נכון את העיצורים, אבל אני לא דובר מייצג את השפה, את מייצגת אותה. לכן חשוב להראות סרטים וקטעי וידאו, למרות שאני לא מראה הרבה.

Tsariḥ lizkor she’anahnu hamakor hayehidi kim’at. Mitsad sheni, anahnu lo meyatsegim ‘et kol ha’ivrit. ‘ani lo medaber bislang. Mitsad sheni-zo hasafah ve’anahnu tsriḥim lelamd safah ‘otentit. Gam mivta. ‘Ani hogeh nakhon ‘et ha’itsurim ‘aval ‘ani lo gorem meyatseg ‘et hasafah. ‘at meyatseget ‘otah. Lakhen ḥashuv lehar’ot sratim vekit’ey video, lamrot she’ani lo mar’eh harbeh.

You have to remember that we [teachers] are almost the only source. On the other hand, we do not represent all of the Hebrew. I do not speak slang. On the other hand – this is the language and we need to teach authentic language. Also accent, I pronounce the consonants correctly, but I am not a [genuine] representative of the language. You are. It is therefore important to show movies and videos, even though I do not show much.

In this excerpt Dr. Levin acknowledges how his formal phonetically correct as well as high register Hebrew, which does not include slang, is different than mine, even though we are both educated native speakers of Hebrew. Asserting his superiority over me, Dr. Levin notes that my pronunciation represents the language more authentically, in his

view, maybe because I use some slang, or because I pronounce some phonemes differently.<sup>21</sup> Being our students' (almost) only source for Hebrew, we should find a way to expose them to various levels of Hebrew, beyond what we as native speakers of Hebrew can demonstrate. Dr. Levin's language knowledge and expertise, intersected with his language teacher awareness (Borg, 2006) reveal the challenges foreign language teachers have, when the language properties they possess and able to offer students are so heavily connected to their own [teachers] background and expertise, such as the way teachers pronounce their native language.

### **Learning by Knowing**

As stated above, Dr. Levin's positionality as an expert is very important for understanding his beliefs as a Hebrew teacher. Unlike some teachers who engage in teaching heritage languages to create an image of the society they hope their students will form (Cummins, 2001), Dr. Levin views his role as the one who enriches students' knowledge. As an expert in both Hebrew and instructional technology, Dr. Levin possesses both knowledge and the means to access that knowledge (Nespor, 1987). As a Hebrew scholar who used to teach Hebrew grammar to Native Hebrew speakers at a university in Israel, Dr. Levin has the knowledge to teach Hebrew to West Hebrew School students who study Hebrew as a foreign language. As someone who values grammar constructs in his own foreign language learning (German), as shown above, Dr.

---

<sup>21</sup> Hebrew uses two phonetic realizations: Two allophones (1) Voiced uvular roll or frictionless continuant and (2) emphatic velarized or uvularized linguo-alveolar roll (Khan, 1997). Dr. Levin uses emphatic velarized or uvularized linguo-alveolar roll R as is common among Israelis who originate from Eastern Europe or from Arabic speaking countries, and I use Voiced uvular roll, typical native Israeli. My pronunciation is considered more authentic than Dr. Levin's, but his pronunciation is considered the better one by the rules of Hebrew.



‘Ani: ‘Ad kamah hamisgeret misaviv makhtivah lekhga mah lelamed ‘o ma lo lelamed?

Dr. Levin: hamisgeret hayehidah he zo shel hauniversita uvishvili he hamisgeret haminimalit. Hatalmidim sheli lomdim harbeh me’ever letsipiyot ha’universita’iyot harishmiyot ‘al haniyar. ‘ani doresh me’atzmi yoter ki ‘ani tsarikh lehakhin harbeh yoter.

I: ten years from now, when your students will be asked what they remember from your lessons except the knowledge of Hebrew, what do you think they would say?

Dr. Levin: That's a good question. Teaching is much more than teaching linguistic elements. This is thinking in the language, this is the love of what this language represents, the properties of the language it is what influenced the language. It is no less important than linguistic teaching the basic elements of the language. Examples: songs, stories, society, the composition of the society, the composition of the population, the national composition, the ethnic and religious composition, therefore my students each year learn about the Cherkess, and Druze, the Karaites and Samaritans, the Muslims<sup>22</sup>, the history of this ensemble, and so on.

I: In what way does the framework around you [school administration and university rules] dictate what to teach or what not to teach?

Dr. Levin: The only framework for me is that of the university and for me it is setting the minimum. My students are learning far beyond the official expectations of the university. I demand more of myself, therefore I need to prepare a lot more.

Dr. Levin wants his students to know and love Hebrew language and everything this language represents, what he calls “properties of the language,” represented by the history of Hebrew and what influenced this language, canonized texts that show historical facts, according to Dr. Levin. Dr. Levin does not teach texts that reflect current political debates that are likely not considered “properties of language” by Dr. Levin. Avoiding politics at all cost, Dr. Levin refrains from teaching anything that would discuss current Israeli politics, as another realization of the boundaries he sets himself. For example, Dr.

---

<sup>22</sup> Minorities in Israel

Levin wants the students to know Hebrew literature as it is reflected in poems/songs<sup>23</sup> and stories. Dr. Levin wants his students to remember what he perceives to be the properties of the language, that are, among other things, the history of the people who live in Israel and speak the language. Since Hebrew is spoken in Israel as a native language, students need to learn about Israel, including the various religious and ethnic groups who live in Israel and their history. Dr. Levin highlights the content of what he perceives as the properties of the Hebrew, but interestingly he does not mention Judaism. I interpret that as pertaining to the way he perceives me, a fellow teacher in the same imagined community. Dr. Levin does not say what is obvious to both of us, that the way to foster his students' Jewish identity is to teach them about Hebrew speaking Israelis, the majority in Israel, and about Judaism, the most prominent religion in Israel. This concept of practice includes what is said and what is left unsaid, subtle cues that are a part of social practice between people who are both members of the same imagined community (Anderson, 2006).

In an unrecorded conversation I had with Dr. Levin, he was very explicit about the way he perceives his role as a Hebrew teacher. In his view, maintaining Jewish identity cannot be achieved only by exercising Jewish religious rituals such as prayer. Students need to be able to think for themselves and negotiate their role in the Jewish imagined community (Anderson, 2006), and this process of negotiation should be supported by knowledge of facts about Judaism (only facts that are not political, facts that do not show any negativity pertaining to Judaism). His role is to provide the facts and allow students to negotiate and even own these facts as a part of their identity formation.

---

<sup>23</sup> Songs and poems are the same word in Hebrew

As a CIS teacher, Dr. Levin is expected to maintain class rigor by teaching texts that have a high level of Hebrew, beyond a proficiency level that is presumably reached at the end of the intermediate level. Knowing that I am the university CIS faculty coordinator, he mentions that he maintains a level of teaching that is higher than what is expected by the university. This is puzzling because there is no exact description of what is to be taught at the advanced level class I observed. If the expectation is to maintain rigor, there is no room for saying that he does more than what is expected. I interpret that as an attempt to clarify that as someone who is supposed to transmit knowledge to his students, he is doing it well enough, even beyond what he perceived as the expectation.

Knowing that grammar is Dr. Levin's field and a source of pride, I ask him about the way he teaches new grammar. Dr. Levin teaches both the intermediate and the advanced level Hebrew at West Hebrew School. The intermediate level focuses on grammar, while the advanced level shifts the focus from grammar to literature. When asked about the way he teaches new grammar, Dr. Levin explains how he makes sure that his students master knowledge about Hebrew, and that what they learn from him goes far beyond what they need for Hebrew.

Excerpt 25 (December 29, 2013)

אני: איך אתה מלמד דקדוק שהם אינם מכירים?  
 ד"ר לוי: שוב: שאלות מצוינות. ההסבר צריך להיות באנגלית. הבעיה היא שלתלמידים האמריקאים אין ידע מספיק במונחים בלשניים. אין להם גישה לדקדוק. זה ידוע בעולם. בבתי הספר התיכוניים לא מלמדים מינוח. כשאני מלמד מילות יחס, אני מסביר את המינוח באנגלית ואז אני עובר לעברית. מאחר שיש הרבה תרגומי שאילה, זה עוזר לתלמידים. הם יכולים תמיד לבדוק בתמסירים ולקבל הסברים.

'ani: 'eikh 'atah melamed dikduk shehem 'eynam makirim?

Dr. Levin: shuv, she'elot metsuyanot. hahasber tsarikh lihyot be'anglit. habe'ayah he shelatalmidim ha'amerika'iyim 'eyn yeda maspik bemunaḥim balshaniyim. 'eyn lahem gishah ledikduk. Ze yadu'a ba'olam. Bevatey hasefer hatikhoniyim lo melamdim minuah. Kshe'ani melamed milot yaḥas, 'ani masbir 'et haminuah be'Anglit ve'az 'ani 'over le'Ivrit. Me'achar sheyesh harbeh tirkumey she'ilah, zeh ozer latalmidim. Hem yekholim tamid livdok batamsirim 'ulekabel hesberim.

I: How do you teach grammar that they do not know?

Dr. Levin: again, excellent questions. The explanation must be in English. The problem is that the American students do not know enough linguistic terms. They do not have access to grammar. It is known in the world. High schools do not teach terminology. When I teach prepositions, I explain the terminology in English and then I switch to Hebrew. Since there are many borrowed translations, it helps students. They can always check handouts and explanations.

Dr. Levin believes that grammar should be taught explicitly. Dr. Levin wants to make sure students know Hebrew constructs. In order to do that, he writes the explanation in English to make sure they understand it completely, in their native language, and read it before class, not during his “Hebrew only” classroom teaching. The need for explicit knowledge about the language (Andrews, 2007) is specifically important to Dr. Levin’s American students because, according to him, they don’t have sufficient background to master grammar knowledge even in English. By teaching them grammatical terminology he is enriching their knowledge about English, not just Hebrew. This is yet another example for the way Dr. Levin, a native Israeli, perceives himself as a Hebrew teacher in the US, one who is competent and knowledgeable to teach English grammar terminology to his American students. Another example for Dr. Levin’s perceptions regarding the need for explicit form-based instruction is his final exam in that 50% of the questions were about grammar. This study views these examples as evidence that Dr. Levin’s beliefs about form-based instruction clearly mapped onto his classroom practices.

### Text-choice as a Vehicle for Influencing Students' Jewish Identity Negotiation

Dr. Levin's own secularity, as well as his expert positionality and strong national feelings towards Israel, determine the type of texts he deems appropriate for teaching. Looking at Dr. Levin's reply about material he believes are suitable for teaching, Dr. Levin mentioned Hebrew songs.<sup>24</sup> In a class I observed, Dr. Levin taught a song written by a canonized Israeli poet, Naomi Shemer. This song is "Lashir zeh kmo lihyot yarden" (to sing is like being the Jordan River). In this song, the poet describes the path of the Jordan River in Israel. The river starts in the north, cold, young, with the sound of hummingbirds. It continues south growing old until it gets to the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. Below is one stanza taken from this song:

לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן / נעמי שמר

(1) לשיר

(2) זה כמו להיות ירדן

(3) אתה מתחיל למעלה בצפון

(4) צונן, צעיר, שוצף ומתחצף.

(5) אתה שומע צפורים בסבך

(6) וכל אחת מהן

(7) ציפור גן-עדן

(8) כי לשיר

(9) זה כמו להיות ירדן

#### 1) Lashir

---

<sup>24</sup> In various informal conversations I had with Dr. Levin in the past I learned that he liked teaching Israeli songs. This study cannot attest to the number or frequency of classes per semester in which Dr. Levin teaches songs.

- 2) zeh kmo lihyot yarden
- 3) 'atah mathil lema'lah batsafon
- 4) Tsonen, tsa'ir, shotsef 'umithatsef
- 5) 'atah shome'a tsiporim basvakh
- 6) Vekhol 'ahat mehen
- 7) tsipor gan-'eden
- 8) Ki lashir
- 9) Zeh kmo lihyot yarden

- 1) To sing
- 2) Is like being the Jordan
- 3) You start up north
- 4) Cool, young, slashing and insolent.
- 5) You hear birds tangle
- 6) And each bird is
- 7) A heavenly bird
- 8) Because to sing
- 9) Is like being the Jordan

Dr. Levin started to teach this song to his students by distributing the printed song together with a Hebrew English glossary that should serve as scaffolding for the students. Alongside the words of the song and the glossary, this printed page has an analysis of that song written in Hebrew, done by Dr. Levin. According to this analysis, this song is a

metaphor for human life. Life starts young, fresh and unruly, the world smiles at it, the birds are chirping at it. It continues towards the south, but is declining, and instead of humming birds it has wild grass growing around it, that is a metaphor for difficulties human beings encounter. But people, like the river, are not afraid of difficulties and continue living like the flowing river.

Dr. Levin uses a Smart Board to have the students listen to the song. They see the words on the screen as well as photos of this river. This clip was taken from an Israeli song contest, similar to American Idol in the US. While the song is playing, students see photos of famous Israeli singers who participate as judges in the contest. Dr. Levin speaks with the students while the singer is singing, elaborating on the Israeli singers whose images are shown on the board. The students seem interested, one of them, Eytan, seems to have heard about these singers in the past.

Excerpt 26 (October 16, 2013)

ד"ר לויין: זה השיר הכי יפה שאני מכיר  
 ד"ר לויין : לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן. אתם יודעים מה זה ירדן?

איתן : זה נהר...

ד"ר לויין: איזה מקום אתם מכירים בישראל על יד... (מי רוצה להסתכל?) (פורש את המפה). המקום הזה. המקום החם ביותר בישראל הוא עמק הירדן. יותר חם מהנגב. זה חום לח. מאוד קשה לחיות בעמק הירדן, בית שאן והקיבוצים. איזור טרופי. הקיבוצים והמושבים מגדלים דברים טרופיים כמו מקסיקו. בקיבוצים יש פפאיייה ואבוקדו. התפוזים טובים. מתוקים. למה? בגלל מזג האוויר החם. זה מצוין בשביל פירות. אבל בשיר שלנו זה טוב ולא טוב כי יש עשב פרא.

Dr. Levin: zeh hasher hakhi yafe she'ani maker.

Dr. Levin: lashir zeh kmo lihyot yarden. 'atem yod'im mah zeh yarden?

Eytan: zeh nahar...

Dr. Levin: eyzeh makom ‘atem makirim beyisra’el ‘al yad... (mi rotseh lehistakel?) (Spreading the map). Hamakom hazeh. Hamakom haḥam beyoter beyisrael hu ‘emek hayarden. Yoter ḥam mehanegev. Zeh ḥom laḥ. Me’od kasheh liḥyot be’emek hayarden, beyt she’an vehakibbutsim. Ezor tropi. Hakibbutsim vehamoshavim megadlim dvarim tropiyim kmo meksiko. Bakibbutsim yesh papaya ve’avokado. Hatapuzim tovim. Metukim. Lamah? Biglal mezeg ha’avir haḥam. Zeh metsuyan bishvil peyrot. ‘aval bashir shelanu zeh tov velo tov ki yesh ‘esev pere.

Dr. Levin: To sing is like being Yarden. Do you know what [is the meaning of the word] Yarden?

Eytan: It’s a river...

Dr. Levin: What place do you know in Israel by... (who wants to look?) (spreading the map). This place. The warmest place in Israel is the Jordan Valley. Warmer than the Negev<sup>25</sup>. This is a moist heat. It is very difficult to live in the Jordan Valley, Beit Shean<sup>26</sup> and the kibbutzim. Tropical zone. Kibbutz and Moshav grow tropical things like Mexico. Kibbutzim have papaya and avocado. Oranges are good and sweet. Why? Because of the warm weather. It is excellent for fruit. But in our song that's good and bad because it is (sometimes) a wild or overgrown grass.

Dr. Levin uses this opportunity to teach his students about the geography of Israel.

He stands by the map of Israel hanging on the wall in his classroom. After teaching the song he shows the students the path of the Jordan River in the Jordan Valley in Israel. He points at the northern part of Israel, where the river starts and then shows its path until it pours into the Dead Sea. Dr. Levin tells the students about Bet She’an that is a city by the Jordan River, as well as kibbutzim and moshavim<sup>27</sup> by that city. Dr. Levin uses this song to teach students about the weather in this part of Israel, as well as the way this weather influences what people grow in this area. As a native Israeli, who likely knows this part

---

<sup>25</sup> A region

<sup>26</sup> A city

<sup>27</sup> Kibbutz and Moshav are various dwelling options in Israel.

of Israel, Dr. Levin shares his knowledge about this part of Israel with his students. Dr. Levin teaches this mini geography lesson in the context of Naomi Shemer's song.

This study views this choice of teaching this specific song as an evidence for Dr. Levin's beliefs about teaching. In line with what he stated in an interview (see above), he teaches Israeli songs. Through songs he teaches about Israel, its geography and agriculture. The choice of this specific song, which is one of Dr. Levin's favorite songs (as stated in an unrecorded conversation), is evidence for Dr. Levin's politics as well. Naomi Shemer, the songwriter is considered an acclaimed Israeli poet with right wing political inclination. As a nationalistic patriot, it is easier for her to be considered an important building block in the Israeli literary cannon, worthy enough for Dr. Levin's students, good enough as a means for fostering Jewish identity in Dr. Levin's class. Dr. Levin's choice to teach this text is yet another evidence for Dr. Levin's beliefs about his role as a Hebrew teacher in West Hebrew School, as someone who strengthens students' Jewish identity and sense of belonging to the Jewish community. This song reinforces students' nationalistic views about Israel without exposing them to any current debate that might harm this process and even add an unwanted, possibly negative component to the students' negotiation of meaning pertaining to their Jewish identity.

In line with Dr. Levin's beliefs about teaching stated above, he chooses to another song, "Uf Gozal." The timing of teaching this song is important. Arik Einstein, a mainstream Israeli singer, one who was considered among the best Israeli singers, if not the best, died unexpectedly on November 26, 2013, a few days before this class. Israelis in Israel and around the world were saddened by this untimely death, and the Israeli

media played Arik Einstein's songs continuously. Dr. Levin and I shared this sad feeling with each other and Dr. Levin decided to share these sad feelings with his students by teaching one of Arik Einstein's famous songs, "Uf Gozal" (Fly, oh offspring). This song is about a bird whose offspring left the nest and about this bird's worry about the well being of its offspring while out of the nest. The students are familiar with this song and its lyrics and sing along as well. After they listen to the song Dr. Levin asks the students about their feeling when they listen to the song:

Excerpt 27 (December 11, 2013)

ד"ר לויין: מה אתם מרגישים כשאתם שומעים את השיר?  
אתם אוהבים את המוסיקה של השיר?

חוה (סטודנטית): כן.

Dr. Levin: Ma 'atem margishim kshe' atem shom'im 'et hasher?  
'atem 'ohavim 'et hanusika shel hasher?

Eve (student): ken.

Dr. Levine: What do you feel when you hear the song?  
You love the music of the song?

Eve (student): Yes.

Eytan is reading the words of the songs and makes some mistakes, but Dr. Levin does not correct them.

Excerpt 28 (December 11, 2013)

ד"ר לויין: מה יש לנו? גוזלים, קן וציפור זקנה. מי הם הגוזלים?

חוה: הילדים.

ד"ר לויין: בני כמה הם? בערך?

חוה: איך אומרים הם עזבו את הבית.

איתן: הם בני שמונה עשרה. הם עזבו לאוניברסיטה.

ד"ר לויין: מי הציפור?

חוה: אבא או אימא.

חוה: "תמיד ידעתי שיבוא היום..."

ד"ר לויין: "תמיד ידעתי שיבוא היום שצריך להיפרד." מי נפרד?

חוה: הגוזלים.

ד"ר לויין: "מה הפלא.."

איתן: מה זה "פלא"?

Dr. Levin: ma yesh lanu? Gozalim, ken vetsiporzkenah. Mi hem hagozalim?

Eve: Hayeladim.

Dr. Levin: Bnei kamah hem? B'erekh?

Eve: Eikh 'omrim age hem 'azvu 'et habayit.

Eytan: hem bnei shmone'esreh. Hem 'azvu la'universita.

Dr. Levin: Mi hatsipor?

Eve: 'aba 'o 'ima.

Eve: "tamid yada'ti sheyavo hayom..."

Dr. Levin: "Tamid yada'ti sheyavo hayom shetsarikh lehipared." Mi nifrad?

Eve: Hagozalim.

Dr. Levin: "Mah hapele..."

Eytan: Mah zeh pele?

Dr. Levin: What do we have? Chicks, nest and an old bird. Who are the chicks?

Eve: children.

Dr. Levin: How old are they? Approximately?

Eve: How to say age, when people leave the house.

Eytan: they are eighteen years old. They left for college.

Dr. Levin: Who is the bird?

Eve: a father or mother.

Eve: "I always knew the day would come..."

Dr. Levin: "I always knew the day would come that we should say goodbye."  
Who is saying goodbye?

Eve: the chicks.

Dr. Levine: "No wonder..."

Eytan: What is this "wonder"?

The students seem very enthusiastic to learn this song. They are familiar with this song, possibly from Hebrew summer camps that teach Israeli Hebrew songs. Now they get to learn it in the context of Hebrew class. Dr. Levin explains the grammar and the various Hebrew constructs in this song. He maintains only Hebrew, even though at times it requires a lengthy Hebrew explanation. The students turn to me as a participant observer, hoping to hear some English from me. All of us sing it again, this time without using the clip.

By teaching this song to these students, Dr. Levin connected between their life inside and outside of classroom in several ways: This song reminds the students of their happy memories from summer Hebrew camps. They listened to these songs at camp,

probably without delving into the various meanings of this song and the history of the singer. I notice their happy faces while singing it as well as the fact that they knew the words by heart (possibly without knowing their meaning). Dr. Levin found another way to connect this song with his students' current life. These two students are high school seniors who are looking into going to college in a few months. The episode of offspring leaving the nest reminds the students of their situation, leaving their parents at home, that is the nest in this song, heading to college. They seem very enthusiastic to talk about this topic in Hebrew. In comparison with Dr. Levin's other classes I observed, this is the only time when Dr. Levin managed to connect his classroom material to students' current life, teaching them a song that they know and like, giving them an opportunity to discuss their current situation, on a verge of leaving their nests. Dr. Levin taught a well-known Hebrew song that has content that is meaningful to his students. It is famous in Israel and the fact that the singer has just passed away makes this text very current to both Dr. Levin and his students, unlike the other texts Dr. Levin chose to teach.

Following his beliefs about content worth teaching, Dr. Levin taught his students about the Samaritans, an ethnic group in Israel who perceive themselves as the genuine Israelis. Dr. Levin shared with me a text about the Samaritans that elaborates on the meaning of the word "Samaritans" or "Shomronim" in Hebrew. The text explains the root of the word as connected to the verb "Shamar" in Hebrew that means to observe or to protect. Samaritans, according to the article, are those who observed the original Judaism. The article then describes the history of the Samaritans starting from the year 722 BCE and includes some quotes from the Hebrew Bible. The article explains the history of the

Samaritans over the years until present days, describing the way they live in modern Israel today. Students are informed about the principles of Samaritans' beliefs, and their customs and practices as observed until today. It ends by offering questions in Hebrew, pertaining to the facts the article offers. The answers to the questions are found in the text.

Maintaining his beliefs about teaching facts, Dr. Levin taught this text about the Samaritans to his students and elaborated on its content answering many questions that students had. In another class session, Dr. Levin shares with his students that he has plans to host Mr. Tsedek (pseudonym) another teacher from West Hebrew School who is a Samaritan.

Excerpt 29 (December 18, 2013)

ד"ר לויין: אני הזמנתי את מר צדק שיבוא לדבר בכיתה.

איתן: מה באמת?

ד"ר לויין: כן, מר צדק התפלל בעברית שומרנית. זאת עברית אחרת. אז הוא יבוא ויביא תמונות של סבא שלו ואנחנו נדבר ונשאל שאלות. הוא אומר ששומרנים הם יהודים, היהודים הראשונים האמיתיים. כמו שיש יהודים רפורמים. הם לא מאמינים במשנה ובתלמוד.

חוה (מתעניינת): אז האמונה שלהם אחרת?

ד"ר לויין: בחנוכה אנחנו מתפללים: אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וציוונו להדליק נר של חנוכה. איפה אלוהים ציווה? הרבנים. אבל הם לא אלוהים. זאת הבעייה לפי השומרנים.

Dr. Levin: 'Ani hizmanti 'et mar Tsedek sheyavo ledaber bakitah.

Eytan: Mah? Be'emet?

Dr. Levin: ken. Mar Tsedek hitpalel be'ivrit shomronit. Zot 'ivrit 'aḥeret. 'az hu yavo veyavi' tmunot shel saba shelo ve'anahnu nedaber venish'al sh'elot. Hu 'omer sheshomronim hem yehudim, hayehudim harishonim ha'mitiyim. Kmo sheyesh yehudim reformiyim. Hem lo ma'aminim bamishna uvatalmud.

Eve (interested): ‘az ha’emunah shelahem ‘aḥeret?

Dr. Levin: baḥanukah ‘anahnu mitpalelim ‘asher kidshanu bemitsvotav vetsivanu lehadlik ner shel ḥanukah. ‘eifo ‘elohim tsivah? Harabanim. ‘aval hem lo ‘elohim. Zot hab’ayah lefi hashomronim.

Dr. Levin: I invited Mr. Tsedek to come and speak in class.

Eytan: Really?

Dr. Levin: Yes. Mr. Tsedek prays in Samaritan Hebrew. It’s a different Hebrew. Then he will come and bring pictures of his grandfather and we will talk and ask questions. He says the Samaritans were Jews, the first real Jews. The same way there are Reform Jews. They do not believe in the Mishnah and Talmud.<sup>28</sup>

Eve (student) (interested): So their faith is different?

Dr. Levin: In Hanukkah we pray (cites the prayer) is this God’s commandment? No, it’s the rabbi’s commandment. But they are not God. This is a problem, according to the Samaritans.

In this class session, students are getting themselves acquainted with the topic of the Samaritans. They have not read the article about the Samaritans yet, and Dr. Levin raises their interest level by informing them that after the break they will actually discuss the subject of Samaritan with a teacher that is Samaritan, a teacher they all know. The students learn from Dr. Levin about the way Mr. Tsedek prays and that he is using Samaritan Hebrew words in his prayer. Dr. Levin explains that this is a different branch of Judaism and reminds the students that Reform Judaism is also considered a different branch of Judaism, similar to the fact the Samaritans’ Judaism back in the days was also considered different. Dr. Levin asks me to read the article out loud thus using my help as a Hebrew reader, and I read while Dr. Levin asks the students questions pertaining to the content of this article. Dr. Levin’s uses his secular perspective to explain to the students

---

<sup>28</sup> Books of Jewish law

that some basic Jewish rituals, such as the blessings in Hanukah are not from God, but rather from the rabbis, and thus form a problem for the Samaritans who believe in God, but not in the rabbis who interpret what is perceived as God's words. By choosing to teach this text Dr. Levin offers his students with alternative forms of participation that can be perceived as a new source of identity, different from what these students were used to get from other sources in their Jewish education. Dr. Levin shakes the foundation of his students' formal Jewish education by saying that what rabbis said is not necessarily committing, just a human interpretation of divine commandments. The choice Dr. Levin made to teach this text can be viewed as a way to express his own secular views about Judaism that might align with those of the Samaritans. Dr. Levin's affinity for fact-based education is underscored here when he uses the opportunity to get a first-hand affirmation of his views by having a teacher who is originally Samaritan support Dr. Levin's views.

Another text Dr. Levin took from the internet is titled מיהו יהודי Mihu Yehudi [Who (counts as) a Jew]. This text discusses the issue of how people determined Jewish status throughout the years. In this scaffolded article that includes some English, Dr. Levin elaborates on Israeli law, law of return<sup>29</sup> and some specific examples of debates pertaining to the definition of Jewishness. This article elaborates on the ways people can join or leave Judaism, as well as some examples pertaining to the way the question of Judaism was handled by anti-Semitic regimes throughout history. This article has various questions for class discussion, in that students are expected to demonstrate understanding of the text as well as be able to express their opinion. In this article Dr. Levin includes some controversies pertaining to people's Jewish identity.

---

<sup>29</sup> The law that grants Jews Israeli citizenship

I was not present when Dr. Levin taught this article. In an informal conversation I had with Dr. Levin after teaching this article to his students, Dr. Levin told me about his students' reactions and feedback to studying this article. More specifically, Dr. Levin sent me his recollection of the discussions with his students. This discussion was sent to me via email. This study treats this conversation the same way it treats other observed and transcribed verbatim.

Excerpt 30 (sent to me on June 1, 2014)

ד"ר לויין: למה אתם צריכים לדעת למה ואיך אתם יהודים? האם הייתם מפסיקים להיות יהודים אילו עזבתם את היהדות? מה קורה במדינות כמו בריטניה וצרפת בשאלה מיהו יהודי? איך זה שונה מכאן, מארה"ב?

איתן (סטודנט): תמיד הייתי צריך להסביר לחברים לא יהודים איך אני יהודי, ומה זה להיות יהודי. הרגשתי מבולבל, כי התשובה היתה, פחות או יותר, שנולדתי יהודי. אבל מה זה בדיוק, להגדיר את זה בצורה הגיונית ואמיתית, לא יכולתי. היום לא רק שאני יודע, אני גם מחפש כל הזדמנות להסביר ולתת דוגמות.

אריאל (סטודנט): אפילו עם המשפחה שלי הייתי ציני מאוד כשהיינו מדברים על הנושא. אמרו לי שאני צריך להרגיש יהודי, ולהרגיש גאה להיות יהודי, אבל אני רוצה לחשוב, לא רק להרגיש, ורציתי לדעת במה אני צריך להיות גאה. למדתי שאם אני צריך "להרגיש", ההרגשה הזאת יכולה תמיד להשתנות, כמו כל הרגשות.

Dr. Levin: Lamah 'atem tsrikhim lada'at lamah v'eikh 'atem yehudim? Ha'im hayitem mafsikim lihyot yehudim 'ilu 'azavtem 'et hayahadut? Ma koreh bimdinot kmo Britanya vetsarfah beshe'elah mihu Yehudi? Eikh ze shoneh mikan, me'arhav?

'Eytan (student): Tamid hayiti tsarikh lehasbir lehavrim lo yehudim 'eykh 'ani Yehudi 'umah zeh lihyot Yehudi. Hirgashti mevulbal, ki hateshuvah haytah, paḥot 'o yoter, shenoladeti Yehudi. 'Aval mah zeh bidiyuk , lehadgir 'et zeh betsurah hegyonit ve'amitit, lo yakholiti. Hayom lo rak she'ani yode'a, 'ani gam mehapes kol hizdamnut lehasbir velatet dugmot.

'Ariel (student): 'Afilu 'im hamishpaḥah sheli hayiti tsini me'od kshehayinu medabrim 'al hanoseh. 'Amru li she'ani tsarikh lehargish Yehudi, 'ulehargish ge'eh lihyot Yehudi, 'aval 'ani rotse laḥshov, lo rak lehargish, veratsiti lada'at

bemah ‘ani tsarikh lihyot ge’eh. Lamadeti she’im ‘ani tsarikh “lehargish” hahargashah hazot yekholah tamid lehishtanot, kmo kol haregashot.

Dr. Levin: Why do you need to know why and how you are Jewish? Would you stop being "Jewish" if you” left Judaism" What happens in countries like Britain and France in the question of who is a Jew, how is it different from here in the U.S.?

Eytan (student): I always had to explain to non-Jews how I am a Jew, and what it means to be Jewish. I felt confused, because the answer was, more or less, I was born a Jew. But I could not define what exactly it is. Today not only do I know, I'm also looking for any opportunity to explain and give examples.

Ariel (student): Even with my family I was very cynical when we were talking about the subject. They told me I need to feel Jewish, and feel proud to be Jewish, but I like to think, not only feel, and I wanted to know what I should be proud of. I learned that if I have to "feel", that feeling can always change, like all emotions.

Dr. Levin quotes what his students commented about being Jewish. They explain how they were expected to feel Jewish and be proud of their religion without knowing what it really meant. According to Dr. Levin, they needed knowledge about Judaism in order to be proud of their religion, because when people are expected to feel they belong to a religion, they need to know more about this religion in order to sustain this feeling. American students' Jewish identity is fostered by the expectation to feel Jewish because this is how they were born. Dr. Levin wishes to give his students a foundation that would strengthen their Jewish identity and give them some tools to negotiate this identity. In an unrecorded conversation I had with Dr. Levin, he stated that his choice of texts is dictated by his desire to teach the students about Judaism from a historical point of view. For him, practicing Jewish rituals like going to the synagogue or celebrating Jewish holidays is not enough to sustain this membership in the Jewish community if not accompanied by

knowledge about Judaism. By bringing facts from history, Dr. Levin enriches his students' knowledge, thus giving them a substantial Jewish foundation that would enable them to think and make decisions.

To summarize, Dr. Levin believes that in order to foster his students' Jewish identity, he needs to teach them facts about Judaism as a subject matter, not just create an affinity with the Jewish *imagined community* (Anderson, 2006). In Dr. Levin's view, teachers should teach about Judaism as well as current Israeli non-controversial content, and not limit themselves to only supporting students' Jewish feelings. Equipped with a background as a serious student who always did his homework and appreciated fact-based education, Dr. Levin presents himself to the students as a scholar who would help them learn about Judaism. Dr. Levin believes that teaching is more efficient if accompanied by technological tools, although these beliefs are not always what he practices.

Dr. Levin uses his expertise to supply this evidence to his students. He makes sure that students understand grammar constructs and read texts that are important for understanding what it means to be Jewish in Dr. Levin's eyes. Going against the widespread custom of practicing Jewish rituals as a vehicle for sustaining Jewish religion, Dr. Levin suggests a different model that builds upon the need for Jewish knowledge, not just upon feeling Jewish. This is crucial for fostering West Hebrew School students' Jewish identity. Dr. Levin strengthens the identity of participation (Wenger, 1998) of his students by incorporating students' trajectories into Jewish history texts thus giving the students a way to feel that they belong to this community. Past stories about Judaism

strengthen students' membership and feeling of belonging to this community. The facts supplied by Dr. Levin are crucial for enhancing the process of Jewish identity formation and gives the students tools to negotiate their Jewish identity.

## Chapter Six

### **“So many things came to me thanks to Hebrew”: Ms. Abramson’s beliefs and practices**

Ms. Abramson’s transformation process started when she was 37, together with her newly acquired Modern Hebrew language. As a part of College In the Schools (CIS) program, Ms. Abramson teaches beginning II level Hebrew in West Hebrew School. Ms. Abramson’s students go to this supplementary Hebrew school to study several topics, Hebrew being among them. Hebrew classes are offered twice a week, on Sunday morning for two hours (10am-12pm) and on Wednesday evenings for one hour (6:00pm-7:00pm) as is required of CIS students. Ms. Abramson’s high school freshmen (age 14) students had a year of Hebrew studies before enrolling in Ms. Abramson’s class. She is a non-native Hebrew speaker who started studying Hebrew at the age of 37 and earned a BA in Hebrew from a major university in the Midwest (after earning a BA in nutrition years before that). Alongside her position as a Hebrew teacher in West Hebrew School, Ms. Abramson serves as an advocate for Israel and writes a blog in “The Times of Israel” on topics pertaining to politics and Modern Israel. In addition to findings collected in her Hebrew class, this chapter draws upon Ms. Abramson’s blog about Israel as a data source from that one can learn about Ms. Abramson’s beliefs as they pertain to Israel. I did not observe these Israel advocacy classes, but I read her views about Israel and her reflections on her teaching in this class.

In her April 10, 2014 blog, Ms. Abramson described how she finished a presentation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in her Israel advocacy class. In the blog

she reported how she stood by the door at the end of class and asked her students what they would take away from this class. She described in her blog how some students talked about the way she described Israel, and how others expressed opinions that were not supportive of Israel. Citing “Pirkei Avot,” that is a compilation of the ethical teaching of rabbis as her Jewish perspective of this topic, Ms. Abramson explained:

Excerpt 31 (April 10, 2014)

Our tradition has a brilliant teaching on this subject, found in Pirkey Avot, “*Who is wise? The one who learns from every person.*”

Time and again I have found that people with whom I differ on many subjects often have terrific insights into Israel that had not occurred to me. That helps me craft a message that is compelling and dynamic.

As for the anti-Israel, BDS<sup>30</sup> crowd, I learn from them too- how to sharpen my own arguments in response to theirs. Not to persuade the unpersuadable, but to move the needle among the many people I encounter, both formally and informally, who are open to hearing a fair Jewish perspective.

And yet- seeing Israel only through the prism of conflict is a recipe for tunnel vision and despair. Being a fanatical moderate means knowing that Israel is much more than just a story of conflict.<sup>31</sup>

Israel is a multi-dimensional, vibrant, dynamic, ever-evolving society with many stories waiting to be told. I love telling those stories too!

Did you know that the only Arab bone marrow registry in the world is found... in Israel?

As a teacher in an Israel-advocacy class at West Hebrew School, Ms. Abramson fosters students’ Jewish identity by explaining her views about Israel, citing from Pirkey Avot, that is a compilation of rabbinic sayings, thus asserting her Jewish perspective. For her, views that support Israel as well as views that are “anti-Israeli” are used to “sharpen” her own argument. Ms. Abramson says that she tries to view Israel from various lenses, not only those of conflict. Looking beyond conflict, Ms. Abramson describes the way she

---

<sup>30</sup> Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is a global campaign attempting to increase economic and political pressure on Israel to comply with the stated goals of the movement: the end of the occupation of Palestinian land

<sup>31</sup> Bold in the original

shares facts with her students, facts that are not just about conflict, such as the fact that the only Arab bone marrow registry in the world is found in Israel. By sharing this fact Ms. Abramson offers her interpretation of the controversies in the Middle East, according to which Israel is not just as a conflict driven country, but is also a humanitarian country that uses her technology to help those with whom they are in conflict--the Arabs. Attempting to offer this lens, Ms. Abramson wishes to share with her students that even though one could argue that Israel is oppressive to the Arabs, Israel is also an entity that helps Arabs in health issues. Ms. Abramson tries to broaden students' perceptions of Israel by noting that Israel is "multi-dimensional, vibrant, dynamic and ever-evolving," using positive terms to describe Israel in this advocacy class. Ms. Abramson perceives herself as a "fanatical moderate" in issues pertaining to Israel. By doing that, she emphasizes that these two contradicting terms of fanaticism and moderation can actually be combined when discussing Israeli matters, thus affirming her moderate views and at the same time her strong affinity with Israel about that she is apparently fanatic.

Ms. Abramson writes in her blog about that class, not the Hebrew class I observed. This class is an advocacy class in that students learn how to advocate for Israel. Ms. Abramson teaches students "as she would have them teach their students" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002 p. 136), encouraging them to engage in advocacy for Israel and teaching them how to do so. I bring this blog as data source to help the reader get to know Ms. Abramson's views about Israel as she expresses them explicitly in this blog and in her Israel advocacy class. Unlike in this blog and in her advocacy class, Ms. Abramson does not explicitly discuss her views about Israel in her Hebrew class, the class I

observed. When I asked her why she chose not to talk about her blog with her Hebrew students, Ms. Abramson replied that her students' level of Hebrew does not enable them to engage in a conversation about controversies in Israel. As a Hebrew teacher who wishes to teach Hebrew in Hebrew, Ms. Abramson decided to limit her Hebrew conversation only to simple topics that her students can discuss, thus avoiding current politics in Israel altogether.

This chapter identifies three themes that together highlight Ms. Abramson's beliefs and practices: Learning Hebrew as a founding element of forming identity of participation (Wenger, 1998), using language for cultural representation of Israel, and a Hebrew teacher as a form-focused instructor. The first theme of identity formation emerges from transcribing and analyzing interviews with Ms. Abramson and uses the lenses of *imagined community* (Anderson, 2006), arguing that Ms. Abramson fosters her students' Jewish identity by connecting them with the imagined community of Israel and Israelis, in line with Cummins' (2001) depiction of the importance of teachers' lived experience for understanding their beliefs and practices. The other two themes, cultural representation of Israel through language, and form focused instruction, emerged from class observations, some documents and interview data, looking at Ms. Abramson's classroom activities through lenses of teacher cognition (Andrews, 2007), teachers' knowledge and thought process (Borg, 2006), language as meaning making (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002), and *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006).

## Learning Hebrew as a Founding Element for Forming Identity of Participation

In a phone interview, Ms. Abramson elaborated on her lived experience as a Hebrew learner in Minnesota. This experience of learning Hebrew was the motivation behind Ms. Abramson's strong connections with Israel and, more specifically, with Israelis.

Excerpt 32 (November 12, 2013)

אני: מאיפה האהבה הזאת לעברית?

גברת אברמסון: כשהייתי קטנה רציתי ללמוד עברית בתלמוד תורה. את מאמינה? לא היה כסף. אז ההורים אמרו שלא, כי צריך לחסוך כסף שיהיה לאחים ללמוד כי הם חייבים ואת לא. אז השתתפתי בקבוצה בבית הכנסת שלי ב-93 כדי לעשות בת מצווה כמבוגרת. למדנו מהספר Prayer book made easy או משהו כזה. אף פעם לא למדתי עברית. תפסתי את זה כל כך מהר, לא האמנתי. חשבתי: כל כך כיף לי, אני אוהבת שאני מבינה. אני לא מרגישה בחוץ כשאני בבית כנסת. אני מרגישה שאני שייכת. אני מבינה מה שאני אומרת. שאלתי את המורה: איך להמשיך? היא אמרה שאני צריכה ללמוד באוניברסיטה. היו לי ארבעה ילדים קטנים ואמרתי לעצמי: נראה אם זה יילך. נסעתי כל יום, שיעור של שעה. אהבתי את זה. את לא תאמיני, רננה, כל כך הרבה דברים באו אליי בזכות העברית. זו דרך שנפתחה. בגלל העברית יצרתי קשר עם יהודית. רציתי לדבר עברית בקיץ אירחנו נערים שבאו לעבוד ב JCC בקיץ. הם היו מאוד נחמדים.

'Ani: Me'eifo ha'ahavah hazot le'ivrit?

Gveret Abramson: kshehayiti ktanah ratsiti lilmod 'ivrit betalmud torah. 'at ma'aminah? Lo haya kesef. 'az hahorim 'amru shelo, ki tsarikh lahsokh kesef sheyihye la'ahim lilmod ki hem hayavim ve'at lo. 'az hishtatafti bikvutsah beveyt hakneset sheli be93 kedey la'asot bat mitzvah kemevugeret. Lamadnu mehasefer "Prayer book made easy" 'o mashehu kaze. 'af pa'am lo lamadeti 'ivrit. Tafasti 'et zeh kol kakh maher, lo he'emanti. hashavti: kol kakh kef li. 'ani 'ohevet she'ani mevinah. 'ani lo margishah bahuts keshe'ani beveyt kneset. 'ani margishah she'ani shayekhet. 'ani mevinah mah she'ani 'omeret. Sha'alti 'et hamorah: 'Eykh lehamshikh? He 'amrah she'ani tsrikhah lilmod ba'universitah. Hayu li 'arba'ah yeladim ketanim. 'amarti le'atsmi: nir'eh 'im zeh yelexh. Nasa'ti kol yom, shi'ur shel sha'ah. 'ahavti 'et zeh. 'at lo ta'amini, Renana, kol kakh harbeh devarim ba'u 'elay bizkhut ha'ivrit. Zo derekh shenifte'ah. Biglal ha'ivrit yatsarti kesher 'im Yehudit. Ratsiti ledaber 'ivrit bakayits 'erahnu ne'arim sheba'u la'avod baJCC bakayits. Hem hayu me'od nehmadim.

I: Where did this love start?

Ms. Abramson: When I was little I wanted to learn Hebrew at Talmud Torah. Can

you believe it? There was no money. So the parents said no, that should save money to have my brothers learn because they have to [learn] and I don't. So I attended my synagogue group in 93 in order to celebrate a bat mitzvah as an adult. We learned from the book "Prayer book made easy" or something. I never learned Hebrew. I got it so fast I could not believe. I thought it was so much fun, I loved that I was able to understand. I do not feel left out when I'm at a synagogue. I feel I belong. I understand what I'm saying. I asked the teacher: how to proceed? She said I should go to university. I had four small children and I said to myself, we'll see if it will work [for me]. I went every day, a class of one hour. I loved it. You will not believe, Renana, so many things came to me thanks to the Hebrew. This is a [new] way that opened [for me]. Because of Hebrew I contacted Yehudit. I wanted to speak Hebrew. In the summer we hosted boys who came to work in the JCC summer. They were very nice.

Years ago, when Ms. Abramson was a girl at Bat Mitzvah age (12 or 13), she wanted to enroll in Hebrew school, but her parents did not allow it because there was not enough money to enroll Ms. Abramson and her brothers. At that time in Ms. Abramson's Jewish community, Bar Mitzvah was mostly for boys, and very few girls had Bat Mitzvah. Because of that, Ms. Abrams did not have Bat Mitzvah, and therefore did not enroll in a Hebrew school and did not study Hebrew.

This long unfulfilled desire to have Bat Mitzvah was behind Ms. Abramson's decision to join a synagogue group as an adult, learn Hebrew and have a Bat Mitzvah. She reported that Hebrew was easy for her and she enjoyed learning it. Not only that, she enjoyed being able to understand the meaning of the [Hebrew] prayers at the synagogue. At a certain point Ms. Abramson wanted to expand her Hebrew knowledge and enrolled in a university course. This endeavor was not easy when she was required to get to the university each and every weekday. Having to leave four children, she emphasized that this was challenging, but she did it. Ms. Abramson's identity as a learner was deeply connected to her Jewish identity. She wanted to feel that she belonged to the Jewish

community, but not having a Bat Mitzvah and not knowing Hebrew were problematic for Ms. Abramson as a girl. As soon as she was able to do it on her own as an adult, Ms. Abramson joined a synagogue group, had Bat Mitzvah, learned Hebrew at the university and met Israelis. Yehudit was the Hebrew instructor at the university at that time, and Ms. Abramson mentions her name, knowing that I know who Yehudit is. This strong connection to Israel, expressed by Ms. Abramson, stands in contrast with Cohen's (2000) findings, according which very few American Jews viewed Israel as an attractive part of being Jewish. Ms. Abramson moved from being an outsider Jew who did not know Hebrew and never had Bat Mitzvah-to a participating active Jew who wished to deepen her connection with the Hebrew. From a position of *non-participation* (Wenger, 1998) admitting to her inability to get Hebrew education at a young age, Ms. Abramson came to reportedly feel as a full participant in the Israeli *imagined community* (Anderson, 2006).

This connection with the Hebrew language and the need to maintain practicing Hebrew in the summer created an opportunity for Ms. Abramson to meet Israelis by hosting them in her house during the summer. One of her Israeli guests was Adi, who lived in the summers of 2000 and 2001 with the Abramson family. The connection with Adi was very important for Ms. Abramson, as she explains in the interview.

Excerpt 33 (November 12, 2013)

גברת אברמסון: סיפרתי לך על עדי שלנו?

אני: עדי?

גברת אברמסון: זו הבת הישראלית שלנו. היא באה בשנת 2000 וגרה אצלנו כל הקיץ. חזרה ב-2001 וגרה שוב. הקשר כל כך עמוק! כשהיא התחתנה בשנת 2009 היינו כולנו שם. מייק ואני עמדנו מתחת לחופה כמו הורים. ויש לה הורים נהדרים. יש לה משפחה נהדרת. היא חזרה לפה כל שנה וחצי ואנחנו היינו בארץ והקשר מאוד חזק. כשאנחנו בארץ

אנחנו מרגישים שאנחנו עם משפחה. המשפחה שלה כל כך חמה, כל כך נהדרת. הרבה מהם באו לפה. זה קשר לתמיד. כשהייתי בארץ בספטמבר ואת החלפת אותי-זה בגלל שהיא ילדה. רציתי לראות את הבן ולהיות איתה. אני סבתא גם לבן שלה. כל זה בגלל העברית. זה לא שאני לא יכולה לדמיין את החיים שלי בלי העברית, אני לא רוצה לדמיין. בעלי נוסע איתי והחוויה שלו שונה כי הוא לא יודע עברית. אנחנו לא באותו מקום. מה שזה נותן לי קשה לבטא במילים.

אני: זה קשור למעורבות שלך בקבוצות שתומכות בישראל?

גברת אברמסון: כן, בהחלט. בגלל שדיברתי עברית ובגלל שנסעתי לארץ-התחילה המעורבות. הכל התחיל מעברית. הבן שלי יכול לדבר עברית טוב. זה נתן לי המון. אני אישה אחרת בגלל זה.

Gveret Abramson: Siparti lakh 'al 'adi shelanu?

'ani: 'adi

Gveret Abramson: zo habit hayisra'elit shelanu. He ba'ah bishnat 2000 vegarah etslenu kol hakayits. He hazrah be2001 vegarah shuv. Hakesher kol kakh 'amok! Kshehe hitnatnah bishnat 2009 hayinu kulanu sham. Mike ve'ani 'amadnu mitahat lahupah kmo horim. Veyesh lah horim nehedarim. Yesh lah mishpahah nehederet. He hazrah lepoh kol shanah vahetsi ve'anaḥnu hayinu ba'arets vehakesher me'od hazak. Kshe'anaḥnu ba'arets 'anaḥnu margishim she'anaḥnu 'im mishpahah. Hamishpahah shelah kol kakh hamah, kol kakh nehederet. Harbeh mehem ba'u lepoh. Zeh kesher letamid. Kshehayiti b'arets beseptember ve'at hehlaft 'oti-zeh biglal shehe yaldah. Ratsiti lir'ot 'et haben velihyot 'itah. 'Ani savtah gam laben shelah. Kol zeh biglal ha'ivrit. Ze lo she'ani lo yekholah ledamyen 'et haḥayim sheli bli ha'ivrit. 'ani lo rotsah ledamyen. Ba'ali nose'a 'iti vahaḥavayah shelo shonah ki hu lo yode'a 'ivrit. 'Anaḥnu lo be'oto makom. Mah sheze noten li kasha levate bemilim.

'Ani: zeh kashur lame'oravut shelakh bikvutsot shetomkhot beyisra'el?

Gveret Abramson: ken, behekhlet. Biglal shedibarti 'Ivrit uviglal shenasaṭi la'arets--hithilah hame'oravut. Hakol hitil me'Ivrit. Haben sheli yachol ledaber 'Ivrit tov. Zeh natan li hamon. 'Ani 'Ishah aheret biglal zeh.

Ms. Abramson: Did I tell you about our 'Adi?

I: Adi?

Ms. Abramson: This is our Israeli daughter. She came in 2000 and stayed with us all summer. She was back in 2001 and lived [with us] again. The connection is so deep! When she got married in 2009, we were all there. Mike and I stood under the canopy as parents. And she has wonderful parents. She has a wonderful

family. She came back here every year and a half and we were in Israel and the connection is very strong. When we are in Israel we feel we are a family. Her family is so warm, so wonderful. A lot of them came here. This relationship [will last] forever. When I was in Israel in September and you replaced me - it's because she had a newborn child. I wanted to see her son and be with her. I am also a grandmother to her son. This is all because of the Hebrew. It's not that I cannot imagine my life without Hebrew; I do not want to imagine. My husband travels with me and his experience is different because he does not know Hebrew. We are not in the same place. What it gives me is hard to express in words.

I: Is this related to your involvement in groups that support Israel?

Ms. Abramson: Yes, absolutely. Because I spoke Hebrew and because I went to Israel – this involvement began. It all started from Hebrew. My son can speak Hebrew well. It gave me a lot. I'm a different woman because of that.

Ms. Abramson perceives her connection with Adi to be a very strong one, just like family, asking me if I heard about “our” Adi. When Adi got married, Ms. Abramson and her husband were standing under the canopy [huppa], (where usually only the parents of the groom and the bride stand). By mentioning that Ms. Abramson emphasizes that not only did she feel connected to Adi’s family as if it were her own biological family, Adi’s family reciprocated the same feeling by allowing Ms. and Mr. Abramson to stand under the Huppa, a place that is only for parents, not for people who are “just” good friends of the family. This connection with Israelis continued when Ms. Abramson met Avivit Shapir (an Israeli Hebrew teacher who used to work with Ms. Abramson). Their connection was also strong, as strong as one would have with family. Ms. Abramson’s attributes all these good things to the fact that she knows Hebrew. This knowledge of Hebrew changed her life, she is a different woman. This transformation that happened as an adult and influenced her entire family has changed her beliefs about Israel and her views about herself as a part of the Israeli people. It even changed her perception of her

own American biological family, stating that the fact that her son speaks Hebrew “gave her a lot.”

Looking at Ms. Abramson’s reflection reveals how quickly and effectively she has transformed her identity from a non-participant to an enthusiastic full participant who teaches Hebrew, advocates for Israel, hosts Israelis and visit Israel frequently. As a mode of belonging to the Israeli people, she aligns herself with Israel by being active in groups that advocate for Israel. Ms. Abramson relates this transition in her identity to learning Hebrew, and I interpret it as a component in Ms. Abramson’s realization of her Jewish identity that, in turn, determines her identity as a Hebrew teacher and as an advocate for Israel. This strong affinity to Israel and Israelis is apparent in her beliefs about teaching and her teaching practices, that are meant to connect students to Israel, looking at Israel through Ms. Abramson’s positive lenses.

### **Using Language for Cultural Representation of Israel**

As highlighted above, Ms. Abramson is strongly connected to Hebrew and to Israel. We understand her political inclination from her blog (above), that describe her as a “fanatical moderate” in issues pertaining to Israel. Ms. Abramson’s stance regarding Israel and Israelis surfaces in her Hebrew classroom. Replying to an interview question about Hebrew content she would prefer to teach, Ms. Abramson elaborates on her beliefs as they pertain to the material she deems appropriate for teaching:

Excerpt 34 (November 12, 2013)

אני: אני רוצה לשאול אותך על תכנים שאת מלמדת. בדיעה שאת מלמדת שפת מורשת האם יש תכנים שאותם תבחרי לא ללמד? איך את מחליטה איזה חומר מתאים ואיזה לא? אם היית מלמדת רמות גבוהות, מה היית בוחרת ללמד?

גברת אברמסון: הייתי אוהבת ללמד סיפורים קצרים, עוד מוסיקה. פעם לימדתי יחידה מעניינת על עידן רייכל ועל יהודי אתיופיה. על התרבות וההסטוריה שלהם. תרבות ישראלית. לקרוא כתבות מהעיתון. סרטים בעברית. ללמוד דרך הקולנוע. אם הם יכולים ללמוד על התרבות הישראלית-אני אשמח מאוד.

'ani: 'ani rotsah lish'ol 'otakh 'al tkhanim she'at melamedet. Bede'ah she'at melamedet sfat moreshet, ha'im yesh tkhanim she'otam tivhari lo lelamed? Eykh 'at mahlitah 'eyzeh homer mat'im ve'eyzeh lo? 'im hayit melamedet ramot gvohot, mah hayit boheret lelamed?

Ms. Abramson: hayiti 'ohevet lelamed sipurim ktsarim, 'od musiqa. Pa'am limadeti yehidah me'anyenet 'al 'idan raikhel ve'al yehudey ethyopyah. 'al hatarbut vehahistoriah shelahem. Tarbut yisra'elit. Likro katavot meha'iton. Sratim be'ivrit. Lilmod derekh hakolno'a. 'im hem yekholim lilmod 'al hatarbut hayisra'elit-'ani 'esmah me'od.

I: I want to ask you about the content you teach. Knowing that you teach the heritage language, Is there content that you choose not to teach? How do you decide what material is appropriate and what is not? If you were teaching higher levels, what would you choose to teach?

Ms. Abramson: I love to teach short stories, more music. Once I taught an interesting unit about Idan Raichel [an Israeli singer] and Ethiopian Jews. [I'd love to teach their] culture and their history. Israeli culture. Read articles from the newspaper. Movies in Hebrew. Learn through cinema. If they can learn about Israeli culture - I'd love to.

Unlike teachers in the CIS advanced level classes, teachers in the beginning level Hebrew have a textbook they are expected to follow. Still, they have some choice as to what content they teach, what they skip, what they choose to elaborate on, etc. Ms. Abramson teaches passages from the textbook, but also about Israeli culture, selecting authentic material to draw students' attention and enhance their curiosity. For example, she taught a unit about Idan Raichel, an Israeli singer, and it was interesting, in her view. Idan Raichel is an Israeli singer who started a group together with Ethiopian singers and has performed all over the world, including in Ms. Abramson's city. Her choice of teaching

about Idan Raichel reveals her attempts to show the inclusive aspect of Israel reflected in actions of Israeli singers such as Idan Raichel, who formed a group together with Ethiopian Jews who immigrated to Israel.<sup>32</sup> By doing that, Ms. Abramson shows how Idan Raichel promotes the culture of Ethiopian Jews.

In addition to creating a positive image of Israel and Israeli singers, Ms. Abramson's attempts to connect between cultural Israeli figures and students' present life, as some students might have actually seen Idan Raichel in one of his local performances in the US. Ms. Abramson notes that if she were able to freely choose her material, she would teach Israeli movies and newspaper articles about Israeli culture and history. These choices of material reveal Ms. Abramson's teacher beliefs that view culture as both cognitive and social (Buzzelli & Johnston 2002) thus fostering her students' sense of belonging to this Jewish imagined community (Anderson, 2006).

This attempt to form students' identity by connecting them with other Jewish communities is apparent in the way Ms. Abramson chooses to start her lesson. Every class I observed started with a similar pattern: The students enter the classroom and on the Smart Board they can view and listen to an Israeli song. They don't learn the song or talk about the singer. The music is in the background and serves as a way to ease the students into a Hebrew class. Students take out their sandwiches and speak English with each other; Ms. Abramson speaks Hebrew and greets them with a big smile on her face.

---

<sup>32</sup> There were two waves of immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. These new immigrants had difficulties integrating into Israeli society, and Idan Raichel's decision to have a band which sings Ethiopian songs in Israel is perceived by Ms. Abramson as a positive act on behalf of the Israeli singer, promoting social equity.

The students seem calm and content, ready to immerse themselves in Ms. Abramson's Hebrew class.

As a part of promoting student identity formation context, Ms. Abramson teaches a text from the students' textbook in that students are informed about various Jewish customs around the world. In this text students are presented with a comparison between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jewish wedding customs. At the end of this passage there is a chart that offers fill-in-the-blank activities attempting to assess students' understanding of the passage they have just read. Ms. Abramson asks students to read this text on their own and after they finish reading she asks them to find 2-3 important words and one important idea. The students take a few minutes to read the text and then some of them raise their hands in order to share what they perceived to be important words or ideas.

Excerpt 35 (October 30, 2013)

גברת אברמסון: מה אתם חושבים? אילו מילים חשובות מצאתם?

חיים (תלמיד): טבעת, ברכה. אני חושב שאלה מילים חשובות. גם, אני חושב שרעיון חשוב זה שהחתן מקדש את הכלה בחתונה אורתודוקסית, והכלה מקדשת את החתן רק בחתונה קונסרבטיבית או רפורמית. זה חשוב.

גברת אברמסון: יפה מאוד, חיים. כן, זה חשוב. החתן שם טבעת על האצבע של הכלה. הינה הטבעת שלי (מראה את הטבעת שעל האצבע שלה). יש גם ברכה, כן גם זה חשוב.

זיוה (תלמידה): הם שותים יין, גם זה חשוב. (כל הכיתה צוחקת).

Gveret Abramson: Mah 'atem ḥoshvim? 'Eylu milim ḥashuvot natsatem?

ḥayim (a student): Taba'at, berakhah, 'ani ḥoshev she'eleh milim ḥashuvot. Gam, 'ani ḥoshev shera'ayon ḥashuv zeh shehaḥatan mekadesh 'et hakalah beḥatunah ortodoxit, vehakalah mekadeshet 'et haḥatan rak beḥatunah konservativit o reformit. Zeh ḥashuv.

Gveret Abramson: yafe me'od hayim, ken zeh hashuv.haḥatan sam taba'at 'al ha'etsba shel hakalah.hine hataba'at sheli.(mar'ah 'et hataba'at she'al ha'etsba shelah). Yesh gam brakhah. Ken gam zeh hashuv.

Zivah (talmidah): Hem shotim yayin, gam zeh hashuv (kol hakitah tsoḥeket)

Ms. Abramson: What do you think? What important words did you find?

Chayim (student): Ring, blessing. I think these words are important. Also, I think that an important idea is that the groom blesses the bride in an Orthodox wedding, and the bride and the groom bless each other in Conservative or Reform wedding. This is important.

Ms. Abramson: Very nice, Chayim. Yes, this is important. The groom puts a ring on the finger of the bride. Here is my ring (showing the ring on her finger). There is also a blessing, yes, that is important.

Ziva (student): They drink wine, too, this is important. (Whole class laughs).

Ms. Abramson is using her access (as well as the facts found in the passage) to knowledge that can be communicated and understood by learners (Borg, 2006). She knows that her American Jewish students might relate to the topic of Jewish weddings, as some of them might have attended such weddings. Knowing that students would find it hard to discuss details, especially in a text they have not read at home, she asks them to find some key words and ideas they find important. The vocabulary in this passage is not difficult and students were exposed to most of it in the past. Using her pedagogical knowledge (Borg, 2006) and knowledge of her students' interest and abilities, Ms. Abramson asks the students to find 2-3 words and one idea, not a difficult task. Students do not have to use complete sentences (although Chayim does use a complete sentence) in order to fulfill this task. One student came up with a word she found to be funny, that is "wine." Jewish wedding ceremonies include a ritual in that the groom and the bride get

a sip of wine under the canopy (huppah). The teenage students think that it is funny to mention alcohol consumption as an important word. Ms. Abramson is aware of that and attempts to avoid this sensitive topic of alcohol consumption in her class by smiling and moving on.

This is not the only sensitive subject Ms. Abramson tries to avoid. Ms. Abramson evades other sensitive or controversial topics such as the difference between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform wedding custom of exchanging rings and blessings. While in the Orthodox ceremony the groom is the one who sanctifies his bride and puts a ring on her finger, in the Conservative and Reform Jewish wedding ceremony, both groom and bride bless each other and exchange rings. Discussing this topic might highlight a gender gap among Orthodox Jews, according which males and females have different gender roles.<sup>33</sup> Ms. Abramson chooses to stay away from discussing gender gap, possibly because she is not sure how the parents would react to that. The textbook compares between some aspects of Jewish weddings in Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism, without showing any biases towards any branch of Judaism, addressing the facts about the differences without elaborating on them. Ms. Abramson adheres to the text, thus avoiding controversies.

After this activity is over, Ms. Abramson shows a clip from her daughter's wedding using the Smart Board. The clip is very short, (three minutes long). In this clip students watch Ms. Abramson, as well as her daughter and son-in-law. They exchange vows and rings, both of them drink wine. Attempting to practice the vocabulary from the

---

<sup>33</sup> One might perceive this as gender discrimination, but this study views *discrimination* as a modern term which does not describe different gender roles in various ancient religions.

textbook, Ms. Abramson asks the students to come up with sentences of their own to describe what they have just watched. The students are enthusiastic and ask various questions about the wedding, such as the location, the time, the name of her daughter, etc. Ms. Abramson is happy to answer, as long as the questions are asked in Hebrew. By sharing her own life experience with her students, Ms. Abramson promotes her students' participation in the process of identity building. This participation comes from "a sense of belonging" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p. 91), of sharing the same cultural familiarities, points of reference, and values as those around them. By doing that, Ms. Abramson fosters her students' identity as community membership (Anderson, 2006), defining who they are by sharing the familiar, that is-what all of them have in common, such as conservative wedding customs and shared videos of family weddings, and the unfamiliar, that is wedding customs of Orthodox Jews, clearly another component, possibly unfamiliar, of these students' imagined community (Anderson, 2006). These wedding rituals connect students' local practices and identities to other locations across time and space, connecting the students with other Jewish communities around the world who engage in similar rituals.

Connecting students with other Jewish communities increases their knowledge about the history of the Jews and origins of Judaism. Ms. Abramson teaches the students a passage from the textbook about the Dead Sea Scrolls. The text informs the students about the nature of these scrolls being written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and other languages as well, identified with the ancient Jewish sect called the Essenes.

Excerpt 36 (December 13, 2013)

גברת אברמסון: ביום ראשון קראנו את הסיפור על מגילות ים המלח. נכון? זוכרים?  
אני מצאתי וידאו קצר על קומראן. שם מצאו את המגילות. מה זה מצאו ?

אריאלה (סטודנטית): found :

גברת אברמסון: נכון. אתם תראו וידאו על הקבוצה של היהודים the sect שגרו בקומראן.

The video is in English and tells about the excavation of Qumran (in a cave in the West Bank) where the scrolls were found

גברת אברמסון: מי זוכר איך אומרים cave? נכון, מערה. אתם יכולים לבקר שם. זה ליד המצדה.  
אפשר לבקר שם. אפשר ללמוד על ה"איסיים." מי ראה את המגילות כשהיו כאן במינסוטה?

גבריאלה (תלמידה). אני ראיתי.

גברת אברמסון: הרבה אנשים נוצרים באו לראות את המגילות. שמחתי לראות את זה. היו שם גם הרבה פרטים על ישראל.

gveret Abramson: beyom rishon kara'nu 'et hasipur 'al megilot yam hamelah.  
Nakhon? Zokhrim? 'ani matsati video katsar 'al Qumran. Sham mats'u 'et  
hamegilot. Mah zeh mats'u?

'ari'elah (studentit): found.

gveret Abramson: nakhon. 'atem tir'u video 'al hakvutsah shel hayehudim  
shegaru bequmran.

gveret Abramson: mi zokher 'eikh 'omrim cave ? nakhon. Me'arah. 'atem  
yekholim levaker sham. Zeh leyad hametsadah. 'efshar levaker sham. 'efshar  
lilmod 'al ha'isiyim. Mi ra'ah 'et hamegilot kshehayu kan beminnesota?

gavrielah (talmidah): 'ani ra'iti.

gveret Abramson: harbeh 'anashim notsrin ba'u lir'ot 'et hamegilot. smaḥti lir'ot  
'et zeh. hayu sham gam harbeh pratim 'al yisra'el.

Ms. Abramson: On Sunday we read the story of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Right?  
Remember?

I found a short video on Qumran. There they found the scrolls. What is it found  
(Hebrew)?

Ariella (student) found (English)

Ms. Abramson: Right. You will see a video on the group of Jews who lived at Qumran.

(The video is in English and tells about the excavation of Qumran (in the West Bank) where the scrolls were found)

Ms. Abramson: Who remembers how to say cave (English)? Cave (Hebrew). You can visit there. It is near Masada. You can visit there. You can learn about the Essenes.

Who saw the scrolls when they were here in Minnesota?

Gabriella (a student): I saw.

Ms. Abramson: many Christian people came to see the scrolls. I was glad to see it. There was also a lot of information about Israel.

Three days before this class Ms. Abramson's students read about the Essenes, a sect that lived in Qumran and wrote the scrolls in Hebrew and other languages. On Wednesday when I observed this class, Ms. Abramson reviewed this material by having students view a clip about the Dead Sea Scrolls and speaking about its content in Hebrew. Ms. Abramson attempts to give this historical text a more current meaning by telling the class that they could visit Qumran as tourists and see the place where these scrolls were found. She also reminds the students that not long ago, there was an exhibit in St. Paul that showed some of the scrolls, thus making the textbook passage more meaningful and connecting the topic of the scrolls to students' current life.

Attempting to use the cultural aspects to represent authentic Israel to her students, very often did Ms. Abramson bring authentic material from Israel and used this material for teaching. For example, one day she brought Israeli coins and engaged the students in an activity in that they all touched and felt the coins and used them. Attempting to teach

the past tense in another activity, Ms. Abramson brought a current receipt from a café in Israel, which was in Hebrew. The students described what they understood from this receipt, using Hebrew verbs that they have just learned. In another occasion Ms. Abramson brought stamps from Israel that are related to various periods in Israeli history. She had the students look at them closely, distributing several stamp albums among the students, initiating a Hebrew conversation in which students asked questions about the stamps.

In the process of developing students' identity, Ms. Abramson's students locate their own questions in the material they study (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002), linking students' present with the history of their ancestors. The passages Ms. Abramson teaches are all taken from the textbook she is expected to teach. Nevertheless, Ms. Abramson finds a way to use aspects of representation that are based on her understanding of "culture" by adding personal videos of her daughter's wedding, as well as some comments about recent exhibits and a collection of Israeli stamps from past and present times. Her choice to supplement textbook readings with recent events connects students' present with textbook passages, thus contributing to the process of making this material more meaningful and personal to the students.

### **A Hebrew Teacher as a Form-Focused Instructor**

Ms. Abramson's attempt to enhance students' interest while teaching them Hebrew is apparent when she teaches grammar as well. In West Hebrew School, it is expected that teachers teach Hebrew grammar. Teachers use verb charts in their classes and value grammar. As a foreign language teacher, Ms. Abramson, like her colleagues,

teaches Hebrew grammar. Some of the homework assigned is fill-in-the-blank verb exercises, in that students practice grammar they studies in class. Studies suggest that there are various methods for teaching grammar, and that these ways are related to teachers' beliefs (e.g., Borg, 2006; Ellis, 2001; Schultz, 1996, 2001; Widdowson, 1998). In an interview conducted with Ms. Abramson, she explained how she was teaching Hebrew grammar.

Excerpt 37: (November 12, 2013)

אני : כמורה של שפה זרה את נדרשת ללמד דקדוק. איך את עושה את זה?

גברת אברמסון: חשוב לי שהתלמידים יידעו ויבינו דקדוק. אני מסבירה חומר חדש באנגלית. כדי שהם יבינו על מה אני מדברת. כשאני מסבירה אני עושה את זה קודם על הלוח. אחרי שאני מסבירה אנחנו משחקים בעברית. לדוגמה, לזמן עבר הפעיל אני הכנתי כל מיני סטים של כרטיסיות עם אותיות. הם שמים את זה על השולחן ואני קוראת פועל והם צריכים לחבר את זה עם האותיות. הם רואים איך זה משתנה מאני, אתה, את כשהם צריכים רק להוסיף סיומת. כשהם משחקים עם הידיים שלהם זה עוזר להם להבין את הטיית הפועל בזמן עבר. אנחנו משתמשים בשאלון כי הם צריכים לדבר. החומר הוא שלהם רק כשהם מדברים אותו. אם זה רק עפרון ודף-זה רק תרגיל, זה עדיין לא שלהם.

'ani: kemorah shel safah zarah 'at nidreshet lelamed dikduk. 'eykh 'at 'osah 'et zeh?

Gveret Abramson: ḥashuv li shehatalmidim yed'u veyavinu dikduk. 'ani masbirah ḥomer ḥadash be'anglit. Kedey shehem yavinu 'al mah 'ani medaberet. Kshe'ani masbirah 'ani 'osah 'et zeh kodem 'al halu'ah. 'aḥarey she'ani masbirah 'anahnu mesaḥkim be'ivrit. Ledigmah, lizman 'avar hif'il 'ani hekhanti kol miney setim shel kartisiyot 'im 'otiyot. Hem samim 'et zeh 'al hashulḥan ve'ani koret po'al vehem tsriḥim lehaber 'et zeh 'im ha'otiyot. Hem ro'im 'eikh zeh mishtaneh me'ani, 'atah, 'at kshehem tsriḥim lehosif rak siyomet. kshehem mesaḥkim 'im hayadayim shelahem zeh 'ozar lahem lehavin 'et hatayat hapo'al bizman 'avar. 'anahnu mishtamshim beshe;elon ki hem tsriḥim ledaber. haḥomer hu shelahem raq kshehem medabrim ;oto. 'im zeh raq 'iparon vedaf-zeh raq targil, zeh 'adayin lo shelahem.

I: as a teacher of a foreign language, you are required to teach the grammar. How do you do it?

Ms. Abramson: It is important for me that students know and understand grammar. I explain new material in English, so they will understand what I mean. When I explain that I do it first on the board. After I explained we play in Hebrew. For example, for [teaching] the past tense I made all kinds of sets of flashcards with letters. They put it on the table and I read verbs they need to connect them with the letters.

They see how it changes from I, you (m.s) you (f.s.) when they need to just add the suffix. When they play with their hands that helps them understand the past tense verb form. We use the questionnaire because they need to speak. Their material is only theirs when they speak it. If it's just a pencil and a page - it's just an exercise, it is still not theirs.

Ms. Abramson believes that it is important for students to learn grammar as a part of their language acquisition process. When Ms. Abramson teaches new grammar she first explains it deductively in English because she wants her students to understand the new grammar. She writes the new construct on the board, explains it and then plays games with the students, in that they are required to practice the new grammar. For example, she mentioned flashcards that have verb forms in certain patterns, as well as other flashcards that have the suffixes. Students play with the flashcards and use these as games through that they learn these new constructs. I suggest that this activity is an example of Ms. Abramson's instruction style named focus-on-form (DeKeyser, 1995; Ellis, 2001). Students' homework assignments include fill-in-the-blank verb charts assignments in that students are expected to practice the new grammar they studied in class. Class' exams include sections in that grammar knowledge is assessed. Ms. Abramson and her students are aware that the primary focus of the activity is to learn this specific pattern of the past tense. This grammatical rule was addressed deductively (Ellis, 2001) by presenting it on the board, and practiced afterwards. Ms. Abramson believes that her students need to feel ownership of this new grammar. Writing it alone does not get them to own this new

grammar; in her view, they need to speak it. The amount of L2 research narrowly focused on the implicit-explicit distinction is limited in duration and in scope (DeKeyser, 2003); therefore it is difficult for this study to agree or disagree with Ms. Abramson's statement regarding ownership of new grammar.

Ms. Abramson's beliefs about teaching grammar map onto her classroom practices. In another class I observed (on October 23, 2013), Ms. Abramson taught the class about construct state<sup>34</sup>. Students read a passage from their textbook in that construct state is used frequently. After presenting the topic of construct state in English, Ms. Abramson plays a game in that students compete with each other. She asks the students to give as many examples as possible, where the word בית (house) is used in a construct state. The students compete with each other, attempting to give as many examples as possible and win the game. Then Ms. Abramson asks the students to do the same with the word בגדים (clothing). The students shout and mention many examples for Construct State using the words "clothing." They all want to win the game and get the prize (chocolate). When students leave the class they are expected to get "a ticket to leave." In this focused communicative task (Ellis, 2001), students are expected to perform communicative tasks employing some specified features. More specifically, after studying some past tense patterns, students were expected to use verbs with these patterns in sentences at the door as their ticket to leave the room.

Ms. Abramson believes that students should speak and write in Hebrew using correct grammar. Language teachers employ various ways for correcting students' speaking. Some choose to correct every mistake, others choose to correct some mistakes

---

<sup>34</sup> A Hebrew construct which combines two Hebrew nouns to form yet another noun with a new meaning

and not others, and some do not correct at all. I asked Ms. Abramson about her beliefs as they pertain to correcting her students' mistakes in speaking:

Excerpt 38: (November 12, 2013)

אני: עד כמה חשוב לך שידברו נכון? כשתלמידים מדברים ושוגים את מתקנת אותם או שאת לא רוצה לעצור אותם באמצע? ואם את מתקנת, איך את מתקנת? את חוזרת על מה שאמרו ומתקנת או שאת נותנת להם לתקן את עצמם?

גברת אברמסון: אני עושה הכל, תלוי במה שאנחנו עושים ותלוי בסוג השגיאה, אם היא שגיאה של מה שכבר לימדתי. למשל, אם מישהו עושה שגיאה ב"לך או לך", אני אתקן אותו או אותה תכף. או שאחכה ואולי מישהו אחר יתקן. אם זה משהו חדש ותלמיד מנסה להשתמש בו-לפעמים אני מחכה.

'ani: 'ad kamah ḥashuv lakh sheyedabru nakhon? Kshetalmidim medabrim veshogim, 'at metakenet 'otam 'o she'at lo rotsah la'atsor 'otam be'emtsa? Ve'im 'at metakenet , 'eikh 'at metakenet? 'at ḥozeret 'al mah shehem 'amru 'umetakenet 'o she'at notenet lahem letaken 'et 'atmam?

Gveret Abramson: 'ani 'osah hakol, taluy bemah she'anahnu 'osim vetaluy besug hashgi'ah, 'im he shgi'ah shel mah shekvar limadeti. Lemashal, 'im mishehu 'oseh shgi'ah be lekha 'o lakh, 'ani 'ataken 'oto 'o 'otah tekhef. 'o she'ahakeh ve'ulay mishehu 'aḥer yetaken. 'im zeh mashehu ḥadash vetalimid menaseh lehishtamesh bo-lif'amim 'ani meḥakah

I: How important is it to you that they speak correct [Hebrew]? When students speak and make a mistake, do you correct them, or you don't want to interrupt them? And if you correct them, how do you do it? Do you repeat what they say and correct their sentences or you let them correct their mistakes by themselves?

Ms. Abramson: I do everything, depending on what we do and depending on the type of error, if [students] make errors in subjects that had already been taught, for example, if someone makes a mistake in "to you" (M.S.) vs. "to you" (F. S.), I'll correct them right away, or I will wait and maybe someone else will correct. If this is something new and students are trying to use new constructs- sometimes I wait.

As suggested in Excerpt 38, Ms. Abramson believes that her role as a Hebrew teacher includes correcting student errors, but only errors in subjects that had already been taught and that students need to know, in her view. She brings an example from Hebrew, in that

she explains the type of speaking errors she would not tolerate. Hebrew students study possession constructs at an early stage. Hebrew differentiates between masculine and feminine possession constructs, and Ms. Abramson's students are expected to know this difference. If they err, she corrects them. From observing Ms. Abramson's classroom practices, I suggest that her beliefs as expressed during the interview map clearly onto her classroom practices. There were several times in which students made a mistake and Ms. Abramson corrected them immediately with a smile on her face in a way that did not obstruct communication (recast). These corrections were accepted well by her students. Since these beginning level students used short utterances, Ms. Abramson's corrections never seemed to interrupt students during their speech.

Replying to a question about her thought process pertaining to grammar mistakes in writing assignments, Ms. Abramson said that she employed similar practices: when students make mistakes in subjects they were supposed to know, they lose points. However, if they make mistakes in constructs she had not taught, then it is harder for her to decide if she should delete points or not, as evident in Excerpt 9, in that Ms. Abramson explains her methods in assessing students' assignments:

Excerpt 39: (November 12, 2013)

אני: ואם הם כותבים חיבור ומגישים לך ויש בחיבור שגיאות בדקדוק, עד כמה את מורידה על שגיאות דקדוק ?

גברת אברמסון: אם כבר לימדתי-אני מורידה. אם לא לימדתי-אני לא מורידה. אני תמיד מתלבטת. מישהו שכותב פחות יש לו פחות פוטנציאל לטעות ומישהו שכותב יותר עלול יותר לטעות. אני לא רוצה להעניש מישהו שכותב יותר. אני לא מורידה הרבה נקודות על דקדוק. לי חשובה תקשורת. לכתוב או להגיד משהו שאחרים יכולים להבין את הכוונה. ללחוץ המון על דקדוק יוריד מהם את המוטיבציה לכתוב יותר ולדבר יותר.

‘ani: ve’im hem kotvim ħibur ‘umagishim lakh veyesh ba ħibur shgi’ot bedikduk, ‘ad kamah ‘at moridah ‘al shgi’ot dikduk?

Gveret Abramson: ‘im kvar limadeti-‘ani moridah. ‘im lo limadeti-‘ani lo moridah. ‘ani tamid mitlabetet. Mishehu shekotev pa ħot yesh lo pa ħot potentsyal lit’ot, ‘umishehu shekotev yoter ‘alul yoter lit’ot. ‘ani lo rotsah leha’anish mishehu shekotev yoter. ‘ani lo moridah harbeh ‘al dikduk. Li ħashuvah tikshoret. Likhtov ‘o lehagid mashehu she’a ħerim yekholim lehavin ‘et hakavanah. lil ħots hamon ‘al dikduk yorid mehem ‘et hamotivatsyah likhtov yoter ‘uledaber yoter.

I: And if they write essays and submit to you and the essays have grammatical errors how many points do you take off on grammar errors?

Ms. Abramson: If I’ve taught - I delete points. If I did not teach - I do not delete. I always hesitate. Someone who writes less has less potential for [making] mistakes, and someone who writes more is likely to make more mistakes. I do not want to punish anyone who writes more. I don’t take off many points on grammar. Communication is important to me. To write or say something so that others can understand the intention. If I put much pressure on grammatical correctness, it will impact their motivation to write more and talk more.

Ms. Abramson teaches grammar deductively and expects the students to internalize what she teaches and show this knowledge when they are tested. If students make mistakes in the grammar she taught, they lose points. Ms. Abramson is aware of the problem that many foreign language teachers face, and that is maintaining a balance between correctness and richness of text learners produce. Ms. Abramson believes that students should be encouraged to write more, knowing that the more they write the likelier they are to make mistakes. She admits that she is hesitant about deleting points on grammar she had not taught. For Ms. Abramson, communication is her main goal. Students should use Hebrew in a way that enables others to understand them, both in writing and in speaking, suggesting that for her, comprehensibility is more important than grammatical correctness.

In a conversation I mention some of my classroom practices, such as rubrics, as a means for assessing students' work, that allow for a holistic approach to assess students' progress.

Excerpt 40: (November 12, 2013)

אני: אני משתדלת לתת רובריקות שבהן דקדוק הוא רק עמודה אחת. עמודה אחת היא תחכום. אם תלמידים נמנעים משימוש במילים חדשות זה גם לא טוב.

גברת אברמסון: אני לא משתמשת ברובריקות אבל אני חושבת שזה רעיון טוב. אם תלמיד כותב חיבור ועושה הרבה שגיאות בדקדוק, עדיין הוא מקבל נקודות על התוכן.

'ani: 'ani mishtadelet latet rubrikot shebahen dikduk hu rak amudah 'ahat. 'amudah 'aheret he tihkum. 'im talmidim nimna;im mishimush bemilim hadashot zeh gam lo tov.

Gveret Abramson: 'ani lo mishtameshet berubrikot 'aval 'ani hoshevet shezeh ra'ayon tov. 'im talmid kotev hibur ve'osah harbeh shgi'ot bedikduk, 'adayin hu mekabel nekudot 'al hatokhen.

I: I try to give rubrics in that grammar is only one column. Another column measures sophistication. If students are reluctant to use new words [for writing their essays] this is also not good.

Ms. Abramson: I do not use rubrics but I think it's a good idea. If students write essays and make many errors in grammar, they still get points for content.

Ms. Abramson states that she believes that it is a good idea to use rubrics for assessing students' Hebrew essays. When I read some of her students' corrected essays, I noticed that Ms. Abramson corrected all of the grammar mistakes, but deleted points only when the mistakes were in constructs that she had taught in this specific class. Ms. Abramson marked the mistakes, offered corrections, and in some instances added an explanation. This reveals her willingness to change the ways she assesses her students' progress and

adopt new ways that might go hand-in-hand with her positionality regarding students' communication in Hebrew.

In sum, this chapter attempts to answer two research questions, one about Hebrew language teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building in the context of U.S. Hebrew schools, the other is about the way these beliefs map onto teachers' practices with respect to Jewish identities. This chapter reports that Ms. Abramson is influenced by her beliefs that are closely related to her values and understanding of the world and her perception of her place within this world (Pajares, 1993). Three main themes emerged, that together summarize Ms. Abramson's beliefs and practices as both a learner and a teacher of Hebrew in the process Jewish identity formation in her Hebrew classroom. These themes indicate that Ms. Abramson's classroom practices highlight what she expressed in the interviews, namely, that her identity as a teacher and as a learner of Hebrew are closely related to her identification with Israel, and more specifically with the people of Israel (Rotenstreich, 1993).

The first theme, learning Hebrew as a founding element for forming identity of participation, is about Ms. Abramson's journey towards participating in the community of Jews who support Israel. This attempt to learn Hebrew is a part of her Jewish identity building<sup>35</sup> that was interrupted due to financial constraints. When she was finally able to learn Hebrew, she noticed how this knowledge of Hebrew contributed to her feeling of belonging, first to the Jewish community, afterwards to Israel, by developing her repertoire and creating new routines that were strongly connected to Israel. By meeting

---

<sup>35</sup> She does not say it specifically, but from reading about her description of the change she felt when she was finally able to understand the prayer book at the synagogue, I assume that her desire to learn Hebrew was initially related to her Jewish identity formation process.

Adi, an Israeli girl, over the summer and developing strong relationships with Adi's family in Israel, Ms. Abramson aligned her engagement with Israel and Israelis and developed this new identity. As Ms. Abramson notes in excerpt 3, Adi and her family in Israel became very close. An example for this closeness is the fact that Ms. Abramson feels as if she were Adi's mother. Ms. Abramson emphasizes that it all started in Hebrew, and everything else only came as a result of her learning Hebrew.

The second theme, using language for cultural representation of Israel, shows how Ms. Abramson promotes her students' curiosity by exposing them to artifacts that bring Israeli culture to their classroom. As a beginning Hebrew teacher who uses language for cultural representation of Israel, the content of her teaching is dictated by the university. Still, Ms. Abramson found a way to connect this dry material with students' current interests by bringing a video about her daughter's recent Jewish wedding in the US, or some Israeli stamp albums, and used newly learned vocabulary to speak about her daughter's wedding and about the Israeli stamps, thus making the dry textbook passage more tangible. This attempt to maintain authenticity, although not elaborated in her interviews—was clearly apparent in her classroom practices. Attempting to teach what Ms. Abramson perceived as meaningful content that serves her attempts to truly represent Israel was not limited to current information, but pertained to Israeli history as well. When teaching a passage about Dead Sea Scrolls that was clearly a historical text, Ms. Abramson attempted to make even this ancient piece of history tangible to her teenage students by mentioning the exhibit that took place in their city not long ago, in that Dead Sea Scrolls were presented to local audiences.

The third theme, a Hebrew teacher as a form-focused instructor that emerged from Ms. Abramson's data was her engagement with grammar teaching. This study suggests that Ms. Abramson believes it is important to teach and to assess grammar, and this is reflected in her classroom practices as well. Grammar teaching is important and so is the correct production of Hebrew, both in speaking and in writing. This importance, however, is secondary to the need for Hebrew communication. As expressed in excerpts 39 and 40, she expects her students to engage in Hebrew communication, both in writing and speaking. Putting too much pressure on grammar might deter her students from communicating in Hebrew; therefore grammar, although important, is secondary. Ms. Abramson's classroom practices reveal what she described in the interviews about how important communication is. Ms. Abramson used the Smart Board in class all the time, always for communication and meaning making activities, not for grammar drills.

Ms. Abramson's attempt to teach authentic material and make it tangible to her students is apparent in every class. Through the use of play, music, fun, authentic artifacts and personal engagement with students, she fosters their Jewish identity. Her beliefs as expressed in her interviews map onto her classroom practices in the Hebrew class. Her political views, though explicitly present in her non-Hebrew Jewish advocacy class, as well as in her blog, were not explicitly present in her Hebrew class. One can assume that mentioning only positive facts about Israel without any negativity might be perceived as a way to express political views implicitly. The next chapter will offer a thorough discussion of Ms. Abramson's identity and ideology in the Hebrew classroom.

## Chapter Seven

### Secular Jewish Identities and Underlying Hebrew Language Ideologies

This chapter addresses the research question concerning what teachers' classroom practices and teachers' beliefs reveal about underlying Hebrew language ideologies. This discussion is framed by studies about language ideology (e.g., Fishman, 1989; McGroarty, 2010; Norton, 2010; Silverstein, 1985, 1995, 1998; Spolsky, 2009; Woolard, 1992, Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994), heritage languages (e.g., Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Smith, 2006), as well as studies about Jewish identity (e.g., Beilin, 2000; Cohen, 1985, 2000; Feuer, 2007; Goldberg & Krausz, 1993; Rotenstreich, 1993). Following Silverstein (1985), the terms *language ideology* and *linguistic ideology* are used interchangeably to indicate that "conscious purposivity in language use entails a consideration of the ideologies about language form, meaning, function, value, et cetera the users apparently bring to bear on the activity of using it" (p. 515). This dissertation proposes an ideological connection between the Hebrew language and its significance to the Jewish people as a means for fostering Jewish identity. Following Silverstein (1985), the findings in this dissertation suggest one main Hebrew language ideology (HLI) and two other HLIs that derive from the main ideology, all of which underlie Hebrew language teachers' beliefs and practices, to some degree. These ideologies are about the way teachers as users of Hebrew convey their ideologies about the Hebrew language system, function, meaning and value as significant to fostering Jewish identity:

- 1) Hebrew connects between Jews, Israel and Israelis.

- 2) Hebrew classroom practices should be conducive for enhancing Jewish identity.
- 3) Hebrew correctness is very important to some teachers.

When discussing language teachers' ideology epistemologically, it is worthwhile to connect teachers' ideology and identity (Fishman, 1989; Woolard, 1992), because this connection is essential for understanding Hebrew language teachers' Judaism or Jewishness (Sarna, 2004) in the context of the Hebrew classroom, linking Hebrew language to the group of Jewish people at large and, at the same time, to students' personal identities. The other two research questions discussed earlier in this study examine teacher beliefs and practices. This chapter views *Jewish identity* as the motivation behind teachers' beliefs, and *HLI* as the expression of that Jewish identity, as manifested in teacher practices in the Hebrew class. Some Hebrew teachers have beliefs that are rooted in their Jewish identity, and these beliefs surface in these teachers' Hebrew classrooms when they teach Hebrew, but these beliefs probably surface in these teachers' other non-Hebrew classroom settings, or in other contexts outside of school, such as an internet blog (see chapter 6). This chapter uses the term *Jewish identity* when describing motivation behind teachers' beliefs and the term *HLI* when discussing classroom practices or teachers' choice of Hebrew material they intend to teach in their Hebrew classroom.

### **Secular Judaism: a Complex Term Identifying Hebrew Language Teachers' Jewish Identity**

The findings of this study suggest that despite differences in their personal and academic background and teaching practices, two out of the three Hebrew teachers in this study could be broadly described as having secular Jewish (Nadler, 2009) identities in the context of their Hebrew classes. One teacher (Rabbi Cohen) asserted in an unrecorded conversation that he was neither orthodox nor secular; therefore, describing him as a secular Jew is not accurate.

Defining secular Judaism is complex, and a thorough discussion of this concept is beyond the scope of this chapter; attempting to narrow down the term, I argue that all three teachers demonstrate a strong connection to Israel, both in the context of their class and outside of it, and that this strong connection to Israel is a major component in these teachers' Jewish identity, each teacher in his or her own way, in their Hebrew class context. Nadler (2009) describes his perception of what a secular Jew is:

A secular Jew is a Jew for whom Jewish law and ritual play practically no part in his or her life. It is a person for whom his or her Jewishness lies outside regular normative observance or even membership in a community. This person must still maintain a strong sense of Jewish identity, a sense of belonging to certain culturally, or ethnically circumscribed group and to a certain history, and this must make some practical difference in his or her life. This person might have a self-conscious commitment to what might be called secularized 'Jewish beliefs and values'—that is, certain moral and social principles that, while divorced from religious and theological foundations, nonetheless derive in some way from Torah and Jewish history (pp. 59-60).

Nadler comments on what is important to secular Jews by looking at their practices.

While Orthodox Jews continuously engage in many Jewish rituals that are a part of Jewish law, secular Jews tend to engage in fewer Jewish practices, and not always continuously. For secular Jews, according to Nadler (2009), "Jewishness lies outside of

regular normative observance or even membership in a community.” (p. 59). This chapter disagrees with this attempt to define what is important to secular Jews only by looking at their Jewish practices. Jewish law and ritual, although not extensively discussed or practiced, does tend to play a part in secular Jews’ life, for the most part ; many secular Jews appreciate the ability to choose what rituals to practice, and object to rabbinical coercion pertaining to daily activities (Sarna, 2004). But that does not mean that the rituals play no part in their life. For example, secular Jews want to be able to choose to fast on Yom Kippur or not, to eat non-kosher food or not. Saying that these rituals have no part in the life of secular Jews is, therefore, too simplistic.

Nadler’s (2009) assertion that for secular Jews, *their Jewishness lies outside regular normative observance or even membership in a community* is not precise either. Unlike orthodox Jews who attend certain synagogues and have membership in these communities, secular Jews<sup>36</sup> can be members in many other groups, some are of Israelis, some groups are Jewish and not Israeli, and some are neither Jewish nor Israeli. Secular Jews can also be members in synagogues. Secular Jews see themselves as Jews and this is how they are viewed by their friends. Secular Jews make choices pertaining to their daily Jewish rituals. Many of them associate themselves with Israel, but this is another choice that they feel entitled to make, just like any other choice pertaining to their Jewish life. Many of the secular Jews are familiar with the various details of the Jewish law and rituals, still, they insist on having a free choice as to what they observe and what they choose to avoid. For example, the same people can opt to fast one year during Yom

---

<sup>36</sup> Since Nadler’s article discusses Spinoza and the origins of Jewish secularism, and Spinoza lived in the Netherlands in the 17th century, I assume that this definition of secular Jews aims at defining secular Jews in Israel or outside of Israel. I view this concept in the context of Jewish life in the US.

Kippur and avoid Yom Kippur altogether at a different year, and they are still Jewish in their eyes and in the eyes of their friends. To make it even more complex, this study takes into account that Orthodox Jews can have choices as well as to what rituals to follow, so defining secular Jews from Orthodox Jews by their ability to choose what rituals to follow is not precise either.

Despite the reservations mentioned above, this study still finds Nadler's (2009) definition of secular Judaism somewhat helpful because it suggests an important lens through that two out of the three participating teachers' Jewish identities can be viewed, a lens that reconciles what seems to be a contradiction between religious (Jewish) and non-religious (secular) identities. Delving into my insider positionality, I can say that this description somewhat defines my own identity as a native Israeli who is also a secular Jew. This study posits that Jews who consider themselves secular are secular, and those who view themselves as Orthodox Jews should be considered Orthodox.

From unrecorded conversations I had with Dr. Levin throughout many years, I believe that Dr. Levin, being a native Israeli like me, can be described as having a similar identity as a secular Jew. Regarding Ms. Abramson, I can make assertions based on my findings and on casual assumptions gathered throughout the years of my acquaintance with her. Outside of the classroom context, I can only assume that some assertions in Nadler's (2009) description might agree with Ms. Abramson. A conversation about personal religious (or secular) beliefs might be understood as breaking some privacy boundaries. My relationship with Ms. Abramson did not allow for that open conversation to happen.

## Teachers' Beliefs and Secular Jewish Identity

This lens of Jewish secularism helps us describe all three Hebrew teachers' Jewish identities to some extent, being more useful for describing two of them (Dr. Levin and Ms. Abramson), and only partially useful for describing the third (Rabbi Cohen). As an Israeli Jew, Dr. Levin could be described as *secular by default*, people who label themselves as secular because they are neither *dati* nor *masorti*<sup>37</sup> (Liebman & Yadgar, 2009, p. 156). As he shared with me in an unrecorded conversation, Dr. Levin keeps few if any of traditional observances. As an Israeli-American, he observes some Jewish traditions to the extent that they have become Israeli-Jewish traditions. The majority of Israeli seculars fall into the category of *secular by default*. In this conversation Dr. Levin described his Judaism and what he tries to teach his students as *peoplehood*,<sup>38</sup> belonging to the people of Israel. This is the way he positions himself explicitly, and this is his underlying HLI, as surfaced in his classroom.

Ms. Abramson could be considered a secular Jew using the lens of secular Judaism described above, but I don't know how she feels about Jewish rituals as we did not discuss this subject. However, I assume that she is not *dati* or *masorti* simply because women who are *dati*(yot),<sup>39</sup> or orthodox, would usually wear dresses, not pants, and I noticed that Ms. Abramson wore pants many times during class observation. She could be *masorti*, but I cannot say that for sure. Ms. Abramson maintains a strong sense of Jewish identity. As mentioned above (chapter 6), Ms. Abramson cites Pirkei Avot, that

---

<sup>37</sup> Hebrew words to describe Jews who are more observant than *secular Jews*

<sup>38</sup> Peoplehood is the awareness of the underlying unity that makes an individual Jew a part of the Jewish people.

<sup>39</sup> Plural feminine form of *dati* in Hebrew

are a compilation of the ethical teachings of rabbis in the Mishnaic period, and this means that religion is somewhat important to Ms. Abramson. Her sense of belonging to Israel that could be viewed as one of the symbols of Jewish identity (Nadler, 2009) is extremely strong. As discussed above, Ms. Abramson underwent a major life change, all due to Hebrew, a change that transformed her life from a non-participant to a passionate participant in the Jewish and Israeli imagined community (Anderson, 2006), visiting Israel often and viewing Israelis as belonging to her family.

This lens of Jewish secularism is less successful in describing Rabbi Cohen's Jewish identity. As an ordained rabbi, Rabbi Cohen does not oppose rabbinic authority explicitly, at least not in the context of his Hebrew class. As a rabbi himself, Rabbi Cohen is a Jew for whom Jewish law and ritual play a significant role in his or life (Nadler, 2009). In an unrecorded conversation, Rabbi Cohen reported that he was committed to Jewish rituals, but thought that any lengthy discussion of the details pertaining to these rituals is an exaggeration and it does not justify the time spent on these conversations. Rabbi Cohen is happy to see the changes in Jewish law to adapt to modern times, an approach that is not common among most Orthodox Jews. Although he does not teach Jewish rituals in his Hebrew class, Rabbi Cohen teaches rituals in other classes. In addition, he is perceived by his students as a religious authority. For example, as described in chapter four, when some of his former students who are currently college students visited him during his Hebrew class, he asked them about their current Jewish practices such as prayers in their colleges. These rituals seem important to Rabbi Cohen, but are not primary in his perception of himself as a Jew. As shown in chapter four,

Judaism for Rabbi Cohen gave him the opportunity to study Hebrew, that is, Hebrew came first, and Judaism came only after that. Rabbi Cohen maintains a strong sense of Jewish identity and a sense of belonging to Israel as a geographical territory. Unlike most of the American Jewish participants in Cohen and Eisen (2000), who replied to a question about Israel as an important entity saying that Israel is not very important, for Rabbi Cohen, an American Jew, Israel is very important, it is a place that he visits every year to study, it is a place where Hebrew is spoken as the primary language, it is very central to Rabbi Cohen's identity, in line with Nadler's definition of secular Judaism (2009). Israel is a place where Hebrew is spoken as a native language, a language that is very important to Rabbi Cohen, a language to that Rabbi Cohen wishes his student to become addicted. Using Buzzelli and Johnston's (2002) definition of *assigned identity*, the identity imposed on one by others, and *claimed identity*, the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself, this chapter views secular Judaism as an assigned identity that enables secular Jews to claim their own separate identities within this assigned identity.

Dr. Levin, Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson's teacher beliefs were somewhat implicit and somewhat explicit throughout this study. This study suggests that the three participating teachers' beliefs were apparent in their classroom practices, and uses these practices to learn about their beliefs as a part of their Jewish identity.

### **Teachers as Learners in a Process of Jewish Identity Formation**

Interviews with the three teacher participants revealed how they view themselves as learners. The two teachers who are non-native speakers of Hebrew (Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson) had stories about how they learned Hebrew, and their stories are

analyzed here. The third teacher (Dr. Levin) acquired Hebrew as a native speaker, and the two of us, as native speakers of Hebrew, never discussed our Hebrew language acquisition process.

Both Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson were spiritually deprived in childhood as far as their Jewish identity is concerned. Rabbi Cohen came from a village with few Jews and he desired to be a part of a larger Jewish community. He went to a Jewish camp attempting to be around Jews. Hebrew came at the same time, when he met American-Israeli camp counselors who spoke both Hebrew and English with no accent. Rabbi Cohen learned Hebrew in Israel and attempted to improve both his knowledge about Hebrew and his Hebrew accent by visiting Israel constantly for many years throughout his life, studying various topics about Judaism in Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen did not mention any specific connection to certain Israelis with whom he maintained contact throughout the years. Rabbi Cohen's difficulties were in acquiring the language and speaking Hebrew like an Israeli with a native-like accent.

Ms. Abramson's deprivation was different. She does not mention not having a large enough Jewish community around her during her childhood. Her deprivation was related to unequal gender role in Judaism, according that Jewish males had to have Bar Mitzvah, and Jewish females were not obligated to have it. This unequal demand denied Ms. Abramson the right to study Hebrew as a child. After high school, Ms. Abramson pursued a bachelor's degree in nutrition; a degree in Hebrew came much later in her life. Ms. Abramson's difficulties were in the logistics of getting to the university five times a week to attend a Hebrew class. While Rabbi Cohen attempted to follow his dream slowly

and systematically, starting from his teenage years at camp and proceeding by studying to become a rabbi and attending courses in Israel every summer, Ms. Abramson's transformation process was less systematic. She learned Hebrew, met a native speaker of Hebrew, hosted her, started going to Israel and experiencing this strong familial feeling of belonging to the Israeli community. Rabbi Cohen is still a learner of Hebrew and goes annually to Israel to study, whereas Ms. Abramson goes frequently to Israel to be among her new family of Israelis. Both Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson have careers that are connected to their Jewish identity: Rabbi Cohen teaches Hebrew in CIS program, as well as other non-Hebrew Jewish topics at school. He also serves as a rabbi in some congregations. Ms. Abramson has been teaching Hebrew in CIS program as well as in other Jewish programs, and she also engages in Israel-advocacy actions, writing English blogs about Israel and teaching a class at West Hebrew School about Israel advocacy (also in English).

### **Hebrew Language Ideologies in the Classroom**

Teacher practices are manifestations of their Ideologies. Ideology has to do with consciousness, subjective representations, beliefs and ideas (Woolard, 1992). At the same time, Woolard notes that ideology is not necessarily a conscious, deliberate, or systematically planned thought or even a thought at all. Ideology has a lot to do with behavior and practices. Following Woolard (1992), my findings suggest that some Hebrew language teachers' ideologies, as observed in Hebrew classroom practices, are related to consciousness and subjective representation of Jewish values, but they are not always a result of systematically organized thoughts. Some Hebrew language ideologies

are about knowledge of Hebrew as a goal; other Hebrew language ideologies are about the way Hebrew is used to sustain Jewish identity. All these ideologies are present in the Hebrew classroom, explicitly or implicitly, to some degree.

**HLI 1: Hebrew connects Jews, Israel and Israelis.** In many Jewish communities worldwide, children learn to read Biblical and prayer book Hebrew in an attempt to be a part of the local and global Jewish community (Avni, 2011, 2012; Benor, 2004, 2010). The commitment to Hebrew language education is a fundamental component of the Jewish Studies curriculum, and is firmly connected to beliefs about what Jewish education entails (Avni, 2011, 2012; Benor, 2004, 2010). Jewish students learn Biblical Hebrew reading and writing in private schools, such as West and East Hebrew Schools in Minnesota, in order to become fluent readers of Hebrew. Knowledge of Hebrew is perceived as a unifier, in accordance with the belief that Hebrew belongs to the Jewish people and is what united them across time and space (Avni, 2011, 2012; Benor, 2004, 2010). Findings suggest that all three Hebrew teachers share this HLI that Hebrew connects between Jews, Israel, and Israelis, to some extent, as the following examples from teachers' lived experiences reveal.

***Lived experience.*** Findings suggest that for Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson, learning Hebrew was a founding element for forming Jewish identity. They report how their lived experience is significant for what they bring to the classroom (Alvine, 2001). Rabbi Cohen reports that he grew up in a small village with very few Jews, and he felt what he calls "deprivation" (see chapter 4). He describes his first encounter with bilingual Hebrew-English speaking counselors at summer camp as a significant moment that

connected his Judaism with Hebrew language. For Rabbi Cohen, as he puts it, learning Hebrew was not something to do in order to be a good Jew. Rather, it was good to be Jewish to have a chance to speak Hebrew. Speaking Hebrew for Rabbi Cohen is a goal, and being Jewish is the means for reaching that goal. This is quite striking, coming from an ordained rabbi, but at the same time, it is a reflection of Rabbi Cohen's unique stance on the importance of Hebrew. As a lifelong learner, Rabbi Cohen travels to Israel on a regular basis to learn various Jewish topics, in Hebrew. He describes trying to imitate Israeli accent in Hebrew, attempting to speak the language as a native or near-native speaker, which represents another layer in Rabbi Cohen's HLI, attempting to get as close as possible to Hebrew, specifically to Israeli Hebrew (see chapter 4). His numerous annual trips to Israel embody yet another perspective of Rabbi Cohen's HLI, connecting his Judaism with Hebrew, Israel, and Israelis.

Ms. Abramson's reported lived experience represents the way Hebrew language connects her Judaism to Israel and Israelis. When she was young, she wanted to learn Hebrew, but her parents could not afford it, so she did not learn Hebrew in her youth (see chapter 6). Only when she learned Hebrew for her adult Bat Mitzvah ceremony did she feel she belonged to the Jewish community. Her feeling of belonging was not only because she engaged in meaningful Jewish activities, but also because she was finally able to understand the prayer book, as she learned its language: Hebrew. Ms. Abramson reports that she wanted to expand her knowledge of Hebrew; therefore she enrolled at the university and majored in Hebrew. Then she hosted Israelis, became very close to one, continued her relationship with this Israeli woman and with her family in Israel to a point

where she considered this Israeli family as close to her as a biological family (see chapter 6). As Ms. Abramson reports, many things came to her thanks to Hebrew. Hebrew language acquired during her adult years brought about changes in Ms. Abramson's life and connected her with Israel and Israelis, which is one aspect of Ms. Abramson's HLI, in which Hebrew connects between Jews, Israel and Israelis.

Dr. Levin's lived experience was different from that of Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson (see chapter 5), being a native speaker of Hebrew who did not have to seek opportunities to communicate in Hebrew. In his reported lived experience, Hebrew connects Jews to Israel and Israelis, but his Judaism is different. In an unrecorded interview, Dr. Levin described his connection to Judaism as "peoplehood," that is the connection to the people of Israel as a unifier. As a former Israeli combat soldier who fought to defend Israel in many wars, Dr. Levin feels strong connection with Israel as a country and with the people of Israel, and that is his Judaism. I argue that this represents the way Dr. Levin's lived experience affects his HLI. Although this component of HLI is not as obvious as it is in the case of Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson, I argue that Dr. Levin's lived experience impacts his HLI that connects Hebrew to Judaism, to Israel, and to Israelis.

**HLI 2: Hebrew classroom practices should be conducive for enhancing Jewish identity.** Teachers' classroom practices reflect a second HLI that Hebrew classroom practices should be beneficial in fostering Jewish identity. In addition to pedagogical goals that are characteristic of many foreign language teachers, Hebrew language teachers engage in practices that are meant to enhance their students' Jewish

identity. Findings suggest that Hebrew teachers select teaching material that agrees with their their Jewish Identities, as the following examples reveal.

*Selecting teaching material.* For Dr. Levin, teaching Hebrew is much more than teaching linguistic elements. This is thinking in the language and loving what this language represents (see chapter 5). Dr. Levin teaches canonized texts about Israel's history and geography that include stories, poems, and songs written by canonized Israeli authors. These texts are informative and portray Israel in a positive manner. Through these texts, students learn about Israel and Israelis, including the minorities who live in Israel. Dr. Levin suggests that this fact-based teaching is conducive for enhancing Jewish identity by teaching the students facts about Israel and about Israelis thus using Hebrew language to connect students to their heritage. Dr. Levin also teaches a text that describes debates in Judaism (see chapter 5) thus exposing the students to the history of Judaism.

Rabbi Cohen teaches contemporary texts that offer current debates in the Jewish world such as the Pew research about the future of Judaism (see chapter 4). Through this text, students have the opportunity to delve into their own Jewish identity and negotiate it in Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen reports about another choice of Israeli text, poems that were written by Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship. These poems are about the conflict in the Middle East and give Rabbi Cohen's students the opportunity to touch on current debates concerning occupation and other "burning" political topics. For Rabbi Cohen, this is an opportunity to use Hebrew to connect students to Israel from a perspective that is quite different from that of the other teachers in this dissertation, allowing space for negotiating problems that might show some negativities pertaining to Israel.

Ms. Abramson adds material to an existing classroom textbook. She wants to use Hebrew to connect students with Israel and Israelis by bringing pictures of places in Israel and discussing them as a part of a grammar lesson (see chapter 6). Ms. Abramson's choice of classroom material is meant to engage her students and connect them with Israelis their age attempting to enhance students' Jewish identity and connection to contemporary Israel and Israelis. Ms. Abramson supplements her teaching by bringing artifacts from Israel to make her teaching more authentic. All three teachers select their teaching material carefully as a tool for fostering students' Jewish identity and these selections are a manifestation of this HLI. Teaching this material leaves space for negotiating Jewish identities, more specifically, for making a choice whether to discuss sensitive Israeli topics, or simply avoid these sensitivities. Findings suggest that teachers' identification with Israel and Israelis manifests itself differently in the case of the three participant Hebrew teachers.

*Identification with Israel and Israelis is a part of Jewish identity.* "To love one's language means to love one's tribe, people, or nation" (Hoffman, 2006, p. 60). Similar to "pro-Quichua" ideology described in King (2000), Ms. Abramson's ideology is "pro-Israel", and unlike Woolard (1992) who characterized Ideology as not always being a result of systematically organized thoughts, Ms. Abramson's Hebrew language ideology is based on organized thoughts that attempt to connect her students with modern Israel and with Israelis using Hebrew language. For Ms. Abramson, affiliation with modern Israel and with Israelis is important for sustaining Jewishness. Support for Israel is taken for granted in Ms. Abramson's class, where

there is no room for criticizing the Jewish state. This form of *language ideology* is common among the other Hebrew language teachers as well. Sometimes personal identities stand in conflict with what is perceived as a Hebrew education, such as when a student withdrew from Rabbi Cohen's class due to what Rabbi Cohen viewed as a change of heart regarding support and identification with Israel (see above). Despite Rabbi Cohen's attempts to create an environment that nurtures students and their opinions in a process of enhancing Jewish identity, a student who presumably had non-Zionist views about Israel felt that he could no longer participate in this class and withdrew from class after a year. Both Dr. Levin and Ms. Abramson avoid conversations about the conflict in the Middle East in their Hebrew classes. This dissertation argues that this is because of their HLI which perceives identification with Israel and Israelis as an intrinsic value that pertains to students' Jewish identity. Discussing "burning" political topics might allow for criticism of Israel, and that stands in contrast with these two teachers' HLI.

**HLI 3: Grammatical correctness of Hebrew is important to some teachers.** This HLI is underlying Dr. Levin's classroom practices. Dr. Levin's engagement with Hebrew was even beyond a typical engagement of a native speaker of Hebrew because he chose Hebrew as his academic field to which he devoted much of his adult life. Dr. Levin taught Hebrew to Israelis and published research in this field. Circumstances brought him to the US, where he found himself teaching Hebrew as a foreign language. Although he no longer teaches Israelis, Hebrew grammar is still his expertise, knowledge for which he is known both locally and internationally. In Dr. Levin

class, *structural* perspective defines the norm of categories of linguistic form as they interact in a system or grammar (Silverstein, 1985). For instance, Dr. Levin reports that in order to maintain grammatical correctness when he teaches prepositions, he explains the terminologies in English first. He posts many handouts on his web site, in which he explains various grammatical terms in English so that students could use that as a resource. Dr. Levin thinks that Hebrew grammar should be taught explicitly. Dr. Levin's Hebrew tests assess grammar for the most part as a part of his strong support of form-based Hebrew instruction. Dr. Levin's HLI is centered on correct usage of the language as a part of sustaining Jewish identity, Hebrew correctness conveys Dr. Levin's status as a language expert.

Ms. Abramson's classroom practices also reveal this HLI that grammatical correctness of Hebrew is important. Unlike Dr. Levin who is a native speaker and a scholar of Hebrew, Ms. Abramson acquired Hebrew at a later stage in her life. As a teacher in West Hebrew School, where she teaches Hebrew together with Dr. Levin, she seems to want to prove that her knowledge of Hebrew is sufficient for teaching Hebrew, including the difficult grammar constructs. Insisting on grammar correctness, but only in material she had taught, is connected to her teacher professional identity and her being a NNS of Hebrew. She wants to prove to her students, to herself, and possibly also to Dr. Levin, who teaches in the same school, that she has the knowledge required from a Hebrew teacher, even though she acquired Hebrew as a non-native speaker a few years ago. In addition, I believe that Ms. Abramson's sense of pride in her own accomplishment as a Hebrew learner, together with her strong affinity with Israel and

Israelis, affect her expectation from her students to maintain correctness when communication in Hebrew. Ms. Abramson reports that it is important for her that students know and understand grammar (see chapter 6). When she teaches new grammar she would explain it in English first to make sure students understand. In addition, Ms. Abramson reports that when students make a mistake in grammatical subjects that she has already taught, she will deduct points. Similar to Dr. Levin, who teaches in the same school, Ms. Abramson views grammatical correctness as an important value, part of teacher's sense of legitimacy.

Unlike Dr. Levin and Ms. Abramson, Rabbi Cohen's HLI does not perceive grammatical correctness as a very important component of his Hebrew teaching. Although he teaches and values grammar, he does not like to teach what he describes as "the history of grammar" (see chapter 4). For Rabbi Cohen, the actual engagement in Hebrew communication is far more important than the correctness of the Hebrew constructs. As he reports, he wants students to "be addicted to Hebrew and to Jewish-Israeli consciousness, the minute they move away from Hebrew and from Israel, they will feel like a person addicted to drugs being distant from the drug." Grammatical correctness is secondary. For example, every class session starts by students' unmonitored Hebrew conversations around daily topics. Students engage in these conversations freely, and Rabbi Cohen just listens from a distance to make sure that students speak in Hebrew, not English. He does not look for mistakes, let alone attempts to correct them.

In sum, all three teachers shared an interest in using Hebrew as a tool for enhancing students' Jewish identity, and this shared HLI was present in their Hebrew practices. Their HLI relates to the conscious subjective representation of teachers' beliefs and ideas (Woolard, 1992), as they pertain to enhancing Jewish identity in their classes. This study recognizes, though, that Dr. Levin, as a native speaker of Hebrew, one who grew up in Israel and taught Hebrew as an academic field to native speakers, is not likely to connect with his students in ways that resemble those of Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson. Their life histories are different; therefore their classroom practices are different. Largely they all share similar teaching goals, but the ways to reach those goals are different, as shown in this study.

### **Hebrew Language Ideology as it Relates to Studies about Language Ideology**

HLI as discussed in this chapter is characterized by the connection between Hebrew classroom practices and Judaism with Israel and Israelis in its center. HLI mostly draws from the following aspects of language ideology conceptualized in research: (a) Ideologies that relate to consciousness, beliefs and notions (Friedrich, 1989; Woolard, 1992)(b) ideologies that connect between language, a group of people, and personal identity (McGroarty, 2010), which are essential in coming to terms with ethnic relations and nationalism (Fishman, 1989; Woolard, 1992)(c) *structural* perspective that defines the norm of categories of linguistic form as they interact in a system or grammar, (d) language ideologies pertain to identities that are constantly renegotiated (Norton, 2010) and include, among other things, religious discursive forms (Silverstein, 1998).

In line with Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001), HLI can associate Hebrew language with Jewish people, linking Hebrew to group and personal identity (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994) and connecting language and people across time and age (Norton, 2010). For example, the three Hebrew teachers choose texts that connect their students to the history and culture of Jewish people across time and space. Fostering students' personal identity, Hebrew teachers use Hebrew ideologically to connect their students with other Jewish people across time and age (Norton, 2010), people who were central to debates about Judaism many years ago in Dr. Levin's class, or current young Israeli singers in Ms. Abramson's class. In line with studies about language ideology (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994), teachers use Hebrew to foster Jewish identity addressing their students as a group, as part of the Jewish community in Minnesota or at large, or they delve into students' personal Jewish identities by talking about their students' sustaining Judaism in college in Rabbi Cohen's class. Teachers discuss debates about Judaism like in Dr. Levin's class, questioning intimate topics like personal beliefs in Dr. Levin's class.

Using examples that pertain to HLI, Spolsky (2009) describes the role played by language varieties in *identification*, the language that Hebrew teachers associate Hebrew language with their principal membership in the Jewish community at large, and with Israel as the nation that is the center of the teachers' heritage. In line with Spolsky (2009), this study found that Hebrew teachers in this study engaged in similar processes of identity formation, despite their various levels of Jewish observance. The three Hebrew teachers' language ideologies relate to consciousness and Jewish identity negotiation as learners and then as teachers who shape the learning of others. These teachers engage in a

process of creating identification with Israel as the geographical focal point of the Jewish people thus shaping their students' identities.

Identifying with Israel is a topic in some studies about Hebrew language ideologies, which offer perspectives that are not found in my dissertation (Avni, 2011; Golden, 2001; Feuer, 2007). In contrast with Feuer (2007), who argued that the notion of identification with Israel was multifaceted among the students in the Hebrew language class she observed in Canada, the three teachers I observed showed a strong feeling of identification with Israel. Admittedly, Feuer (2007) explored ideologies among students, while this dissertation examines ideologies among teachers. In addition, the students in Feuer's (2007) study who showed some reservations identifying with Israel were former Israeli students from Russian descent who had spent some time as a minority in Israel. This experience has probably affected their feelings and created a need for some disengagement from Israel. A similar perspective was shown in Golden's (2001) study that explored identities among Ulpan<sup>40</sup> Russian immigrants to Israel who expressed dissatisfaction with their conditions in Israel that resulted in feelings of disengagement from Israel and Israelis. Both Golden (2001) and Feuer (2007) present a dimension of identification not found in my dissertation. This dimension connects between reality of living in Israel as a recent new immigrant and feeling of disengagement from Israel and Israelis, demonstrated in Hebrew classes. These feelings are a manifestation of underlying Hebrew language ideologies of newcomers to Israel, a situation that the Minnesotan teachers participating in my study apparently did not experience in Israel.

---

<sup>40</sup> A Hebrew immersion programs for newcomers to Israel

The feeling of identification with Israel is, therefore, different in my dissertation, where all three teachers showed a strong identification with Israel.

Avni's (2011) study examines another perspective of identification with Israel that is not found in my dissertation, namely, how interactions with Israelis outside of Israel, as well as in Israel where Hebrew is the main language, affected students' Hebrew language ideologies. In Avni's (2011) study, American learners of Hebrew resisted speaking Hebrew with an Israeli student who arrived at their school in the US. Another example for resisting Hebrew is found in Avni's (2011) description of American students of Hebrew who paid very little attention to the linguistic landscape while being in Israel, specifically when visiting McDonalds in Tel Aviv. The students in Avni's (2011) study were happy not by the fact that they could finally order a hamburger from a Hebrew menu, but by the balloons they received with the slogan "I'm loving it" in English (p. 66). This dimension of HLI was not apparent in my research.

I suggest that there are three reasons to explain the difference between the findings in studies about HLI cited above (Avni, 2011; Golden, 2001; Feuer, 2007) and this dissertation, all connected to the design of the study: One reason for the difference in findings is the fact that my participants are all adult teachers, not students, that is, they are older and have different contexts. A second reason explaining the difference in findings is the fact that some of the students participating in Avni's (2011) study were former Israelis with Russian descent who left Israel to Canada. I suppose that problems pertaining to being newcomers in Israel have affected their identification with Israel and brought about some resentment to Israel expressed in Avni's (2011) study. The third

reason to explain the difference between Golden's (2001) findings and the finding in this dissertation is closely related to the different context of the participants. While the setting of my dissertation is in the US, Golden's (2001) study takes place in Israel, and all of the participants in her study are Russian new immigrants that are experiencing problems as newcomers to a new country. Because of the difference in contexts, the teachers in my study appear to show a stronger feeling of identification with Israel than the feelings presented in Golden's (2001) study.

To summarize, this study found several HLI underlying all three teachers' beliefs and practices. These ideologies connect between Hebrew language, the community of Jewish people, and personal identities (McGroarty, 2010) of students and teachers in the classes I observed. These identities are critical in coming to terms with ethnic relations and nationalism (Fishman, 1989; Woolard, 1992), viewing Israel as central to Judaism and by maintaining strong affinity with Israel and feelings of nationalism towards the Jewish country.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion: Teacher Beliefs and Beyond

#### Summary of Findings in Terms of the Research Questions

This multiple case study shows how teachers aim at reaching the same pedagogical goals while having different beliefs about themselves as learners or teachers and about the process of teaching the Hebrew language. Findings show how teachers' beliefs that are episodically stored (Abelson, 1979; Calderhead & Robson, 1991) derive from personal experience and life story and can be shaped by powerful experiences (Nespor, 1987). Rabbi Cohen's exposure to American camp counselors who spoke Hebrew using Israeli accent or Ms. Abramson's experience hosting an Israeli in the summer were episodes that left a profound impression on these teacher's beliefs. The findings show the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, and how knowledge affects these practices', as in the case of Dr. Levin's who views his role as a teacher to transmit knowledge to the students.

Teachers' classroom practices aiming at teaching Hebrew are also different. While all three teachers broadly share similar ideologies that influence their objective to foster Jewish identity as teachers in Hebrew school, the practices they employ in class are different, reflecting their different views of themselves as teachers and the extent to that they feel comfortable discussing controversial issues, for example. This study compares the perspectives of foreign language teachers who are native speakers of the language they teach with teachers who teach their non-native acquired language. This difference in background influences the way teachers conduct their classes, making the two non-native

Hebrew speakers more similar in classroom approach despite the fact that they teach at different schools. Inspired by a body of literature about teachers' beliefs, language ideologies, and *imagined communities*, this study suggests a strong association between teachers' religious identities and their classroom practices.

In this conclusion chapter, I present a summary of findings drawn from this study, addressing each one of the three research questions; I then offer a summary of the way these findings relate to the literature review and theory, as well as a set of limitations and implications for future research and practice.

**Research Question One: What are Hebrew language teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and identity building in the context of U.S. Hebrew schools?**

Hebrew language teachers have various beliefs about teaching and learning, and identity building in the context of U.S. Hebrew schools. My study discussed teachers' beliefs about identity building, as well as four beliefs pertaining to teaching Hebrew in the classroom. The first belief discussed in my study concerns the way lived histories of teachers are central to the process of their identity formation as learners and as teachers of Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen's lived history as a young Jewish teenager who yearned to learn Hebrew shaped his identity as a learner, and later as a teacher in the East Hebrew School. He believes that he should teach Hebrew in a way that would attract the students up to a point that they will be *addicted to Hebrew*. When students show interest in Hebrew beyond classroom expectations, like in the case of a student who was happy to spend more time reading Hebrew beyond classroom expectations, Rabbi Cohen was very pleased. In contrast, when a student demonstrated "a change of heart" from being an

enthusiastic learner to dropping Hebrew class all within one year, Rabbi Cohen was very disappointed.

The strong impact of lived experience in shaping teachers' identity as learners and later as teachers was apparent in Ms. Abramson's reported story as well. From a somewhat deprived teenager who longed to have Bat Mitzvah and learn Hebrew, but was not given the opportunity to do that at that time, she became a passionate Hebrew learner later in life, committing to studying Hebrew, then creating strong and long lasting connections with an Israeli family, and finally becoming an enthusiastic Hebrew teacher at West Hebrew School. Dr. Levin was influenced by his lived experience as well. Inspired by his childhood teachers, Dr. Levin learned to appreciate knowledge that is backed up by facts. Looking at the difference between Rabbi Cohen's and Ms. Abramson's (NNS) beliefs, on one hand, and Dr. Levin's (NS) beliefs, on the other hand, it is interesting to see how both Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson are affected by their own lived experiences as learners of Hebrew, and this experience affects the way they perceive themselves as Hebrew teachers in terms of aspiring for students to feel strong connections with Hebrew and Israelis. In contrast, Dr. Levin as a native speaker of Hebrew does not connect between his process of learning Hebrew to his current position as a Hebrew teacher. This complicates what studies describe as NS vs. NNS (Ferguson, 2005) issues by showing that the NS/NNS dichotomy relates to language ideologies, not just to classroom activities.

A second belief discussed in my study is about form-based instruction. Dr. Levin believes that explaining new grammar should be in English, not in Hebrew. Students

should be given explanations of the Hebrew grammar rules in writing to enable them to read and understand the rules. Reading the rules in English should be outside of class, in order to use the entire class time for activities conducted in Hebrew. Similarly, Ms. Abramson believes that grammar should be explained in English, but unlike Dr. Levin, she explains grammar orally in English during class time.<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Cohen believes that he should teach grammar, but in contrast with Dr. Levin, he does not believe that students who take Hebrew as a foreign language will be motivated by the history of grammar. The belief about form - based instruction relates to teachers' beliefs about error correction. Rabbi Cohen believes that students need to have the opportunity to speak freely without teacher's monitoring and intervention for half an hour once a week. He believes that he should correct only errors that affect understanding, and even that he should do by whispering, in order to "not stop the flow" of conversation. Unlike Rabbi Cohen who refrains from correcting students while they are talking, Ms. Abramson believes that if students make mistakes on material she had taught and expects them to know—she should correct their mistakes.

A third belief discussed in my study relates to the choice of content teachers believe they should teach. While Rabbi Cohen emphasizes the choice of authentic contemporary Israeli material as a trigger for a Hebrew conversation, not shying away from authors who are not canonized, Dr. Levin emphasizes that his ideal texts would be canonized historical texts that include facts about Judaism in order to increase students' knowledge about Israel and Judaism. Ms. Abramson believes that students should be exposed to current Israeli culture, same texts that Israelis of similar age might enjoy.

---

<sup>41</sup> Thus not adhering to her "Hebrew only" immersion philosophy

Maintaining authenticity is important, according to Ms. Abramson, and this authenticity is achieved by bringing artifacts from Israel.

The fourth belief discussed in my study is about the place of technology in the process of teaching Hebrew. All three teachers believe that technology is conducive for teaching Hebrew. Rabbi Cohen believes that although technology can be used in class, this teaching tool should mostly be used outside of class so that class time can be used for student-to-student and student-to-teacher communication in Hebrew, as it does not replace a teacher in the classroom. Rabbi Cohen admits that the existing technologies for teaching Hebrew are somewhat limited and cannot be compared with other technologies to which students are exposed. Still, he believes that using technology that was initially developed for other languages should be used for the purpose of teaching Hebrew. Ms. Abramson believes that using technology, both in class and outside of class keeps her students motivated and improves their learning process. Dr. Levin is a strong supporter of using technology for teaching Hebrew. He developed computer programs for teaching Hebrew and is eager to share them with other Hebrew teachers. Moreover, Dr. Levin believes that teachers who do not use technology in the classroom are “in medieval times,” in his view.

**Research Question Two: What are teachers’ Hebrew language teaching practices with respect to Jewish identities?**

Classroom observations suggest that some of the beliefs described above mapped onto all three teachers’ classroom practices, other beliefs mapped onto only some teachers’ classroom practices. Teachers’ lived experience as learners, in the case of Dr.

Levin, or more specifically as Hebrew learners, in the case of Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson, mapped onto all three teachers' classroom practices. Rabbi Cohen learned Hebrew and visited Israel regularly. As a teacher, he attempts to raise students' awareness and commitment to Israeli topics by introducing them to interesting material about Israel and by creating a nurturing environment that allows students to express various opinions about Israel, knowing that the class is a safe place to express all opinions. Likewise, Ms. Abramson's beliefs mapped onto her classroom practices by engaging the students in activities that present Israel in a positive light, making it easy for the students to identify with Israel, especially with Israelis of the same age. Dr. Levin's beliefs that learning should be fact-based and knowledge-based map onto his teaching, when he attempts to bring people to class as experts on the facts presented in material Dr. Levin taught in his classroom.

The second belief about form-based instruction mapped onto all three teachers' classroom practices. Dr. Levin's web site is rich with material explaining various Hebrew grammar rules-in English. The classes I observed were conducted entirely in Hebrew, and students demonstrated knowledge of these rules that was acquired outside of class. Rabbi Cohen's deprioritizing of form-based instruction mapped onto his classroom practices. For example, every class session I observed started with students sitting in a circle away from their teacher, engaging in an unmonitored Hebrew conversation about casual topics. In Ms. Abramson's class, beliefs about form-based instructions mapped onto her classroom practices constantly, as when she would correct some mistakes in students' discourses and avoid others, the ones she had not taught yet at that point.

The third belief about content teachers deem worthy to teach mapped onto classroom practices of all three teachers as well. While Rabbi Cohen brought texts about current events in Israel, or other current texts about current Judaism in the US, Dr. Levin engaged his students by teaching them texts about debates that occurred many years ago, contributing to students' knowledge about Judaism and Israel, but avoiding any current controversies. Ms. Abramson's beliefs about the material she deems useful to teach mapped onto her classroom practices as well. She would supplement many new topics by bringing artifacts from Israel such as Israeli stamps or coins, or a receipt from her recent visit to an Israeli Café to practice newly learned grammar.

The fourth belief about using technology mapped onto only two teachers' classroom practices, and that is the belief about the importance of using technology. For example, in Rabbi Cohen's class, I observed how he would use software on his iPad to enable him to write new vocabulary as needed during class time, and his students can read it on the large monitor in front of them. In Ms. Abramson's class, Smart board was used in every class session for writing and for viewing clips to enhance Hebrew speaking activities. While Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson used technology in every class I observed, Dr. Levin's classroom practices I observed included technology only twice, when he taught the students about prominent Israeli singers. While Dr. Levin's students have access to his website and can use the technology he offers there outside of class, Dr. Levin's observed classroom practices included only two sessions using technology.

**Research Question Three: What can classroom practices and teachers' beliefs reveal about underlying Hebrew language ideologies?**

Hebrew language teachers' beliefs and practices reveal teachers' underlying Hebrew language ideologies, such as the ideology according which students in Hebrew schools stay connected to the Jewish community at large by studying about Hebrew and Judaism, in Hebrew, or that teaching Hebrew cannot be disconnected from Judaism. Some teachers' HLIs relate to the importance of grammatical correctness, while other teachers' HLIs put more emphasis on the need for Hebrew communication. This dissertation finds a link between the way teachers view their own learning experience and the way they perceive their classroom teaching goals. This study reveals differences between teachers who are native vs. non-native Hebrew speakers, as far as their beliefs about teaching and learning Hebrew are concerned, and as far as their Hebrew language ideologies are concerned. For example, Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson, the two teachers who are non-native speakers of Hebrew share an ideology that students should engage in Hebrew communications with one another in order to feel good about themselves speaking the language and using it as a communication tool. Dr. Levin, who grew up speaking Hebrew and being among native speakers of Hebrew did not experience the process of seeking Jewish communities and negotiating his Jewish identity. His underlying HLI gives priority to knowledge about Hebrew and the origins of Judaism as important for sustaining Jewish identity, while feeling Jewish is only secondary. Two participating teachers avoid classroom discussions about current politics in Israel, and this avoidance is a manifestation of their HLI, according which some issues pertaining to Israel are better left unsaid in their heritage classes.

Despite the difference between native and non-native speakers of Hebrew, all three teachers believe that they should teach and assess Hebrew grammar, and use technology in the classroom and outside of the classroom as well. All three teachers believe that the materials taught in class should serve as a tool to connect students to Israel and Judaism, thus enhancing their Jewish identity. Teachers' beliefs map onto their classroom practices, but not always. While beliefs about the need to connect students to Israel and Judaism are mapped onto classroom practices, beliefs about the need for using technology in the classroom mapped onto classroom practices in the case of Rabbi Cohen and Ms. Abramson, less so in the case of Dr. Levin.

This dissertation finds a connection between Hebrew teachers' religious identity and HLI. While Rabbi Cohen, who perceives himself as a non-orthodox and non-secular Jew, presents controversial contemporary texts and discussion topics to stimulate conversations in his class, Dr. Levin serves as a sole source of information to his students, and any controversy discussed in class pertains to known controversies about other people in different times and places, not to the students, and certainly not to Dr. Levin, who describes himself as a secular Jew. As a Jewish scholar who is also a secular native-Israeli Jew, Dr. Levin feels comfortable bringing to class texts that go against many Jewish "truths" the students learned throughout the years from rabbis. Ms. Abramson has not shared with me specifics pertaining to her religious identity. Unlike in Rabbi Cohen and Dr. Levin's advanced level Hebrew classes where students express opinions on various topics, Ms. Abramson's beginning Hebrew students engage in saying simple descriptive sentences about everyday life in Israel and the US. Any discussion

about controversies in Israel or Judaism is beyond the scope of this beginning Hebrew class. Despite some differences in their beliefs and practices, all three teachers in this study share a deep connection to Israel and a desire to instill this connection in their students' hearts or brains.

I conclude by summarizing how I answered each RQ for each participant:

Rabbi Cohen believes that Hebrew is extremely important in a process of Jewish identity formation, both as a learner and as a teacher. He believes that grammar should be taught, but errors should be corrected only if they do not impact students' fluency. Rabbi Cohen believes that the material taught in class should be authentic and contemporary and appropriate for classroom debates. Technology is important, but not in place of interpersonal classroom conversations. All these beliefs mapped onto Rabbi Cohen's classroom practices. Rabbi Cohen's underlying HLI is about the importance of Hebrew as connecting students with the Jewish community at large. The need for creating opportunities for communications in Hebrew is more important to him than maintaining Hebrew correctness.

Dr. Levin believes that student knowledge about Hebrew and Judaism is extremely important for sustaining Jewish identity. Hebrew grammar is also very important. In order to maintain correctness, according to Dr. Levin, Hebrew grammar should be explained in English outside of class. Dr. Levin believes that the ideal texts would be canonized historical texts about Israel and Judaism. Technology should be used in class. Most of Dr. Levin's beliefs mapped onto his classroom practices. Dr. Levin's beliefs and practices reveal his underlying HLI, in which correct Hebrew language is

important for fostering students' Jewish identities and sustaining membership in the Jewish community.

Ms. Abramson believes that Hebrew connects between Jews, Israel and Israelis. Sustaining strong connection with Hebrew, Israel, and with Israelis is vital for maintaining Jewish identity as learner and as a teacher, according to Ms. Abramson. Hebrew grammar is important and can be explained in English during class time. Errors should be corrected, especially in material that was covered in class. Ms. Abramson believes that it is important to give students access to contemporary Israeli popular culture. Technology is important and should be used in order to connect between students' interest and current Israeli cultural icons. Ms. Abramson's beliefs mapped onto her classroom practices. Ms. Abramson's underlying HLI is about the importance of Hebrew as connecting students with the Israel and Israelis.

### **Implications of This Study**

The review of literature in this study<sup>42</sup> examines literature about teachers' beliefs and identities and about teachers' language ideologies. The findings of this study advance work in this area by adding understudied components, such as the connection between teachers' religious identity, their beliefs, and their classroom practices that reveal their Hebrew language ideologies. This dissertation adds a component not found in the studies I reviewed, and that is the multilayeredness of Jewish identities that are a manifestation of Hebrew teachers' different lived experiences, teachers' various forms of Judaism, including secular Judaism. This dissertation shares the way these different perspectives of Judaism impact teachers' classroom practices, such as thoughts behind the choices of

---

<sup>42</sup> See chapter two

teaching material, or what topics can be discussed or should be avoided in the classroom. Teaching Hebrew as a heritage language happens in an atmosphere that relates to teachers' religious beliefs and ideologies. Teaching about Israel, especially during times when there is tension in the Middle East, can be loaded with underlying political assumptions that relate to teachers' classroom practices. All these circumstances that surround Hebrew language teachers inside and outside of the classroom are fundamental to teachers' context, and this aspect of religious identity as central to teachers' beliefs and practices is understudied. Studies that explore heritage language teaching (e.g., Milner, 2007; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007) should examine this important component of religious identity as yet another perspective affecting heritage language teachers' context and the process of identity formation. For example, this dissertation potentially adds to studies about Muslim religious identity in the classroom (e.g., Hewer, 2001) by exploring the way teachers' secular Jewish identities affect their classroom practices. Unlike the teachers in Hewer's (2001) study, who engage in Muslim rituals as a means to sustain students' Muslim religious identity, the teachers in this dissertation present a different model of sustaining religious identity, a model that does not include engaging in religious rituals during school time. This difference suggests that the process of fostering religious identity in the classroom is multifaceted and would require more studies to examine it thoroughly.

This dissertation adds an important component of teachers' perspectives to studies that examine Hebrew language ideologies (e.g., Avni, 2011, 2012; Golden, 2001; Feuer, 2007). This dissertation emphasizes the importance of teachers' perspective and the way

these perspectives influence teachers' classroom practices, their choice of material and their willingness to include current controversies in the Middle East in their curriculum, or their unwillingness to discuss controversies thus avoiding them altogether.

### **Limitations of This Study**

Although my study was able to address my research questions, limitations undoubtedly exist. There is one limitation pertaining to my insider positionality. My positionality, that, at times, was an advantage in getting access to the schools and to teachers' classes, and also might be a disadvantage, as well. Since many of the topics discussed in this study were *common sense* to me and to the teachers, it is possible that I missed some important questions that another researcher who is an outsider would have asked. For example, a researcher that is an outsider could ask the teachers why it is important for parents, many of whom do not speak Hebrew, to send their children to Hebrew School to learn this language. With all that, I do think that being a former teacher at West Hebrew School has contributed to my perspectives as a researcher. My subjectivity was a garment that could not be removed (Peshkin, 1988) that enabled me to see the bigger picture and compare between various Hebrew language ideologies. Every qualitative researcher might encounter a problem attempting to represent participants' reported experiences while using their own researchers' lenses, and this might create what Onwuegbuzie (2007) describes as "the crisis of representation" (p. 298), complicating the link between the experience and written text. But when I triangulate data sources, getting at meanings in context, I manage to overcome at least some of the

threats of credibility and confirmability (Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Patton, 2002) for example, comparing observations with interviews.

### **Contribution of This Study**

This dissertation contributes to research on language ideologies and to foreign language teachers' practices. These findings suggest a strong connection between teachers' secular religious identities and the way they teach their classes. This connection between religious identities to classroom practices is important for understanding the teacher role in various heritage languages that teach religion as well, like the indigenous Native American language classes, or Arabic language teachers who teach Islam as well in private Islamic schools, where teachers have various levels of religious observances. For example, Jewish orthodox schools teach biblical Hebrew, attempting to foster their students' Jewish identity. Unlike in the schools I examined, the "glue" that keeps these Jewish orthodox students together is Jewish rituals and not necessarily the modern State of Israel, Modern Hebrew or Israelis. That stands in line with orthodox schools' religious trajectories and observances, which are different from the religious observances and trajectories in the schools I studied.

This study advances research about foreign language teachers' beliefs and practices in multiple ways: this dissertation suggests a difference between beliefs and practices of teachers who are native speakers of the target language they teach and other teachers who acquired the target language they teach at various stages in their lives. Studies that look at teachers' lived experiences as a drive for acquiring a second or a foreign language and then choosing to teach this language to others will benefit from this

study. This study benefits me, a Hebrew language university instructor. I am going to look differently at the way I conduct my Hebrew classes, the motivation behind material I choose to teach and the way I teach grammar. I will reevaluate my teaching practices, also in a sense of what topics I am ready to discuss with my students, and what topics I avoid just because of my personal biases.

Finally, I call Hebrew language teachers in Hebrew schools to include more controversies pertaining to modern Israel in their curriculum. Hebrew school students these days are exposed to these controversies outside of their Jewish *imagined communities*, in their high schools or colleges, where non-Zionist or post-Zionist opinions surface, touching Jewish students' core identities about themselves and their communities. I argue strongly that Hebrew school teachers should discuss the current conflicts in the Middle East as a part of their curriculum, helping students negotiate their Jewish identities, exposing them to realities outside of their Hebrew schools. Hebrew school teachers should initiate these sensitive conversations in their Hebrew classes and allow for various opinions and ideologies to surface. Moreover, I suggest conducting future research that will explore how these students' Jewish identities are affected by the current conflicts in the Middle East in the context of the public schools or universities they attend.

## References

- Abelson, R. P. (1979). Differences between belief and knowledge systems. *Cognitive Science*, 3 (4), 355–366.
- Almarza, G. G. (1996). Student foreign language teacher's knowledge growth. In D. Freeman & J.C. Richards (Eds.), *Teacher learning in language teaching* (pp. 50–78). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Alvine, L. (2001). Shaping the teaching self through autobiographical narrative. *The High School Journal*, 84(3), 5–12.
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York, NY: Verso Books Publishing.
- Andrews, S. (2003). 'Just like instant noodles': L2 teachers and their beliefs about grammar pedagogy. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 9(4), 351-375.
- Andrews, S. (2007). *Teacher Language Awareness* (1st ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Avni, S. (2011). Toward an understanding of Hebrew language education: ideologies, emotions, and identity. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2011(208), 53–70.
- Avni, S. (2012). Hebrew as heritage: The work of language in religious and communal continuity. *Linguistics and Education*, 23(3), 323-333.
- Bailey, K. M., & Nunan, D. (1996). *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Press.

- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 107–128.
- Beilin, Y. (2000). *His brother's keeper: Israel and diaspora Jewry in the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Bekerman, Z. (2001). Constructivist perspectives on language, identity, and culture: Implications for Jewish identity and the education of Jews. *Religious Education*, 96(4), 462-473.
- Benor, S. B. (2004). *Second style acquisition: The linguistic socialization of newly Orthodox Jews*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Benor, S. B. (2010). Ethnolinguistic repertoire: Shifting the analytic focus in language and ethnicity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 14(2), 159-183.
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2008). Contesting “language” as “heritage”: Negotiation of identities in late modernity. *Applied Linguistics*, 29(4), 533–554.
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2010). *Multilingualism: A critical perspective*. London, England: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Blackledge, A., & Pavlenko, A. (2001). Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts: Introduction to the special issue. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5(3), 243–257.
- Blakely, E. J., & Snyder, M. G. (1997). *Fortress America: gated communities in the United States*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Blommaert, J. (1999). *Language ideological debates* (Vol. 2). Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter.

- Bloom, W. (1990). *Personal identity, national identity and international relations*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. New York, NY: Pearson Publishers.
- Borg, S. (1999). Studying teacher cognition in second language grammar teaching. *System*, 27(1), 19–31.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education : research and practice*. London, England: Continuum.
- Bourdieu, P., & Thompson, J. B. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burgess, J., & Etherington, S. (2002). Focus on grammatical form: explicit or implicit?. *System*, 30(4), 433-458.
- Buzzelli, C., & Johnston, B. (2002). *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching: Language, Power, and Culture in Classroom Interaction*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
- Byram, M., & Risager, K. (1999). *Language teachers, politics and cultures*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Calderhead, J., & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 7(1), 1–8.
- Carpenter, T. P., Fennema, E., Peterson, P. L., & Carey, D. A. (1988). Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of students' problem solving in elementary arithmetic. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 19(5), 385–401.

- Cathcart, R., & Olsen, J. (1976). Teachers' and students' preferences for correction of classroom conversation errors. In J.R. Faneslow and R.H. Crymes (Eds.), *On TESOL '76: Selections based on teaching done at the Tenth Annual TESOL Convention* [in NY, NY March 2-7, 1976] (pp. 41–53). Washington, DC: TESOL.
- Chaudron, C. (1977). *Teachers' priorities in correcting learners' errors in French immersion classes*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(3), 474-494.
- Cho, G. (2000). The role of heritage language in social interactions and relationships: Reflections from a language minority group. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 24(4), 369-384.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1985). Personal practical knowledge: A study of teachers' classroom images. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 15(4), 361–385.
- Cohen, A. P. (1985). *The symbolic construction of community*. London, England: Routledge Press.
- Cohen, S. M., & Eisen, A. M. (2000). *The Jew within: Self, family, and community in America*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Coldron, J., & Smith, R. (1999). Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31(6), 711–726
- Coleman, H. (1996). *Society and the language classroom*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Crow, G. P., & Allan, G. (1995). Community types, community typologies and community time. *Time & Society*, 4(2), 147.
- Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society* (2nd ed.). Covina, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Davies, B. (2003). *Shards of Glass: Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities* (Revised.). New York, NY: Hampton Press.
- DeKeyser, R. M. (1995). Learning second language grammar rules. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 17(3), 379-410.
- Donmall, B. G. (1985). *Language awareness* (Vol. 6). Cambridge, England: Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Ducar, C. M. (2008). Student voices: The missing link in the Spanish heritage language debate. *Foreign Language Annals*, 41(3), 415-433.
- Duff, P. A., & Uchida, Y. (1997). The negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in postsecondary EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 451-486.
- Duff, P. A. (2010). Language socialization. In N.H. Hornberger & S.L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 169-192). Bristol, England: Routledge.
- Elbaz, F. (1981). The teacher's "practical knowledge": Report of a case study. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 11(1), 43-71.

- Ellis, R. (1989). Are classroom and naturalistic acquisition the same? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 11(3), 305–28.
- Ellis, R. (2001). *Form-focused instruction and second language learning*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.
- Ellis, M. H. (2009). *Judaism does not equal Israel*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Epstein, J. L., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2001). More than minutes: Teachers' roles in designing homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3), 181–193.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Critical language awareness*. London, England: Longman Publishers.
- Fanselow, J. F. (1977). The treatment of error in oral work. *Foreign Language Annals*, 10(5), 583–593.
- Ferguson, A. (2005). *Student beliefs about their foreign language instructors: A look at the native speaker/non-native speaker issue*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.
- Feuer, A. (2007). How Qualitative Research Changed Me: A Narrative of Personal Growth. *Qualitative Report*, 12(1), 122-130.
- Feuer, A. (2007). *Who does this language belong to? Language claim and identity formation in the Hebrew language class*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Fishman, J. A. (1989). *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual matters.
- Fishman, J. A. (2001). *Can threatened languages be saved?: reversing language shift*,

*revisited: a 21st century perspective* (Vol. 116). Clevedon, England: Multilingual matters

- Fradd, S. H., & Lee, O. (1999). Teachers' roles in promoting science inquiry with students from diverse language backgrounds. *Educational Researcher*, 28(6), 14–42.
- Freeman, D. (2002). The hidden side of the work: Teacher knowledge and learning to teach. A perspective from North American educational research on teacher education in English language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 35(1), 1–13.
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. E. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 397–417.
- Freire, P. (1970). The banking concept of education. In A.S. Canestrari & B.A. Marlowe (Eds.), *Educational foundations: An anthology of critical readings* (pp. 99-111). London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Friedrich, P. (1989). Language, ideology, and political economy. *American Anthropologist*, 91(2), 295–312.
- Gable, R. K., & Wolf, M. B. (1993). *Instrument development in the affective domain: Measuring attitudes and values in corporate and school setting*. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Gee, J. P. (1996). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourse* (2nd ed.). London, England: Routledge.

- Gess-Newsome, J., & Lederman, N. G. (2001). *Examining pedagogical content knowledge: The construct and its implications for science education* (Vol. 6). New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Golden, D. (2001). "Now, like real Israelis, let's stand up and sing": teaching the national language to Russian newcomers in Israel. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 32(1), 52–79.
- Goodson, I. F., & Cole, A. L. (1994). Exploring the Teacher. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 21(1), 85–105.
- Green, T. F. (1971). *The activities of teaching*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Press.
- Haviland, J. B. (2003). Ideologies of language: some reflections on language and US law. *American Anthropologist*, 105(4), 764–774.
- Hawkins, E. (1984). *Awareness of language. An introduction*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- He, A. W. (2010). Identity construction in Chinese heritage language classes. *Pragmatics*, 14(2), 199–216.
- Henze, R., & Davis, K. A. (1999). Authenticity and identity: Lessons from indigenous language education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 30(1), 3–21.
- Hewer, C. (2001). Schools for Muslims. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27(4), 515–527.
- Hill, J. H. (1985). The grammar of consciousness and the consciousness of grammar. *American Ethnologist*, 12(4), 725–737.
- Hoggett, P. (1997). *Contested communities: experiences, struggles, policies*. Bristol, England: Policy Press.

- Hornberger, N. H. (1988). *Bilingual education and language maintenance: A southern Peruvian Quechua case* (Vol. 4). Cumberland, RI: Foris Publications.
- Hornberger, N. H. (2002). Multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy: An ecological approach. *Language Policy*, 1(1), 27–51.
- Iddings, A. C. D. (2005). Linguistic access and participation: English language learners in an English-dominant imagined community. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 165-183.
- James, C., & Garrett, P. (1995). *Language awareness in the classroom*. London, England: Longman Publishers.
- Janks, H. (2010). Language, Power and Pedagogies. In N.H. Hornberger & S.L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 40–61). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Jo, H. (2001). “Heritage” language learning and ethnic identity: Korean Americans’ struggle with language authorities. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, 14(1), 26–41.
- Joseph, J. E., & Taylor, T. J. (1990). *Ideologies of language*. Florence, KY: Taylor & Francis.
- Kim, S. H. ., & Elder, C. (2008). Target language use in foreign language classrooms: Practices and perceptions of two native speaker teachers in New Zealand. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 21(2), 167-185.
- King, K. (2000). Language ideologies and heritage language education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3(3), 167-184

- Kissau, S. P., Algozzine, B., & Yon, M. (2012). Similar but different: The beliefs of foreign language teachers. *Foreign Language Annals*, 45(4), 580-598.
- Kramersch, C. (1995). The cultural component of language teaching. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 8(2), 83-92.
- Kramersch, C. (2006). The multilingual subject. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16(1), 97-110.
- Kramersch, C., Cain, A., & Murphy-Lejeune, E. (1996). Why should language teachers teach culture? *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 9(1), 99-107.
- Kroskrity, P. V. (Ed.). (2000). *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics, and identities*. Oxford, England: James Currey Publishers.
- Kroskrity, P. V. (2004). Language ideologies. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 496-517). Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kubota, R. (1998). Ideologies of English in Japan. *World Englishes*, 17(3), 295-306.
- Kubota, R. (2002). The impact of globalization on language teaching in Japan. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 13-28). London, England: Routledge Press.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Second language learning as a mediated process. *Language teaching*, 33(2), 79-96.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral learning*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Levis, J. M. (2005). Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronunciation teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 369-377.

- Liebman, C.S. & Cohen, S. (1990). *Two worlds of Judaism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Liebman, C., & Yadgar, Y. (2009). Secular-Jewish identity and the condition of secular Judaism in Israel. In Z. Gitelman (Ed.), *Religion or ethnicity* (pp. 149-170). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1994). Accent, standard language ideology, and discriminatory pretext in the courts. *Language in Society*, 23(2), 163–198.
- Lippi-Green, R. (1997). Language ideology and language prejudice. In E. Finegan and J. Rickford (Eds), *Language in the USA* (pp. 289-304). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- MacLure, M. (1993). Arguing for your self: identity as an organising principle in teachers' jobs and lives. *British Educational Research Journal*, 19(4), 311–322.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.
- McCarthy, M., Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. J. (1994). *Language as discourse: Perspectives for language teaching*. London, England: Longman Publishers.
- McCormick, C. B., & Pressley, M. (1997). *Educational Psychology: Learning, Instruction, Assessment*. New York, NY: Longman Publishers.
- McCutcheon, G. (1995). *Developing the curriculum: Solo and group deliberation*. New York, NY: Longman Publishers.

- McGroarty, M. (2010). Language and ideologies. In N.H. Hornberger & S.L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 3-39). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual approach*. New York, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mertz, E. (1998). Linguistic ideology and praxis in US law school classrooms. In B.B. Schieffelin, K.A. Woolard & P.V. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language ideologies: Practice and theory* (pp. 149–162). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, narrative inquiry, and self-study in curriculum and teacher education. *Education and Urban Society*, 39(4), 584-609.
- Milroy, J. (1999). The consequences of standardisation in descriptive linguistics. In T. Bex & R. Watts (Eds.), *Standard English: the widening debate* (pp. 16–39). London, England: Routledge.
- Milroy, J. (2001). Language ideologies and the consequences of standardization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 5(4), 530–555.
- Milroy, J., & Milroy, L. (1999). *Authority in language: Investigating standard English*. Florence, KY: Psychology Press.
- Mintz, A. L. (1993). *Hebrew in America: perspectives and prospects*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

- Mishra, P., & Koehler, M. (2006). Technological pedagogical content knowledge: A framework for teacher knowledge. *The Teachers College Record*, 108(6), 1017–1054.
- Mori, R. (2011). Teacher cognition in corrective feedback in Japan. *System*, 39(4), 451–467.
- Murrell Jr, P. C., & Foster, M. (2003). Teacher beliefs, performance and proficiency in diversity-oriented teacher preparation. In J. Raths & A. Raths (Eds.), *Teacher beliefs and classroom performance: The impact of teacher education* (pp. 43–64). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Nadler, S. (2009). Spinoza and the origins of Jewish secularism. In Z. Gitelman (Ed.), *Religion or ethnicity? Jewish identities in evolution* (pp. 59–66). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Nespor, J. (1987). The Role of Beliefs in the Practice of Teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 19(4), 317–28.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. New York, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Norton, B. (2010). Language and identity. in N.H. Hornberger & S. L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 349–369). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching*, 44(4), 412–446.

- Nystrom, N. (1983). Teacher-student interaction in bilingual classrooms: four approaches to error feedback. In M. Long (Ed.), *Classroom oriented research in second language acquisition*, (pp.169–188). Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers.
- Ochs, E. (1988). *Culture and language development: Language acquisition and language socialization in a Samoan village*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 155–188.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Collins, K. M. (2007). A Typology of Mixed Methods Sampling Designs in Social Science Research. *Qualitative Report*, 12(2), 281-316.
- Pajares, F. (1993). Preservice teachers' beliefs: A focus for teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education*, 15(2), 45–54.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pavlenko, A. (2002). Narrative study: Whose story is it, anyway? *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 213–218.
- Pavlenko, A. (2003). "I never knew I was a bilingual": Reimagining teacher identities in TESOL. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 251-268.
- Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (No. 45). Clevedon, England: Multilingual matters.

- Peirce, B. N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9–31.
- Pennycook, A. (2010). Nationalism, identity and popular culture. In N.H. Hornberger & S.L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 62-86). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity—one's own. *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17-21.
- Plano Clark, V., & Creswell, J. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the “wild” and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 368–395.
- Putnam, R. D. (2001). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D., Feldstein, L. M., & Cohen, D. (2004). *Better together: Restoring the American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Putnam, R. T., & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher*, 29(1), 4–15.
- Richardson, V. (2003). Preservice teachers' beliefs. In J. Raths & A. Raths (Eds.), *Teacher beliefs and classroom performance: The impact of teacher education* (pp. 1–22). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Regev, M. (2000). To have a culture of our own: On Israeliness and its variants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(2), 223-247.

- Robinson, I. (1999). Jacob H. Schiff: A study in American Jewish leadership (review). *American Jewish History*, 87(4), 400-401.
- Rotenstreich, N. (1993). Identification and Identity. In D. T. Goldberg & M. Krausz (Eds.), *Jewish Identity*, (pp. 50-55). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Ryan, P. M. (1998). Cultural knowledge and foreign language teachers: A case study of a native speaker of English and a native speaker of Spanish. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, 11(2), 135-153.
- Safran, W. (2008). Language, ethnicity and religion: a complex and persistent linkage. *Nations and Nationalism*, 14(1), 171-190.
- Saldaña, J. (2012). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (No. 14). London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sarna, J. D. (2004). *American Judaism: a history*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Schieffelin, B. B., & Ochs, E. (1986). Language socialization. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15, 163–191.
- Schieffelin, B. B., Woolard, K. A., & Kroskrity, P. V. (1998). *Language ideologies: Practice and theory* (Vol. 16). Oxford University Press, USA.
- Shabad, G., & Gunther, R. (1982). Language, nationalism, and political conflict in Spain. *Comparative Politics*, 14(4), 443–477.
- Shohamy, E. G. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. Florence, KY: Psychology Press.

- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4–14.
- Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1–23.
- Silverstein, M. (1985). Language and the culture of gender: At the intersection of structure, usage, and ideology. In E. Mertz & R. Parmentier (Eds.), *Semiotic mediation: Sociocultural and psychological perspectives* (pp. 219-259). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Silverstein, M. (1998). Contemporary transformations of local linguistic communities. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27, 401–426.
- Skulstad, A. S. (2005). Competing roles: student teachers using asynchronous forums. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 15(3), 346–363.
- Song, Y., & Andrews, S. (2009). *The L1 in L2 Learning: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*. Munich, Germany: Lincom Europa.
- Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. (1993). The impact of native language learning problems on foreign language learning: Case study illustrations of the linguistic cooling deficit hypothesis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 77(1), 58-74.
- Spolsky, B. (1991). Hebrew language revitalization within a general theory of second language learning. In R.L. Cooper & B. Spolsky (Eds.), *The influence of language on culture and thought: Essays in honor of Joshua A. Fishman's sixty-fifth birthday* (pp. 137-155). Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Spolsky, B. (2009). *Language Management* (1st ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Spolsky, B., & Shohamy, E. G. (1999). *The languages of Israel: Policy, ideology, and practice* (No. 17). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Swender, E., Martin, C. L., Rivera- Martinez, M., & Kagan, O. E. (2014). Exploring oral proficiency profiles of heritage speakers of Russian and Spanish. *Foreign Language Annals*, 47(3), 423-446.
- Tal, R., Bamberger, Y., & Morag, O. (2005). Guided school visits to natural history museums in Israel: Teachers' roles. *Science Education*, 89(6), 920-935.
- Talmy, S. (2010). The interview as collaborative achievement: Interaction, identity, and ideology in a speech event. *Applied Linguistics*, 35(4), 1-19.
- Tickle, L. (2000). *Teacher induction: The way ahead*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Trahey, M. (1996). Positive evidence in second language acquisition: some long term effects. *Second Language Research*, 12(2), 111-139.
- Trahey, M., & White, L. (1993). Positive evidence and preemption in the second language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 15(2), 181-204.
- Valdés, G. (2005). Bilingualism, heritage language learners, and SLA research: Opportunities lost or seized? *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 410-426.
- Valdes, J. M. (Ed.). (1986). *Culture bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Van Driel, J. H., Verloop, N., & De Vos, W. (1998). Developing science teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 35(6), 673–695.
- Van Lier, L. (1995). *Introducing language awareness*. London, England: Penguin.
- Van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. New York, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language Identity & Education*, 4(1), 21-44.
- Volkman, M. J., & Anderson, M. A. (1998). Creating professional identity: Dilemmas and metaphors of a first-year chemistry teacher. *Science Education*, 82(3), 293–310.
- Weaver, H. N. (2001). Indigenous identity: What is it and who really has it?. *The American Indian Quarterly*, 25(2), 240-255.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2002). Writing up qualitative research... better. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(1), 91-103.
- Woolard, K. A. (1985). Language variation and cultural hegemony: Toward an integration of sociolinguistic and social theory. *American Ethnologist*, 12(4), 738-

748.

Woolard, K. A. (1992). Language ideology: Issues and approaches. *Pragmatics*, 2(3), 235–249.

Woolard, K. A., & Schieffelin, B. B. (1994). Language ideology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23, 55–82.

Wu, H. P., Palmer, D. K., & Field, S. L. (2011). Understanding teachers' professional identity and beliefs in the Chinese heritage language school in the USA. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 24(1), 47-60.

Yadgar, Y. (2003). Between 'the Arab' and 'the Religious Rightist': 'Significant others' in the construction of Jewish-Israeli national identity. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 9(1), 52-74.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. London, England: Sage Publications, Inc.

Zanting, A., Verloop, N., Vermunt, J. D., & Van Driel, J. H. (1998). Explicating practical knowledge: an extension of mentor teachers' roles. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 21(1), 11–28.

**Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

1. How many years have you been teaching at the Hebrew school?
  - What do you like the most about teaching in this school?
  - What do you like the least?
2. Do you think it is important to teach about Israel in your Hebrew class? In what way?
3. Do you think that teaching about Israel pertains to fostering Jewish identity? In what way?
4. What aspects of Israeli culture do you prefer to teach?
5. Do you incorporate Israeli current events in your lesson plan? In what way?
6. Do students discuss Israeli current events in small groups and express their opinion about it? If so, can you give me an example of a discussion you can recall?
7. What do you do when students express opinions that are not in-line with your own beliefs about Israel? Can you give me an example?
8. Do you think that your own connection to Israel influences the way you teach about Israel? In what way?
9. If you could choose, what type of text would you like to teach in class? Please elaborate.

**Appendix B: Sample Fieldnotes**

10-21-13-Rabbi Cohen

Rabbi Cohen: Religious Jew can be Reform or Orthodox. No Jew says he has no connection with Jewish tradition.

Student: Tradition is associated with religious Jews. It seems we do not have much time to be religious and it takes to the back seat.

Student: It's stupid. If you are a Jew we don't need to classify you to Conservative, Orthodox, or reform. We do not have to pray or eat kosher food. Many Christians have celebrated Christmases and Easter but do not go to church. They still think they are Christians. The same is with Jews. They have a religion but they do not do the things of religion.

Student: If people say they are Jews, this is their religion. They do not need to do anything about it.

Lesson Two

Student: people in the US are not religious now as they were in the past. They have no time for religion.

Rabbi Cohen: People are busy?

Student: The article is about religious and secular Jews. With time people will be less and less religious and more secular.

Rabbi Cohen: This is what happens. 32% of young Jews are secular.

Student: In a few years there will be less religious Jews.

Rabbi Cohen: Do you think that their kids would say they are Jewish?

Student: The younger generation does not like Jewish or Christian religion. We are more academic and we center on mathematics and science and no time for religion. When someone thinks about science they think it's the right thing. It is not a modern religion. I think that this generation is not as religious as past generations.

Student: It's a bit sad that the man who wrote the article thinks that there will be a lot of Jews. I feel a great relationship with Jews. Not like Christians. I went to Torah study all my life. I want my children to be connected to Israel and Jews. I want to marry a Jew.

Rabbi Cohen: What about the Jews who are Jews in name only?

Student: It's OK but I do more. Like Israeli folk dances.

Rabbi Cohen: alarming numbers. I do not know how American Jewry will be in 20 years.

Student: It's OK to do nothing but sad. Judaism is a great thing in my life.

Student: Another great thing in all religions. There are many extreme religions, Judaism too. There are very religious Orthodox Jews, we also have the Tea Party, even Islam. Many people think that it is a religion and it rejects them. If anyone sees Jews praying all the time and they are a little crazy they do not want to do it. I think that the gap between the very religious people and religious with a normal life is very large.

Student: Judaism is changing. People are less involved in their community and more than just a name. They are not connected to their Judaism.

Rabbi Cohen: Conservative 30 years ago were the great flow. Reforms are the majority. But some reforms are becoming secular without religion.

Student: It's sad but it's not just for Jews but for many religions that a lot of people I know say they are not religious. Not only Jews.

Rabbi Cohen: For previous generation it was important to be Conservative or Reform. Today it is not important.