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Language Education in the Trilingual Situation: The Post-Soviet Jewish Intelligentsia in Israel between State, Community and Labor Market

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Abstract

The issues related to language education in the trilingual situation are discussed in this study, referring to the experience of the post-Soviet Jewish intelligentsia in Israel.

While most immigrants to Israel since 1989 from the former USSR are of Jewish origin, their mother-tongue is neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, but Russian. In Israel, integration into the labor market requires Soviet immigrants to master both Hebrew and English, this despite the fact that the immigrant population is large enough demographically to support the continuous use of the Russian language.

The prevailing view in Israel held that immigrants could learn a new language better if they stopped using their former language. It was also believed that the use of foreign languages threatened the Hebrew language and the national identity. Most post-Soviet immigrants have rejected such thinking and for the present, continue to retain their native language and culture.

When their learning occurs simultaneously with their entering a new language community, the immigrants become more sensitive to the cultural and social implications of multilingualism. Appropriate ways should be found to bridge the host society's expectations from the newcomers with the immigrants' own orientations towards their language education and re-socialization. Educators and policy makers need to be sensitive to how language policy and implementation in the immigrants' country of origin differ from those in the host society.

Introduction

Though the Israeli Jews' national language is the modern Hebrew, no more than 50% of them were born in Israel, so that for about half of this population Hebrew is not the mother tongue. Yet the majority of the Jewish population has a command of Hebrew. Moreover, among Jews coming from the Diaspora countries many now speak Hebrew better than their native language. On the other hand, new immigrants who have been in the country for only a short time as well as those who arrived after the retirement age are likely not to master Hebrew at all.

Although most immigrants from the former USSR who have arrived in Israel since 1989 are of Jewish origin, their mother-tongue is neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, but Russian. Maria Polinsky (1998) and David Andrews (1999), who studied the language repertoire of the Post-Soviet Jewish immigrants in the United States, also noted that the majority of their informants had spoken no language other than Russian before the emigration. In Israel, at least in order to be integrated into the labor market, the ex-Soviet citizens are required to master both Hebrew and English, although the group of ex-Soviet immigrants is large enough demographically to support the continuous use of the Russian language.

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As argued by Elana Shohamy (1994, p. 136), maintenance of home languages is a threat to the main language and to national identity, whereas the successful acquisition of Hebrew can occur only when all other home languages are dropped. This condition, however, has been rejected by the ex-Soviet immigrants, who, at least in the current generation, aspire to retain their native language and culture.

It should be mentioned that, when immigrants begin to learn a new language, comparisons between the mother tongue and a new language, as well as between the language policies adopted in the country of origin and the target one are inevitable. Providing that the learning occurs simultaneously with entering a new language community, the immigrants become more sensitive to the cultural and social implications that multilingualism involves. Thus in order to find an appropriate way to bridge between the host society's expectations from the newcomers and the immigrants' own orientations towards their language education and re-socialization, educators and policy makers should be aware of various issues related to language policy in the immigrants' country of origin and the points of similarities and differences between that policy and the course of action in the same field adopted in Israel. This essay provides such a perspective.

The Tradition of Jewish Multilingualism and the Zionist Movement

As Israel does not have a written constitution, and as there is no law defining language policy, the policy issue is somewhat fuzzy (see Spolsky, 1996). Even before it took over the Mandate for Palestine from the League of Nations, the British government had been persuaded by English Zionists of the need to recognize Hebrew alongside English and Arabic. The King's Order-in-Council of 1920 echoed the Mandate in proclaiming three official languages, but the meaning of "official" was somewhat limited (Spolsky, 1997). The order required that regulations be published in Arabic as well as English in predominantly Arab areas of Palestine and in Hebrew in Jewish areas, and that people in these sectors be allowed access to courts and government offices in these languages.

The decision to leave education to the communities made it possible for each to use their respective languages for instruction, both systems teaching English as well.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, all British Mandatory law and regulations remained in effect until amended. One specific law revised was the one proclaiming English an official language, by which it would seem that Hebrew and Arabic were left as the two official languages of the state, but the outcomes of this situation have been far from being clear. The three languages appear on coins and stamps. The country's laws see the light in Hebrew, and, with some delay, English and Arabic translations are published. Representation in courts of law is in Hebrew. However, a lawyer is entitled to appear in Arabic and to be accorded Arabic-Hebrew-Arabic interpreting services by the court. Lawyers may under special conditions plead in English as well as Arabic. As recent studies show, language policy appears to be set at a local level, each government office deciding what is appropriate (Spolsky and Cooper, 1991; Spolsky and Shohamy, 1999). Furthermore, in spite of the widespread official and ideological policy support for Hebrew, English has continued to flourish and spread in all sectors of the Israeli population.

The national language of the Israeli Jews is the modern Hebrew – "Its revival as a spoken language in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is often called a miracle or a unique event in the world of languages" (Rabin, 1983, p. 31). However, no more than 50% of the Israeli Jews were born in Israel, so that for about half of them Hebrew is not the mother tongue. For over a fifth of the Israeli Jewish population the native language is Russian, for about 8 percent of the Jews (coming from the Arabic speaking countries) the native language is one of the varieties of Arabic or Judeo-Arabic; and for about 5 percent of the Jewish population (mainly older people born in central and eastern Europe) the native language is Yiddish. For many other Jews, a wide range of native languages exists, which includes French, Rumanian, Hungarian, Polish, Persian, English, Amharic and Tigrinian, Spanish and German. Most of the Jewish population has a command of Hebrew. Among Jews coming

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from the Diaspora countries many now speak Hebrew better than their native language. On the other hand, new immigrants who have been in the country for only a short time as well as those who arrived after the retirement age often do not speak Hebrew at all.

The description of the language situation in Israel would be incomplete, if one did not refer to the francophone community and, in particular, to a certain ambiguity characteristic of the status attributed to the French language in the Israeli society. In the case of Israel, it is problematic to speak of a francophone community as such (Miles, 1995). While it is true that the middle- and upper-class North Africans exhibit a special allegiance to French as a resource which is helpful for mobility in the countries of their origin, the North African community as a whole hardly retains this language, one of its rare valued resources, over generations (Ben-Rafael, 1994b). Gradations of attachment to the linguistic and cultural enterprise connoted by Francophonie vary so widely that imputation of a collective francophone group consciousness is risky. Whereas a minority of Francophones (mainly native speakers who immigrated from Europe) do demonstrate affective, and in some cases ideological, ties to the French language and francophone culture, native-born Israelis have acquired French merely as part of their general education and regard Francophonie in more culturally symbolic and instrumental terms.

Francophones in Israel may be loosely grouped into six categories (see Miles, 1995). One of the oldest (though probably the smallest) is the indigenous group of Arabs trained in religious schools set up in Palestine by French and other Catholic missionaries mainly in the nineteenth century. Some of these Francophones live in Jerusalem and Jaffa, but the single largest population of Palestinian Francophones is found in Bethlehem. The second longstanding category are the descendants of Jewish families who immigrated from East Europe and the Balkans (Romania, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria) long before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and who settled in the Tiberias region. The third and numerically largest category are Francophones of North African and Middle Eastern origin (especially Moroccan, but also Algerian, Tunisian,

Egyptian, and Syrian). Their massive inflow in the 1950s and the early 1960s came to change the social and political landscape of the nation; Netanya, Ashdod, and Beersheva contain large concentrations of these Middle Eastern Francophones. West European (French, Belgian, Swiss) Jews, the fourth category, have been dwelling in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. More recently, the post-Cold War wave of immigrants from the former Soviet bloc, newly dispersed throughout the country, includes a cadre of intellectuals steeped in Francophone tradition (category five). The sixth category includes those Israelis who, without any particular ethnic or familial ties to the Francophone world, have chosen to study the French language and thereby add Francophonie to their personal repertoire of multiculturalism.

The fact that the largest group of Israeli Francophones emanates from an underprivileged socioeconomic class (North African Sephardim) has given rise to a paradox. On the one hand, by its identification with a low socioeconomic status (SES) within wider Israeli society French carried with it unwelcome associations and connotations. This language retained, if at all, as a familial tongue for private purposes, whereas its public usage became stigmatized: an oft-repeated anecdote is that North African youngsters would tell their classmates that their accents stemmed from their origin in "southern France". The shedding of identity symbols associated with a subculture disparaged by the dominant society resulted in the devaluation of the French language, particularly among its Moroccan speakers. On the other hand, Francophonie has managed to retain its image as a high status and high prestige cultural marker. As summarized by Ben-Rafael (1994b, p.199), "that the French language has been an identitional attribute of a low-class community has not diminished the prestige of French in privileged milieux and its status there as a desirable object of acquisition". However, as a minoritarian, nonethnic and voluntaristic linguistic identity, the future of Israeli Francophonie is problematic.

The modern Israeli multilingualism has been existing since the ancient times. As mentioned by Spolsky and Cooper (1991), the Jewish multilingualism clearly pre-dates the destruction of the Second Temple

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in 70 CE. At least until the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 CE, the Jews of Palestine were multilingual, using Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek for different purposes and in different parts of the country. It is now generally agreed that the two varieties of Hebrew used by Jews in Palestine in the late Second Temple period are represented more or less by biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. The differences between the two can be summarized, as extending to grammar, vocabulary, and general style. The distinction between the two varieties of Hebrew is attested to in the Talmud; the varieties are referred to as *leshon Torah*, "the language of the Torah", and *leshon hakhamim*, "the language of the learned"; there are also references to *leshon bnei adam*, "the language of ordinary people" (Chomsky, 1957; cited in Spolsky and Cooper, 1991, p. 21). Three other languages had significant places in the general pattern of language use in Palestine in the late Second Temple period: Aramaic (almost certainly the dominant language of wider communication, the principal language of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine – the Nabateans, the Samaritans, the Idumaeans, and one of the major languages of Jews in Palestine in the first century AD); Greek (in the Greek colonies both outside and within Palestine; by 150 BC a good knowledge of the Greek language could be expected of members of the Palestinian Jewish aristocracy); and Latin (the language of the Roman army and officials).

One of the critical distinctive features of the Jewish communities has been their readiness to use *lashon kodesh* as a barrier against assimilation. Understanding the process of the development of Jewish languages is important, for it exemplifies "the special function of Jewish multilingualism in permitting a kind of acculturation that does not become assimilation" (Spolsky and Cooper, 1991, p. 31). It starts in a minority situation, when Jews, whether through numerical or political and economic weakness, come to adopt the majority and alien language, the co-territorial vernacular, not just as a language for communication with outsiders, but as the language for internal community functions. As has been stated by Spolsky and Cooper (1991, pp. 57–58), "during the period when it was not a daily spoken language, Hebrew was restricted in its domains, serving mainly liturgical, scholarly, and literary functions,

it was called on occasionally as a lingua franca by Jews who shared no other language". Although during hundreds of years Hebrew had ceased to be a language in daily spoken use, it retained its place in most Jewish communities as a language to be read and to be written, to be prayed in, and to be studied.

Influenced by European nationalism, the leaders of the Zionist movement emphasized the importance of creating a new society, with social, religious, occupational and political structures that differed drastically from those of the past. The ideology of Zionism emphasized the return of the Jews of the Diaspora to their historical homeland. The "ingathering of the exiles" to the Jewish homeland and a cultural transformation, which started with a linguistic revolution, the revival of Hebrew (see Harshav, 1993), the intention to transform the Jewish legacy – these were the principal tenets of Zionism. Hebrew was a central symbol for the awakening and maintenance of the national sentiment. The promotion of Hebrew was a reminder of the glorious tradition connecting the Jewish people to its ancestors, and a sign of the national self-determination to win again. In principle, any common language can be used to mobilize the masses, but an indigenous language, carrier of a great classical, religious, and historical tradition, is an eminently powerful symbol around which to rally.

Thus Hebrew, the national language of Israel, is a mighty common national symbol, which paves the way to a wide range of other national symbols and national institutions. The acquisition and the use of the Hebrew language in Israel have been endowed with the highest ideological significance in the establishment of the state. In the words of Pearl Katz (1982, p. 102), "In Israel, the ideological significance attributed the use of Hebrew with being a good, loyal citizen of Israel, sharing a common Zionist ideology and participating in the building of a Jewish state. The Hebrew language provided a highly valued charter for transmitting the Zionist ideology among Jews in Israel". The process of acquisition of Hebrew by immigrants has been combining elements of language education and acculturation. The role of Hebrew language classes *(Ulpanim)* in the re-socialization process is especially meaningful

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(Katz, 1982): through the medium of the highly valued Hebrew language, immigrants are taught to interpret national symbols, such as those pertaining to national heroes, holidays and history.

The development of political meaning assigned to the language choice, the tie between language and nation, which accompanied the rise of the nineteenth-century nationalism, reached its acme in the ideological-political basis of language choice faced by the Jews in the pre-revolutionary Russia, in which the variety of practices included "the old three-language pattern, with internal Yiddish and lashon kodesh and an external co-territorial vernacular for those who remained committed to the old traditions; Russian for those who believed in universalism and revolution; a revitalized Hebrew for those who believed in socialism and Jewish national liberation in Eretz Israel; and Yiddish without *lashon kodesh* for those who believed in a new Jewish secular nationalism" (Spolsky and Cooper, 1991, p. 33). However, after the October Revolution (1917) the situation regarding the Russian Jews' patterns of language and identity had changed drastically, due to the repressive governmental policy towards the minority languages. As claimed by Yelenevskaya and Fialkova (2003, p. 45), "in the USSR Russian gave better access to economic resources and power, and the Jewish intelligentsia prided itself on knowing Russian better than the in a minority situation ethnic Russians".

The Forced Shift to Russian:
Soviet Governmental Policy towards Minority Languages

According to 1989 census, the Russians accounted for only 50.8 per cent of the population in the Soviet Union. Officially, Russian was not attributed the status of a language of the state. Neither in the Constitution nor in any connection with language policy was such a function mentioned; however, this was contradictory to the actual language situation in the Soviet Union, in which Russian took the practical role of the dominant language of the state. The quantitative analysis of a set of products from which principles and results of the Soviet language policy could be inferred (e.g. book, newspaper, and magazine publications in 127 "languages of the peoples of the USSR" from 1959 to 1984)

indicated that among all Soviet languages, Russian was clearly a category by itself: its publications exceeded those in other languages by any measure applied, whereas the dispersion of these products throughout the Soviet Union underlined and reinforced the Russian language's undisputed status as the country's state language (Rogers, 1987). Russian was widely studied in all types of schools as a required second native tongue and as the language of international communication and "socialist culture". It should be mentioned that in the Soviet Union the culture of all nationalities was declared to be national in form and socialist in content. Russian was the medium through which socialism was transmitted to the national minorities. It had become a mark of the Soviet patriotism to study the "language of Lenin". Lenin himself considered a cultural national autonomy a transitory state. He foresaw a process of assimilation and merging of nationalities in the times of communism. Stalin adopted his philosophy; at the XVI Party Congress in 1930, he declared that in the times of communism the national languages would merge into one common language (Pennar, Bakalo and Bereday, 1971, p. 165). As a result, Russian had achieved a pre-eminent position in all the republics of the Soviet Union. Many schools for national minorities had adopted Russian as the language of instruction instead of the native one, which was taught only as a subject. All schools of Karelia, many schools of Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Kalmykia had adopted the Russian language as the only one to be used at all the educational levels (see Kreusler, 1976, pp. 50–52). The processes of language shift were indeed a social factor of great significance, given the fact that by 1979 about 16.3 million non-Russians (such as Ukrainians, Latvians, Georgians) had shifted to Russian as their first language. As far as Russian was involved in processes of language shift, this was labeled the "second mother tongue" of those people who assimilated themselves. This term must not be confused with a "second language": one who had shifted to the "second mother tongue" was monolingual, speaking Russian as the first language (Haarmann, 1992, p. 111). It should be emphasized that the term "second mother tongue" appeared in all publications, generally political or culture-related and bacame a stereotype expression in the

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Soviet scientific literature. Without any doubt, the term emphasized the positive connotation of achieving a new identity and, while avoiding any negative association with language shift. Assimilation had become an increasingly important factor in the Soviet society, this phenomenon being described and evaluated in positive terms by the Soviet ideologists.

Characterized by the rigid bureaucratic centralization of administration, the Stalinist centralism deeply affected the state of affairs regarding the non-Russian languages in that Russian became the only inter-republic language which had an official status in all the Soviet territories. This was also true for the dominance of Russian in all inter-republic institutions (such as army, federal administration, legislation, jurisdiction, press, post, radio and television network). Referring to the situation in 1988, 76.6 percent of the printed books were published in Russian, with a number of copies which amounted to 85.7 percent of the whole Soviet book production. The dominance of Russian was also evident in other domains of the press, for instance, with respect to magazines (84.6% of all issues and 83.9% of all copies were in Russian) and to the daily newspapers (67.5% of all issues and 83.5% of all copies were in Russian; see Haarmann, 1992, p. 120). Almost all official documents were delivered in Russian and only to a limited degree – in other languages.

In addition, Russian was declared to be a 'source for the development and enrichment of the languages of the peoples of the USSR'. The Soviet type of language internationalization included lexical modernization as an important factor for promoting an internationalist terminology in the national languages of the Soviet Union. Russian loanwords or calques on the basis of Russian expressions had penetrated many spheres of the vocabulary of the non-Russian languages. Moreover, since the 1930s, the great majority of Soviet languages had been written in Cyrillic letters, while only a few local alphabets had been maintained (Lewis, 1972). The Latin script was used for writing Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian; the Armenians and Georgians in the Caucasus had preserved their own alphabetic writing systems since the Early Middle Ages (fifth century); the Hebrew alphabet was used for rendering Yiddish and Tat (the

language of the so-called 'mountain Jews' in Dagestan) and formerly Karaim; yet almost all the other national minorities used the Ciryllic script. The case of Central Asia republics is of particular interest, since the original, Arabic, alphabet was replaced twice. Among the Muslims of the Soviet Union, the Latin alphabet was substituted for Arabic for the first time in Azerbaijan in 1926. In 1928 the Latin alphabet was introduced in Uzbekistan and a year later in Tajikistan. The move toward Latinization of the alphabet was designed to make separate cultures out of the more or less unified culture of Central Asia and to make censorship of the printed word much easier (for more detailed discussion see Shorish, 1984, pp. 38–41). However, in 1938, by a decree of the central government, the Latin alphabet was abandoned in favor of the Cyrillic script. In Tajikistan, the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet was initiated by the law of May 21, 1940, which decreed that "all press and printing houses start using Russian letters by June 1, 1940" and "all printing, writing, and instruction in the Republic be done in the modified alphabet by September 1, 1941". The central government believed that changing the alphabet to the Cyrillic one would facilitate the learning of the Russian language by the non-Russians (Wurm, 1953; cited in Shorish, 1984, p. 44). By 1940, more than 68 languages were supplied with Cyrillic scripts (Lewis, 1983). At that time, the USSR was becoming increasingly inward-looking, with the realization that world revolution was not imminent and that this country would for a long time be virtually the sole Soviet-style state, surrounded by hostile systems. This led to a consolidation of internal unity, and demarcation from outside forces, both of which functions were served by the Cyrillic alphabet (Comrie, 1981, pp. 32–33).

The promotion of 'language shift to Russian' can well be considered the ultimate goal of the Soviet national politics. The merging of the non-Russians with the Russian-speaking population had an intermediate stage, which was the promotion of Russian as the second language. In the Soviet ideology, any way of becoming a member of the Russian speaking community was considered positive in its long-range effect of creating

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a homogeneous 'Soviet socialist nation'. It should be mentioned that Russians constituted a considerable part of the population in the capitals of the non-Russian republics, in which members of a variety of ethnic groups had been living together. As early as 1970, the proportion of Russians was higher than that of the local nationality that had given its name to the republic in Riga (Latvia) and the capitals of all Central Asia republics: Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Ashkhabad (Turkmenistan), Frunze (Kirgizstan) and Dushanbe (Tadzhikistan). The nuclei of Russian population outside Russia not only guaranteed the dominance of the Russian language in public life, but also promoted the spread of Russian from urban centers to rural areas where school instruction in Russian was not so much advanced. The migration of the Russians into peripheral regions of the Soviet Union had always been supported ideologically; the migration of the non-Russians to the large cities in Russia (such as Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk) had also been propagated as a supporting factor in the creation of an 'internationalist socialist community'. Although, in principle, each Soviet citizen had the right to be taught his mother tongue at school, there had been a steady decline of non-Russian languages in primary school education of non-Russian territories since the 1940s (see Lewis, 1972). In the early 1970s, the role of Russian was further strengthened by testing and approving experimental programs for teaching this language in kindergartens and nursery schools (see Kreindler, 1985). The higher the level of education and qualified training was, the more dominant was Russian. Many non-Russian students were educated at universities outside their home territory. Wherever there were members of different nationalities in a class, Russian was the vehicle of instruction. As a matter of fact, much of what had been investigated and planned in the field of bilingual education in the Soviet Union in the 1970s carried all manner of support for what has been described as the phenomenon of 'replacive bilingualism', "an unstable configuration where the dominant language is tending to supersede and eventually replace the mother tongue" (Kloss, 1969, p. 71; cited in Haarmann, 1992, p. 113).

The Suppression of the Jewish Languages in the Soviet Union

Stalinist centralism affected the status of all non-Russian languages, among them Yiddish and Hebrew. One of the most striking features of the discrimination against the Jewish national minority in the Soviet Union had long been its cultural deprivation (see Yedidya, 1991; Chernin, 1995). None of the Jewish national languages was taught at any school, nor was there any way for Jewish youth to learn those languages officially. Because assimilation had become an increasingly important factor in the Soviet society, the socio-political Jewish activity, except in Bolshevik party circles or under its auspices, was gradually prohibited in the first decade of the new regime. Yet while Yiddish had known its ups and downs – at different periods there were theatres, printed literature, and even, in the 1920s and early 1930s, schools – Hebrew had always been anathema to the Soviet authorities. Towards the end of that decade the Hebrew-mediated cultural activity went underground; Hebrew was considered an "instrument of counter-revolutionary, subversive activity by the Jewish religious clericals and Zionists". Anyone connected with Hebrew was automatically considered an enemy of socialism and punished severely. Not only was Hebrew not taught at any school, there was also no Soviet Hebrew literature: no books, journals, or newspapers appeared in this language. Simultaneously, the authorities made numerous attempts to create a Soviet-Jewish culture based on the Yiddish language which would be communist in content. These attempts mostly failed because the Soviet Jews were not enthusiastic about this absurd combination of the Yiddish language and the Communist culture. Although Yiddish, as opposed to Hebrew, first enjoyed support, in the second decade the network of Yiddish educational, academic and cultural institutions went into steady decline. In the mid-thirties, the liquidation began first of the Jewish elementary and high schools, and then of the Yiddish libraries, newspapers, museums, clubs, etc. From 1936 till 1938 numerous writers, artists, literary critics, and historians were arrested and later killed; these included such famous figures as Izi Kharik, Moyshe Kulbak, Zelig Akselrod, Max Erik, Yisroel Tsinberg and others. In 1948 all remnants

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of Yiddish cultural activity were destroyed, and Yiddish broadcasting was discontinued. On 12 August 1952, a group which included the leading Yiddish writers of the Soviet Union, among them Dovid Bergelson, Dovid Hofshteyn, Perets Markish, Leyb Kvitko, Shmuel Perlov and others, was executed under false accusations.

Throughout the 1950s the Soviet Jews were denied the right to maintain their culture in any form. Only towards the end of the decade, for 1959 was the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Sholem Aleichem, a major cultural event in Soviet Jewish life took place: a volume of Sholem Aleichem's collected works was published in the original Yiddish. It was the first book published in the USSR in Yiddish since *Der Emes* publishing house in Moscow was closed in 1948 (see Chernin, 1995). However, because Yiddish was not taught (in the words of Dora Shturman (1988, p. 197), "the disappearance of Jewish schools and the fact that neither Jewish language can be found on the curriculum of any school in the USSR no longer surprises anyone"), and no Yiddish textbooks were published, the Soviet Yiddish culture was becoming an exclusive attribute of the older generation. According to 1959 USSR population census, the number of Jews who claimed Yiddish as their native tongue was a little over 21 per cent of the people registered as Jews (18 per cent in 1970, 14 per cent in 1979; see Moskovich, 1987, p. 138). The Moscow-published *Sovetish heymland* [Soviet Motherland], the only Yiddish magazine, which was established in 1961 and published monthly until its closing in 1991, was not widely read in Russia because it was basically a translation into Yiddish of articles from *Pravda*, the leading Soviet newspaper. Aron Vergelis, *Sovetish heymland* 's editor-in-chief during three decades, subsequently became the unofficial censor of all the Yiddish-language literature and the chief CPSU Central Committee consultant on matters related to the Soviet Jews (see Chernin, 1995 and Shmeruk, 1991).

The case of Hebrew was even more hopeless; however, the publication in Moscow in 1963 of the famous Hebrew-Russian dictionary by Feliks Shapiro has slightly improved the formidable situation. This book not only helped educate a new generation of private Hebrew teachers after three

generations of suppression of the Hebrew culture in the USSR, but also attributed certain legality to unofficial Hebrew teaching in Russia. After the dictionary had been published, dealing with the Hebrew language was no longer considered *formally* a criminal offense (Ulanovskii, 1982, p. 259). However, the right to use the Hebrew language outside the synagogue and the right to teach it privately were not recognized. It should be pointed out that whereas a teacher of English, French or any other foreign language could apply and be registered as a private teacher of a foreign language, many Hebrew teachers had tried to apply for registration as private teachers of a foreign language and had all been refused by the District Fiscal Department. It was later learned that these offices had been given secret instructions forbidding them to register teachers of Hebrew; this made private Hebrew teaching an illegal activity. However, the fight for the right to learn and teach Hebrew had become one of the foremost signs of the vitality of the Zionist movement in the Soviet Union since the late 1960s. Long before that, small groups or individuals had begun learning Hebrew, so that by the early 1970s there was a considerable network of Hebrew classes in many cities with large Jewish populations; in Moscow alone there were some 1,000 people learning Hebrew in 1980 with about 60 teachers, and about 40 teachers were known to be teaching in other cities (Pinkus, 1988, p. 273). The police and the KGB busied themselves in combating Hebrew studies in private homes – breaking into houses, carrying out searches and arresting people; those arrested are charged with keeping anti-Soviet publications, which referred to nothing but Hebrew-Russian dictionaries or text-books used as teaching aids (for further details see Yedidya, 1991). Undoubtedly, the struggle for the study of Hebrew in the Soviet Union was in many ways a sign of the Jewish national awakening in that country. From the late 1950s onward, many young representatives of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia had conceived the study of Hebrew as the major way to identify themselves with their national culture. This was especially true following the elimination of the vestiges of the Yiddish culture in the USSR, which had in any case become less attractive to the younger generation of the Soviet Jews, since in various historical circumstances

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this language had served as the authorities' instrument for suppressing any autonomous Jewish existence. By contrast to that, Hebrew, perceived as the language of the Jewish independence, symbolized the renaissance of the national culture. As such it became a subject to the most repressive policy of the Soviet authorities.

Adult Russian-Speaking Immigrants and the Israeli System of Language Education

As pointed out by Kopeliovich (2000, p. 14), there were not only some significant differences, but also some meaningful similarities between the language policies adopted in the USSR and in Israel:

"The Soviet language policy was directed towards all the subjects of the multilingual state, and it aimed at making Russian the national language. For the Soviet regime, there was the imperative requirement to diminish the degree of heterogeneity which existed in the USSR. Besides, the Soviet government had cosmopolitan goals of spreading the Communist ideology all over the world and making Russian the new language of international communication. In contrast, the Hebrew dominance was established only within the independent state, the language policy was directed only towards members of the Zionist community who supported the ideology and towards volunteer new-comers".

Alongside with the differences in language policy, there were some parallel ideological conceptions that conditioned a similar impact on the mentality of individuals in the Soviet Union and in Israel. The common ideological goal, which might be of crucial importance for the discussion of the linguistic aspects, was to produce a New Perfect Individual (the Soviet or the Zionist one) living in a New Egalitarian Society. The New Citizen had to break up with the traditions of the past and refuse to assign any value to ethnic and cultural distinctions.

For a number of decades the Israeli education policy encouraged a "melting-pot" approach. The goal was for all citizens to become "Israelis" as soon as possible, at the expense of their home culture and language. This policy was in keeping with the general policy of the

"ingathering of the exiles" *(kibbutz galuiot)*, aimed at the consolidation of the Jewish people and eradication of the negative connotations of the Diaspora, which had culminated in the Holocaust. While it is debatable whether the melting-pot approach responded to the needs of the Jewish population (particularly because there were questions about how to maintain Jewish cultural traditions within Israel as the country matures), it was undoubtedly not applicable to the needs of the Israeli Arabs. Immediately after the Declaration of Independence, Arabic was recognized as the second official language by the State of Israel. Nowadays several sub-groups of the Arab minority live in Israel: the Moslems, the Christians and the Druze. Most of them reside in villages and towns that are populated by the Arabs only; though there are a few "mixed cities" (such as Jerusalem, Nazareth, Jaffa, etc.), the Jews and the Arabs inhabit separate parts of them. Under British Mandatory rule the Jewish and Arabic communities remained distinct, with separate school systems. With very few exceptions today's' Arab and Jewish schools exist apart de facto, because of both residential separation and cultural differences.

Arab students are required to learn Hebrew. However, the social and political problems between Arabs and Jews within and outside Israel are likely to influence the Arab students' attitudes towards learning Hebrew the second language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggested two important concepts in second-language research: integrative and instrumental attitudes toward the second-language learning. The former occurs when the learners identify themselves emotionally with the second language and its speakers; the latter occurs when the learners study the second language only for utilitarian purposes. The results of research conducted by Abu-Rabia (1998) indicate unsurprisingly that the Arab students' motivation toward learning Hebrew is not an integrative, but an instrumental one.

Over the past few years, a number of fundamental changes have been taking place in the policy concerning the place of languages in Israeli education and society. Israel's traditional Hebrew-enforcement policy is apparently in retreat. Israel is now officially committing large resources to fostering an immigrant language as a channel of information, education

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and culture. As mentioned by Lewis Glinert (1995, p. 358), the final aim of that policy, as applied to the Russian speaking immigrants, is still "Hebraisation, but using tactics that highlight Russian ethnic and cultural distinctiveness for a mix of pluralistic values and crisis response, and with no evident fear for social costs". These – and other – changes were crystallized in the first formal statement of a Policy for Language Education in Israel, a document issued in the Ministry of Education Director-General's Circular dated June 1, 1995. The policy covers mother tongue teaching, as well as second and foreign language education (see Spolsky and Shohamy, 1996; the following paragraphs are based on this study). The new Ministry policy acknowledges the unfortunate loss of the potential of the languages associated with the earlier waves of immigration (especially of French and Arabic) and calls to correct this mistake especially in the case of Russian.

Mother tongue education. The policy establishes literacy goals in Hebrew and in Arabic as mother tongues in the two major sectors, Jewish and Arab. It makes a further provision for language maintenance in the languages of immigrants, with special reference to Russian and Amharic. There is a long-established policy permitting immigrant students and students who have been overseas for a long period to take the school leaving examination in any language they choose.

Second language education. The policy stresses and makes provision for a one year teaching of Hebrew to immigrants and for developing literacy in that language. Within the Arab sector, there is provision for the teaching of Hebrew, optionally in the first grade and compulsorily from the second grade until the twelfth (the end of secondary education). For speakers of Hebrew, Arabic is a required subject from 7th to 10th grade (the fourth year has just been added in the new policy) and optional in 5th, 6th, 11th and 12th grades. Schools may choose to offer French instead of Arabic; new immigrants are exempted from the requirement.

Foreign Language Education. In Israel both at the elementary and secondary school level, English is the language studied by all students. With the reform in the Israeli educational system in 1969, English attained the status of a favored additional language, being optional

in the 3rd and 4th grades and compulsory throughout the rest of the school system. There is some teaching of Arabic, French and other languages at elementary school. At high schools, all students continue with English, while a large number of them adds to this Arabic (about 50%), French (about 10%), Russian (5–10%), or Yiddish (2–3%). All schools in the Arab sector use Arabic as their language of instruction, and teach Hebrew as the second language and English as a foreign language (Spolsky, 1998). It should be mentioned that while the policy marks French as an option, university entrance requirements determine that it is never selected instead of English. French, recognized as an important subject because of Israel's cultural, political and economic ties and as the community language of a sizable body of immigrants, is taught optionally (or as a required subject in place of Arabic) from 5th to 12th grade. Russian is offered as an optional language for new immigrants (and as an alternative to Arabic or French) throughout the system. The policy encourages students to also study a third foreign language. Languages in which there exist curricula are Yiddish (also used as language of instruction and taught in the independent ultra-orthodox schools), Ladino, Spanish and German; the policy seeks to add others like Japanese. The new policy also encourages the development of special language schools. In the matriculation certificate examinations, all students take English (the exam includes separate listening and speaking sections alongside the written examination), and about 10% take one or more other languages.

In the recent years, the Ministry of Education has encouraged the learning of Arabic by the Jewish school students in all high school tracks. Official policy, however, sustains the acquisition of Arabic by Jews only as the Arabs' language and not as a part of the Sephardic Jews' cultural heritage. This acquisition is aimed at the encouragement of face-to-face contacts and better understanding between Arabs and Jews. It is in this spirit that textbooks focus especially on Islamic values and symbols such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, Ramadan, the figure of the Prophet, the Koran, or the Khalifs. For non-religious topics, these books invariably describe the Arab peasants and their villages. As emphasized by Ben-

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Rafael (1994b, p.194), "it is never noted that Arabic is also one of the major diaspora languages. Recognizing Arabic as a language of Jews might encourage cultural pluralization of Jewish society as opposed to the ideology of national integration and Hebraization". Hence, the school programs which elaborate on the contribution of non-Ashkenazi Jewry to Judaism at no time associate this contribution with the fact that, for the most part, it was originally written in Arabic.

Although the treatment of the Arabic and French languages within the educational system suggests that the two are on an equal part in terms of societal needs and status, in fact they are not. Arabic is an official language in Israel, alongside Hebrew. It is the first language of a sizable minority in Israel – the Arab citizens of Israel comprise about 17% of the population – and is the dominant language of the wider region of the Middle East. French, on the other hand, serves no long- or short-term social need. Its function as a language of wider communication has been taken over by English (Ben-Rafael, 1994a). In other words, as mentioned by Kraemer and Olshtain (1994, p. 163), "pragmatic concerns of the state strongly support the study of Arabic among the Jewish population in Israel". Yet, despite the societal needs for knowledge of the Arabic language – for communicating with and understanding the wider environment, as well as for serving Israel's needs in the areas of government, the military, and academia – French has been competing with Arabic for the foreign language student. As emphasized by Ben-Rafael and Brosh (1991) and Kraemer and Olshtain (1994), "nationalist" sentiments – the sociocultural bond between people, for which language is often the primary symbol – influenced by the intensity of the Arab-Israel conflict, have produced a situation of non-accommodation of the Arab group, reflected in separateness on all levels of Israeli life. The salience of national identity and accentuation of group differences create divergence on the linguistic dimension as well, resulting in an overall unwillingness on the part of the Jewish majority to learn the Arabic language. As a result, only about 50% of pupils learn Arabic for the required three years (Spolsky and Shohamy, 1996).

As has already been mentioned, the teaching of English has moved from an earlier (pre-1960, approximately) concern for literature and culture to a stress on English as an international language of communication. The immigration from the English-speaking countries in the 1970's resulted in the fact that a good proportion of the teaching, particularly at high schools, is done by native speakers. There has been growing emphasis over the years on oral ability. More recently, a new interest has been expressed in the teaching of reading. There is a large textbook industry in English, highly sensitive to changes in the teaching and examination syllabi. The competition has led to a relatively high quality. There also are locally developed textbooks for Arabic and French and some for Russian. Audio, visual and computer-based materials are available, especially in English, and some in Arabic.

In the research conducted by Abu-Rabia (1996) the effects of the attitudes and culture of Israeli-Jewish students learning English on their reading comprehension was explored, using culturally familiar and culturally unfamiliar stories. The research results demonstrate that students who read the culturally familiar texts received higher reading-comprehension scores than the students who read the culturally unfamiliar ones. The findings reported by Abu-Rabia (1998) suggest an alternative pedagogical method, namely, teaching/learning second language through culturally familiar texts, especially when the social learning context does not foster sympathy and social interaction between ethnic groups. Thus it would be helpful for Arab students if the curriculum for Hebrew as the second language combined the texts in the target language with a culturally familiar Arab content. The "culture-based curriculum" may improve second language learners' motivation because of their familiarity with the material and their positive attitudes toward their culture. Positive attitudes toward learning situations may arise as learners read about their own culture. Familiar cultural content can provide both a motivational and a cognitive basis for language learning.

The language curriculum will be engaging and meaningful to students only if it is relevant to their lives and their cultural backgrounds. Greater awareness and imagination on the part of policy makers and

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educators are crucial to the needs of immigrant and minority children struggling to balance their lives between the two cultures. In a social context characterized by an overt inter-group conflict a second language curriculum reflecting the cultural content familiar to the learners could provide a very effective strategy to raise their self-esteem, create the feeling of equality and narrow the psychological distance between the minority and dominant groups, thus enhancing academic achievement.

The Russian curriculum is supposed to capture the grammatical and literary goals of the native-language curricula in the former Soviet Union. A new syllabus is being developed to teach Russian to the speakers of Hebrew, or to those immigrant children who did not attend high schools in Russia.

Many authors argue that the subjective value of the Russian language is very high in all groups of the ex-USSR immigrants in Israel (see, for example, Olshtain and Kotik, 2000) and in the USA. Researches especially point out that this attitude is unusual as compared to the other groups of immigrants – both those who arrive in Israel and the USA. In the words of David Andrews (1999, p. 27), "Traditionally, immigrant languages have enjoyed far less status than English, both in the minds of native-born Americans and often among the immigrants themselves. Such beliefs may have become less pervasive in the last few decades, but they remain a deeply ingrained facet of American culture. While conscious of this, all adult Third Wavers [immigrants who arrived in the USA from the former Soviet Union during the 1970s-1980s] were also well aware of the glories of Russian culture, and therefore most considered the language no less prestigious than English. Although attitudes toward the Soviet government were often unfriendly, they were usually kept separate from an allegiance to the Russian language". Zvi Gitelman (1984) also found no hostility to the Russian language: in a sampling project two thirds of the respondents (the same ex-Soviet Jewish Americans) said that they wanted their children to learn Russian; in New-York the figure was 80 percent. According to Yelenevskaya and Fialkova (2002, p. 207), "while before emigration people are future-oriented, upon immigration they tend to emphasize the significance of their past" and describe ex-

Soviet Israelis' attitude towards Russian as "exaggerated loyalty". They even argue that "[the Soviet citizens'] imperial attitude to minority languages and speakers of minority languages has been transferred [by the immigrants] to the linguistic situation in Israel, but now Russian, a minority language of Israel, is associated with a culture superior to the culture of the country's majority" (Yelenevskaya and Fialkova, 2003, p. 45).

The high value the Russian speaking immigrants tend to assign to their native language and culture has led to some, often successful, attempts to establish frameworks in which these resources would be maintained. While some authors argue that immigrants' cultural separatism is a reactive form of social integration and that by adopting a seemingly separatist course of action and founding educational, cultural, scientific and political institutions inspired by traditions brought from the country of origin, what the immigrants actually do is try to integrate themselves into the host society (Epstein and Kheimets, 2000), others claim that "ethnic formation among these immigrants is not a reactive-oriented identity, … it is rather an instrumentalized ethnicity, which is the outcome of ethnic-cultural pride and pragmatic considerations" (Al-Haj, 2002, p. 49).

It should be mentioned that almost all the relevant research data regarding a cultural-linguistic portrait of the Russian-speaking immigrants accounts for their first years in the USA and in Israel. One could wander, however, whether this portrait has changed as a result of their prolonged stay in Israel (or in the United States). Unfortunately, during the last few years no comprehensive empirical study has been conducted to find out whether the immigrants changed their attitude towards their mother tongue(s) vis-à-vis the Hebrew and English languages. In our research we made an effort to find out whether the aforementioned changes have taken place. The respondents (the sample included a group of 120 Israeli scientists, all of them immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union after 1990; questionnaires collected in August–December 2001) were asked whether an institute(s) of higher education in which the studies would be conducted in Russian should be founded in Israel and whether they would like their children and grandchildren to study at such institutions.

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It should be emphasized that the trends these two questions account for are essentially different. The support for the foundation of an institute of higher education where the studies would be conducted in Russian can be interpreted as the willingness of the respondents (who, due to the difficulties in studying Hebrew, face problems in finding jobs) to create working places for themselves, or, in other words, as a way to solve a problem in the present. However, the immigrants' willingness to send their (grand)children to study in such a framework would be evident of their special concern for the maintenance of the Russian language and educational tradition in Israel.

Many immigrants express their faithfulness to the idea of the creation of an alternate infrastructure of higher education under the aegis of an Israeli-based International Russian-language university. In fact, a precedent for such an alternative institute of higher education and research has already been created in Germany, where the growth of the Russian-speaking population together with the lack of psychological assistance in the Russian language brought about the demand in psychologists who could consult those emigrants in their mother tongue. Answering this need, a branch of the psychological department of the Saint Petersburg University was founded in Berlin in 1996. On their graduation, students receive the B. A. degree in psychology, which is recognized by the German authorities.

The results obtained in the current study (conducted in 2003) revealed, rather unexpectedly, that the decision to found a Russian language based institution of higher education would be controversial even among those who might benefit from it: the sample split into two almost equal parts, so that 51.3% supported (completely or with reservations) this idea. Moreover, only 15.6% claimed they would like they (grand)children to study at such institutions, thus revealing that their concern for the maintenance of the Russian language and educational tradition in the next generations of immigrants was rather low. These findings make one assume that the relative salience of Russian vis-à-vis the other languages has decreased during the last ten years.

The convergence process has been taking place: the elements of Hebrew idioms and slang inevitably penetrate the speech of Russian Israelis, turning "immigrant Russian" into an amalgam lingo hardly comprehensible for outsiders. Dress habits, cuisine, leisure patterns and other elements of the everyday Israeli culture make their way into the lifestyle of the newcomers slowly but surely. Over 60 per cent of respondents interviewed by a group of researchers lead by Larissa Remennick (2002, p. 523) reported that their dressing style and eating habits have drifted towards Israeli patterns.

The sociolinguistic situation under discussion can be accounted for in terms of *triglossia*: Russian is used within the family and community frameworks; Hebrew is essential for all contacts with any state and/or municipal authorities and the native population; finally, as stated by Kheimets and Epstein (2001), English is crucial for obtaining jobs which require academic and high professional skills.

The term *triglossia* can be defined as the use of three languages throughout a speech community, each with a distinct set of social functions. It is based on the term *diglossia*, suggested by Ferguson, that refers to a kind of *bidialectism* – significant differences between formal and informal styles of speaking (see Ferguson, 1959; Bright and Ramanujan, 1972 [1964]). Later the term was transformed to obtain an additional meaning, namely, the use of two different languages in non-overlapping social contexts. Joshua Fishman put this issue forward in his remarkable essays entitled "Bilingualism with and without *diglossia*; *diglossia* with and without bilingualism" and "Who speaks what language to whom and when" (see Fishman (1967); Fishman, 1972 [1965]). Various societies face the situation of *functional diglossia* (in this respect the concept of "global *diglossia* of English and all the other native languages" was suggested; see Inoue (2001), p. 449), while the higher education is probably one of the fields in which this phenomenon is most evident.

In any country immigrants are likely to face the situation of *diglossia,* maintaining their native language within their families and learning the main language of their new country. In Israel, however, the situation becomes even more complicated: the formation of Hebrew-

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English bilingualism (see Spolsky and Shohamy, 1999, pp. 156–186) requires from the immigrants to master both Hebrew and English; the first is important for their social and civil integration, while the second – for the professional one. Simultaneously Russian is preserved for communication within family settings and plays an important role in community-building processes. Yet the Russian speaking community in Israel is likely to face its native language loss in the next generations.

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