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Cross-Cultural Communication and Linguistic Cross-Fertilization: Yiddish and its Survival under the Israeli Language

Abstract

This article introduces cross-cultural communication and linguistic cross-fertilization by exploring the fascinating and multifaceted Yiddish language and its survival in Israeli, the result of the *fin-de-siècle* Hebrew revival. Yiddish is a 1,000-year-old Germanic language with Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic substrates, with most dialects having been influenced by Slavonic languages. Yiddish is characterized by a unique style that embeds psycho-ostensive expressions throughout its discourse.

Keywords

Endangered languages, Cross-Cultural communication, Yiddish, Hebrew, Aboriginal

The Yiddish Language

Yiddish is a 1,000-year-old Germanic language with Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic substrates, with most dialects having been influenced by Slavonic languages. It is known for the use of gestures, *klezmer* music, a self-deprecating sense of humour (different from Anglo-Aussie sense of humour), psycho-ostensive expressions embedded throughout its discourse, and bilingual tautological expressions.

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Examples of Psycho-Ostensive expressions

Below are some examples of psycho-ostensive expressions in Yiddish (Matisoff 1979):

(1) Bono-recognition

איך בין, **ברוך השם**, אויף אַלע ייִדן געזאָגט געוואָרן, געזונט און שטאַרק.

I am—**blessed be the name [of God]**, may it be possible to say that about all Jews—healthy and strong.

(אני, **ברוך השם**, הלוואי שאפשר יהיה להגיד זאת על כל היהודים, בריא וחזק.)

(2) Malo-recognition

איצט זאָגט זי, זי וועט חתונה האָבן מיט אַ פראַנצויז, **וויי איז צו מיר!**

Now she says she will marry a Frenchman, **oh woe is me**.

(עכשיו היא אומרת שהיא תתחתן עם צרפתי, **אבוי לי.**)

(3) Bono-petition

פון ערשטן מאַן האָב איך פיר קינדערלעך, **זאָלן געזונט זײַן.**

From my first husband I have four children, **may they be healthy**.

(מבעלי הראשון יש לי ארבעה ילדים, **שיהיו לי בריאים.**)

(4) Malo-petition

ער האָט ביי מיר אויסגענאַרט מיט פופציק דאָלאַר, **אַ בראָך צו אים!**

He cheated me for fifty dollars, **may a disaster happen to him**.

(הוא רימה אותי בחמישים דולר, **שיבוא אסון עליו!**)

(5) Bono-fugition

מיין טאָכטער, **קיין בייז אויג זאָל איר ניט שאַטן**, עסט גוט.

My daughter – **may no evil eye harm her** – eats well.

(הבת שלי, **שעין הרע לא תזיק לה**, אוכלת טוב.)

Bilingual Tautological Expressions

A bilingual tautological expression is a phrase that consists of two words that mean the same thing in two different languages. An example of a bilingual tautological expression is the Yiddish expression מים אחרונים וואסער *máyim akhróynem váser*. It literally means "water last water" and refers to "water for washing the hands after a meal, grace water'. Its first element, *máyim*, derives from the Hebrew מים ['majim] "water." Its second element, *váser*, derives from the German *Wasser* "water."

Yiddish abounds with both bilingual tautological compounds and bilingual tautological first names. The following are examples of bilingual tautological compounds in Yiddish:

- פֿינצטער חושך *fíntster khóyshekh* "very dark," literally "dark darkness," traceable back to the German word *finster* "dark" and the Hebrew word חושך *ħōshekh* "darkness."
- חמור-אייזל *khameréyzļ* "womanizer," literally "donkey-donkey," traceable back to the Hebrew word חמור [ħăˈmōr] "donkey" and the German word *Esel* "donkey."

The following are examples of bilingual **tautonyms**, and specifically bilingual tautological first names, in Yiddish:

- דוב-בער *Dov-Ber*, literally "bear-bear," traceable back to the Hebrew word דב *dov* "bear" and the German word *Bär* "bear."
- צבי-הירש *Tsvi-Hirsh*, literally "deer-deer," traceable back to the Hebrew word צבי *tsvi* "deer" and the German word *Hirsch* "deer."
- זאב-וואָלף *Ze'ev-Volf*, literally "wolf-wolf," traceable back to the Hebrew word זאב *ze'ev* "wolf" and the German word *Wolf* "wolf."
- אריה-לייב *Arye-Leyb*, literally "lion-lion," traceable back to the Hebrew word אריה *'arye* "lion" and the German word *Löwe* "lion."

**Yiddish Linguicide: רצח יידיש rétsakh yídish
(Israeli for the "murder of Yiddish")**

Yiddish as a secular language was subject to linguicide (language killing) on three different fronts:

(1) The Holocaust
(2) Communism
(3) Zionism

There were 13 million Yiddish speakers (Katz 2011), among 17 million Jews worldwide, before the Holocaust. About 85% of the approximately 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust were Yiddish speakers (Birnbaum 1984). Yiddish was banned in the Soviet Union in 1948–1955.

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Rozka Korczak-Marla (24 April 1921 – 5 March 1988) was a Holocaust survivor, one of the leaders of the Jewish combat organization in the World War II Jewish Vilna Ghetto, Abba Kovner's collaborator, and fighter at the United Partisan Organization (known in Yiddish as *Faráynikte Partizáner Organizátsye*).

In 1944 Rozka Korczak-Marla was invited to speak at the sixth convention of the Histadrut, General Organization of Workers in Israel, known in Israeli as **hahistadrút** *(haklalít (shel haovdím beérets israél))*. In her mother tongue, Yiddish, she spoke about the extermination of Eastern European Jews, a plethora of them Yiddish speakers. Immediately after her speech, David Ben-Gurion—the first General Secretary of the Histadrut, the *de facto* leader of the Jewish community in Palestine, and eventually Israel's (established 1948) first Prime Minister—came to the stage. What he said is shocking from today's perspective (Zuckermann 2020: 201):

זה עתה דיברה פה חברה בשפה זרה וצורמת על הצרות שפקדו את...
*ze atá dibrá po khaverá **besafá zará vetsorémet** al hatsarót shepakdú et...*
A comrade has just spoken here *in a foreign and cacophonous tongue* about the troubles inflicting the...

Earlier, in the 1920s and 1930s, *gdud meginéy hasafá*, 'The Battalion for the Defence of the Language' (Zuckermann 2020, 39-40; Shur 2000), whose motto was עברי, דבר עברית *ivrí, dabér ivrít* 'Hebrew [i.e., Jew], speak Hebrew!', used to tear down signs written in 'foreign' languages and disturb Yiddish theatre gatherings. However, this group's members looked for only Yiddish **forms** rather than **patterns** in the speech of the Israelis who did choose to speak 'Hebrew.' Astonishingly, even the anthem of the same language defendants regiment included a calque from Yiddish:

ועל כל מתנגדינו אנחנו מצפצפים
veál kol mitnagdénu anákhnu metsaftsefím
lit. 'and on all our opponents we are whistling'
i.e. 'we do not give a damn about our opponents,' 'we defy our opponents'

Whistling here is a calque (loan translation) of Yiddish פֿײַפֿן *fáyfn* 'whistle + not give a damn.'

One should also consider Yiddish glottophagy rather than linguicide due to the modernization, globalization, and assimilation that affected Yiddish both in the New and the Old World, which was strongly felt by the early 1930s in both the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Survival of Yiddish beneath Israeli: ייִדיש רעדט זיך yídish rédt zikh (Yiddish for "Yiddish speaks itself")

Before the end of the second millennium, Ezer Weizman, then President of Israel, visited the University of Cambridge to familiarize himself with the famous medieval Jewish notes known as the Cairo Genizah. President Weizman was introduced to the Regius Professor of Hebrew, allegedly nominated by the Queen of England herself.

Hearing "Hebrew," the president, who was known as a *sákhbak* (friendly "bro"), clapped the professor on the shoulder and asked: מה נשמע *má nishmà*, the common Israeli "What's up?" greeting, which some take to mean literally "what shall we hear?", but which is, in fact, a calque (loan translation) of the Yiddish phrase וואָס הערט זיך *vos hért zikh*, usually pronounced *vsértsəkh* and literally meaning "what's heard?"

To Weizman's astonishment, the distinguished Hebrew professor did not have the faintest clue whatsoever about what the president 'wanted from his life.' As an expert of the Old Testament, he wondered whether Weizman was alluding to Deuteronomy 6:4: שמע ישראל *Shəmáʕ Yisraél* (Hear, O Israel). Knowing neither Yiddish, Russian (Что слышно *chto slyshno*), Polish (*Co słychać*), Romanian (*Ce se aude*), nor Georgian (რა იsმის *ra ismis*), let alone Israeli (מה נשמע *má nishmà*), the professor had no chance whatsoever of guessing the actual meaning ("What's up?") of this beautiful, economical expression.

Any credible answer to the enigma of Israeli requires an exhaustive study of the various influence of Yiddish on this אַלטנײַלאַנג '*altneu* langue' ("Old New Language")—cf., the classic אַלטנײַלאַנד *Altneuland* (Old New Land"), written by Theodor Herzl, the visionary of the Jewish State in the old-new land. I analyze אַלטניי *altneu* also as Hebrew על תנאי (Israeli *al tnáy*) 'on condition' [that we embrace the hybridity of the Israeli language].

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Yiddish and Hebrew were rivals to become the language of the future Jewish State. At first sight, it appears that Hebrew has won and that, after the Holocaust, Yiddish was destined to be spoken almost exclusively by ultra-Orthodox Jews and some eccentric academics. However, closer scrutiny challenges this perception. The victorious Hebrew may, after all, be partly Yiddish at heart.

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Yiddish **survives** *beneath* Israeli phonetics, phonology, discourse, syntax, semantics, lexis, and even morphology, although traditional and institutional linguists have been most reluctant to admit it. Israeli is not רצח יידיש *rétsakh yídish* (Israeli for 'the murder of Yiddish [by Hebrew]') but rather יידיש רעדט זיך *yídish redt zikh* (Yiddish for 'Yiddish speaks itself [beneath Israeli]'). The following figure illustrates the hybrid genesis of the Israeli language:

Fig. 1. The Hybrid Genesis of Israeli
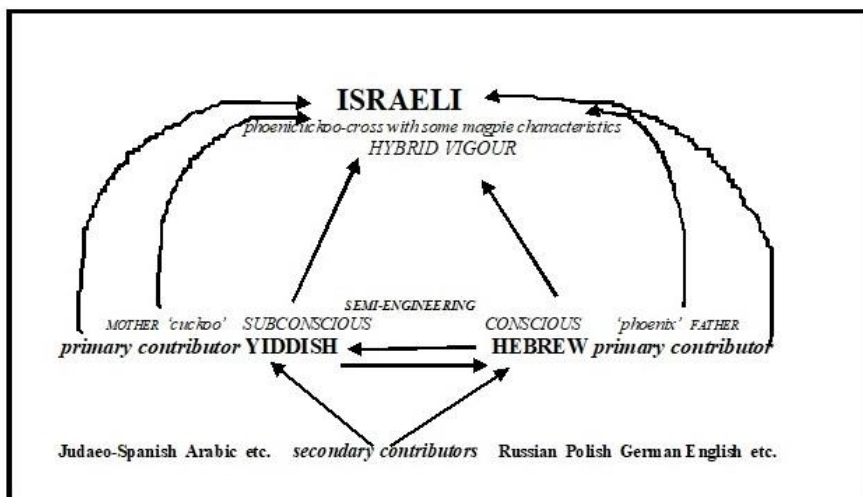
What makes the 'genetics' of Israeli grammar so complex, thus support-ing my model of Israeli genesis, is that the combination of Semitic and Indo-European influences is a phenomenon occurring already within the primary (and secondary) contributors to Israeli. Yiddish, a Germanic language with a Latin substrate (with Slavonic languages that have influenced most dia-lects), was shaped by Hebrew and Aramaic. On the other hand, Indo-Euro-pean languages, such as Greek, played a role in pre-medieval varieties of Hebrew (see, for example, Hellenisms in the Old Testament). Moreover, be-fore the emergence of Israeli, Yiddish and other European languages influ-enced Medieval and Maskilic variants of Hebrew (Glinert 1991), which, in turn, shaped Israeli (in tandem with the European contribution).

When taken to its extreme, this approach might lead to the bitter ques-tion: הרצחת וגם ירשת? *harotsákhto vegám yoróshto* (Israeli *aratsákhta vegám yaráshta)* (Hebrew for 'Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?', 1 Kings 21:19)? Nevertheless, I would advocate a more positive, reconciliatory atti-

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tude: cultures, through language, have their intriguing ways of developing and evolving. One should not bear a grudge. What one might consider as 'mistakes' today might well be tomorrow's grammar; the stopgaps of the present are the infrastructure of the future. However, if you are a *mámə lóshṇ* (Yiddish for 'mother tongue'), a lover who is reluctant to accept such a liberal view, you might be consoled by the fact that, after all, Yiddish survives beneath one of its 'killers,' Israeli. Thus, as long as Israeli survives (and American will not kill her during our lifetime), Yiddish survives too.

Israeli patterns have often been based on Yiddish, Russian, Polish, and sometimes 'Standard Average European.' This observation is not to say that the revivalists, had they paid attention to patterns, would have managed to neutralize the impact of their mother tongues, which was often *subconscious*.

Although they engaged in a campaign for linguistic purity (they wanted Israeli to be Hebrew, despising the Yiddish 'jargon' and negating the Diaspora and the diasporic Jew (Zuckermann 2020), the language that revivalists created mirrors the very hybridity and foreign impact they sought to erase. The revivalists' attempt to

(1) deny their (more recent) roots in search of Biblical ancientness,
(2) negate diasporism and disown the 'weak, dependent, persecuted' exilic Jew and
(3) avoid hybridity (as reflected in Slavonized, Romance/Semitic-influenced, Germanic Yiddish itself, which they despised)

failed.

Interestingly, Yiddish itself is multi-sourced, with a necessary Hebrew (and Aramaic) component. Thus, there are cases of Yiddish and Hebrew simultaneously influencing Israeli, in which the relevant Yiddish features themselves stem from the very same Hebrew elements involved. For example, in the case of calques, the form preferred by Israeli is often the Yiddish one, rather than its Hebrew equivalent, which could be its ultimate source.

Consider, for example, Israeli נעשׂה לו חושך בעיניים *naasá lo khóshekh baenáim*, lit. 'Darkness has been made in his eyes,' i.e., 'He saw blackness (after bad news).' This is a calque of Yiddish ס'איז אים פֿינצטער געוואָרן אין די אויגן *siz im fíntstər gevórṇ in di óygṇ* 'ditto', which might in turn be an adaptation of Hebrew חשכו עיניו [ħåʃkʰuː ʃeˈnåw], lit. 'His eyes became dark,' i.e., 'He saw blackness (after bad news).' The latter is rare in Israeli, while the former is commonly used.

Similarly, Israeli לך תדע *lekh tedá*, lit. 'Go, know!', i.e. 'Go figure!', is a calque of Yiddish גיי ווייס *gey veys* 'id.' (cf. French *va savoir*), which could perhaps, in turn, be an adaptation of Mishnaic Hebrew צא ולמד [sˀe ulˈmad], lit. 'Go learn!',

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or Mishnaic Hebrew צא וראה [sˤe urˈʔe], lit. 'Go see!', or Mishnaic Hebrew צא
וחשב [sˤe waħăˈʃobʰ], lit. 'Go think!', all of which in practice meant 'Pay atten-
tion!'. Go figure!

Consonant and Vowel Inventory

The Israeli consonant and vowel inventory, and its intonation, reflect Yid-
dish. When abroad, *Sabra Israelis* (Jews born in Israel) are often asked
whether they are German or Dutch rather than Arab when the listener tries
to identify their accent.

One linguistic example of the difference between an Orthodox, a Con-
servative, and a Reform Jew is that

- the Orthodox says *borukh ato **adonóy*** 'Blessed are you Lord' (ברוך אתה
  אדוני);
- the Conservative—just like Israelis—pronounces the same phrase as
  *barukh ata **adonáy***;
- the Reform says *barukh ata, **I don't know***!

The point at stake is that Ashkenazim used to pronounce *adonáy* 'Lord' as
adonóy. However, Israelis' pronunciation of the *kamáts* vowel (Hebrew [å],
known in Hebrew as קָמֵץ [qåˈmasˤ]) now follows the Sephardic ([a]), rather
than Ashkenazic Hebrew ([o]). Consider also Standard Yiddish *khókhəm*
'wise guy' (Polish Yiddish *khúkhəm*) versus the Israeli pronunciation of the
same word *khakhám* (חכם).

Likewise, a non-geminate *t* is pronounced [t] following the Sephardim,
rather than [s] as in Ashkenazic Hebrew, as in Ashkenazic Hebrew *leshóynəs*
'tongues' versus the Israeli pronunciation *leshonót* (לשונות).

Therefore, when asked about the phonetics of Israeli, many distinguished
linguists claim that Israeli's sounds reflect the Sephardic pronunciation tra-
dition. However, this is a mere *pro forma* 'lip service': Unlike Israeli purists,
I believe that the pronunciation of a Yemenite (a Jew originally from Yemen)
speaking Israeli is the exception rather than the norm. Such *mizrahi* pronun-
ciation is gradually disappearing, one of the reasons being that Yiddish-
speaking Ashkenazic Jews primarily created Israeli, and thus its standards
are different from the Semitic standards of Hebrew. Furthermore, as indi-
cated by *sfirát yehudéy érets israél*, a census conducted in 1916–18 (cf. Bachi
1956, 67-69), the Ashkenazim were the ones most receptive to the 'Hebrew
revival': 61.9% of Ashkenazic children and 28.5% of Ashkenazic adults
spoke Israeli in 1916–18.

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The percentage of Israeli-speakers among Sephardim (constituting most of the veteran residents in *Eretz Yisrael*) and the other *mizrahim* (excluding the Yemenites) was low: only 18.3% of Sephardic children and 8.4% of Sephardic adults spoke Israeli in 1916-18, while 18.1% of *mizrahi* children (excluding Sephardim and Yemenites) and 7.3% of *mizrahi* adults spoke Israeli (cf. 53.1% among Yemenite children and 37.6% among Yemenite adults). *Mizrahim* (plural of *mizrahi*) are Jews descending from the Middle East (as opposed to those from Europe and other places), mostly from Muslim-majority countries.

Yiddish has determined the consonantal inventory of Israeli in the following ways:

Neutralization of the pharyngeals ק, ט and צ:

Neutralization of the Hebrew pharyngealized (emphatic) consonants ק (*q*), ט (*t*) and צ (*ṣ*). The sounds [q], [tˤ], and [sˤ] do not exist in Yiddish at all. Consequently, Hebrew ק [q] is pronounced in Israeli [k], equal to Israeli כ [k] and Yiddish ק. Hebrew ט [tˤ] is pronounced in Israeli [t], equal to Israeli ת (t) and Yiddish ט. Hebrew צ [sˤ] is pronounced in Israeli [ts], which did not exist in Classical Hebrew but which did exist in Yiddish and Ashkenazic Hebrew, pronounced [ts]. Naturally, this does not only apply to the pronunciation of pre-existent Hebrew words. In borrowing foreign lexical items, ק, ט, and צ are the letters used in Israeli to represent imported [k], [t], and [ts], respectively.

Neutralization of ע, ח, ה and א:

Neutralization of the Hebrew pharyngeals and glottals ע (ʕ), ח (ħ), ה (*h*) and א (ʔ). In Yiddish, there is neither [ʕ] nor [ħ], whereas [h] and [ʔ] are very weak. By and large, Hebrew ע [ʕ], א [ʔ] and ה [h] are all 'pronounced' in Israeli in the same way: most of the time, and they are not pronounced. They are only pronounced (both ע and א – [ʔ], while ה – [h]) when in a post-consonantal position *within uncommon words*. Some speakers also pronounce Israeli ה [h] at the beginning of phrases. Compare the frequently used Israeli נראה *nirá* [niˈʁa] 'seemed (masculine singular)' (where the glottal stop is not pronounced) to the rare תשאל *tish'él* [tiʃˈʔel] 'interrogated, questioned (masculine singular)' (where the glottal stop is pronounced). Hebrew ח [ħ] is pronounced in Israeli [χ], equal to Israeli כ [χ] (from Hebrew [kʰ]).

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Hebrew alveolar trill versus the Israeli unique lax uvular approximant:

The phonetic shift of the Hebrew alveolar trill r [r] to a lax uvular approximant [ʁ], similar to the [ʁ] in many Yiddish dialects.

So, one should not be too surprised to see an Israeli child spelling:

- אכּוטב *ikvotáv* instead of עקבותיו 'his traces' (cf. Hopkins 1990: 315)
- משקנטה *mashkánta* instead of משכנתא 'mortgage'
- מתתה *mataté* instead of מטאטא 'broom'

In Yiddish one would say that this child spells נח מיט זיבן גרייזן *nóyekh mit zíbn gráyzn* ' נח ("Noah") with seven errors' (e.g., נאייעך *nóyekh*)—cf. נח מיט זיבן קרייזן *nóyekh mit zíbn kráyzn*, '"Noah" with seven circles':

Fig. 2. נח מיט זיבן קרייזן *nóyekh mit zíbn kráyzn*, '"Noah" with seven circles'
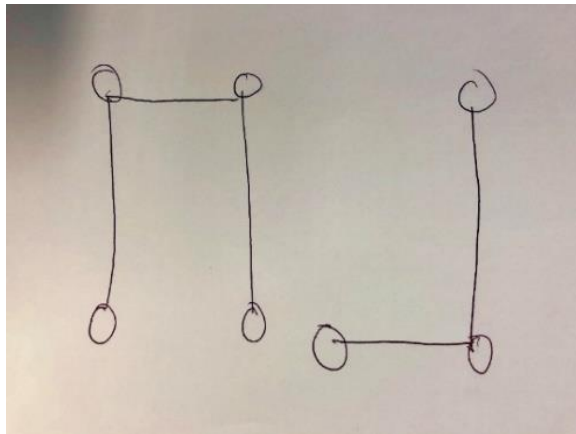
Syllable Structure

The question is, where does the Israeli $(^{s}{}_{,ʃ})$(C)(C)V(C)(C)$(^{s}{}_{,ʃ})$ structure come from? The syllable structure in Yiddish is identical, although Yiddish can also have a syllabic consonant (*CC*) (with a dot under the second C). Consider Yiddish *érshtn̩s* 'first of all' or *shtrúdl̩*, and the latter pronounced in Israeli as *shtrúdel*. As opposed to some English speakers, for example, who pronounce *Sweden* as *swi:dn̩*, most Israelis say *komunízem* rather than *komunízm*. Intriguingly, whereas Lincoln College (Oxford) is pronounced *línkən* (the sec-

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ond *l* is not pronounced), Israeli students tend to call it *línkolen*. That said, Yiddish is far from being like Czech, where a whole sentence can have no vowel. For example, *Strč prst skrs krk* means 'Put your finger down your throat!'

Penultimate Stress

I believe that, as opposed to the traditional view that the unmarked Israeli stress is final and follows the Sephardic traditions, the essential stress in Israeli is trochaic (penultimate). This stress explains, for example, the native pronunciation of *albáni* 'Albanian' rather than the prescriptive *albaní*. When I asked a friend of mine, who has lived in Tel Aviv for years, whether we can meet at *rekhóv yehudá hamakabí* (Judah the Maccabi Street), she claimed to have never heard of it. I had to pronounce it correctly as *yúda makábi*. The stress of Israeli names and words often changes from final to the penultimate, as in Yiddish and Ashkenazic Hebrew.

In some cases, penultimate stress is caused by several motivations, such as Yiddish influence, endearment, differentiation, Arabic influence, and alienation. This stress is yet another manifestation of multiple causation and cross-fertilization, an essential motif in this book. Penultimate stress in Israeli can thus be marked as plus/minus emotion (endearment/alienation). Consider the following examples of penultimate stress in Israeli:

1. Anthroponyms, for example the female first names שושנה *shoshána*, יפה *yáfa*, שרה *sára*, דבורה *dvóra*, יונה *yóna*, ברכה *brákha*, נחמה *nekháma*, שירה *shíra*, דינה *dína*, רינה *rína*, חיה *kháya*, חווה *kháva* and אסתר *éster*. Penultimately-stressed male first names include חיים *kháim*, יהודה *yúda*, משה *móshe* (cf. Yiddish משה *móyshə*), מנחם *menákhem*, נחמן *nákhman*, יורם *yóram*, דוד *dávid* and יונה *yóna*. As in these examples in Israeli, the stress of Yiddish polysyllabic first names is never final. The penultimate stress here might imply affection. Compare it to the non-anthroponymic *khatúla* 'female cat', an endearing form of Israeli חתולה *khatulá* 'female cat.'

   Furthermore, many of the penultimately-stressed Israeli names, and especially the female ones, can serve as a lexical item when stressed on the final syllable. For example, דבורה *dvorá* 'bee', שרה *sará* 'female minister,' חיה *khayá* 'animal,' חווה *khavá* 'farm' and יפה *yafá* 'beautiful (feminine plural).' Thus, it is possible to explain the penultimate stress as mere differentiation.

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Compare this with the **minimal pairs** that are not related to stress:

- לאפר *leafér* 'to flick ash from a cigarette/cigar' versus לאפר *leapér* 'to put make up on'
- השתבץ *hishtavéts* 'had a heart attack (masculine singular)' versus השתבץ *hishtabéts* 'was assigned (masculine singular).'
- התחבר *hitkhavér* 'became friends (with) (masculine singular)' versus התחבר *hitkhabér* 'became linked (to) (masculine singular).'

Consider the following Israeli sentence, which would have been impossible to utter in Hebrew:

כיום אני נותן לפחות 70% לפחות סטודנטים מאשר בעבר.
*kayóm aní notén **lefakhót** shivím akhúz **lepakhót** studéntim meashér baavár*
These days I give **at least** 70% **to fewer** students than in the past.

2. Toponyms, for instance the cities/towns בנימינה *binyamína*, נתניה *natánya* (cf. puristic *netanyá*), חיפה *kháyfa* (cf. puristic *kheyfá*), רחובות *rekhóvot* (cf. *rekhovót* 'streets'), גדרה *gedéra*, טבריה *tvérya*, ראש פינה *rosh pína*, זכרון (יעקב) *zíkhron (yaakov)*, ראשון לציון *ríshon letsíon* or just *ríshon*. Note that the usual stress of Yiddish toponyms is penultimate.

Intonation

While on a recent state visit to Israel, President Trump of the United States took part in a ceremony to honour the country's fallen. Laying a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier near Jerusalem, he was confused to discover that the inscription read

חיים שוסטר, חייל וחייט
kháim shúster, khayál vekhayát
i.e. *Haim Schuster, Soldier and Tailor*

'But why do you give his name?' he demanded of Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister. 'Surely, this soldier is meant to be anonymous.'

'Oy!' replied Netanyahu with a strong Yiddish intonation: 'As a *sol*dier, he was unknown, but as a ***tai**lor?!?*'.

People familiar with both Yiddish and Israeli find it hard to deny that the intonation of Israeli is very similar to that of Yiddish. *Mizrahi* Israelis have acquired this very same intonation. There was an Israeli TV commercial for the *Toto* football lottery, in which a *mizrahi* Jew is walking in a stadium (built by the *Toto*) and praising the activities of the *Toto* Committee. Among other things, he produces a sentence that became a catch-phrase for Israelis: ,חיים תדליק את האורות בבקשה! *kháim, tadlík et aorót bevakashá* 'Haim, switch on the [projector] lights please!'. The relevant fact is that this Israeli, apparently of *mizrahi* descent, possesses an intonation that is indeed very Yiddish, for example, when he states:

> טוטו אני ממלא כל שבוע? ממלא! הטוטו מקדם את הספורט בישׂראל? מקדם! אז אני שותף!
> *tóto ani memalé kol shavúa? memalé! atóto mekadém et aspórt beisraél? mekadém! az aní shutáf!*
> Toto (do) I fill every week? I fill! Does the Toto promote the sport in Israel? (It) promotes! So I am a part (of it)! (i.e., a part of the important contribution of the Toto to Israeli society).

At the end of 2004, when the New Terminal of Ben-Gurion Airport was opened, Israeli TV showed a commercial for it. A woman comes back from Paris, and when her family comes to pick her up from the airport, they ask her about the trip. She does not stop praising the shops and service at... the airport. When one of the family members suddenly asks about Paris, she replies using a denigrating Yiddish intonation:

> Paris? Paris!,

funnily implying that Paris is not a big deal compared with the new terminal of Ben-Gurion Airport. [I wish this book could come with a built-in intonation kit.]

Consider also the rise-fall intonation in questions expecting affirmation in the form of 'Of course not!' (cf. Weinreich 1956, 642; Blanc 1965, 189), for example, !?אתה הרי לא הלכת לשם *atá aréy lo alákhta leshám?!* 'You surely did not go there [did you?]!' or 'Surely you did not go there?!'. The unique intonation of sentences with Y-movement brings us to syntax.

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Word order

Ask an Israeli what the Biblical sentence אֲבָנִים שָׁחֲקוּ מַיִם [ʔăbʰåˈniːm ʃåħăˈquː ˈmajim] (see Job 14:19) means and they would most likely tell you that the stones eroded the water. Of course, on second thought, they would guess that semantically this is impossible and that it must be the water that eroded the stones.

   Like Standard Average European, the canonical constituent order in Israeli is Subject–Verb–Object. More specifically, it is either AVO (A being a transitive subject), e.g., *a-yéled akhál et a-tapuákh* 'The boy ate the apple,' or SV (S being an intransitive subject), e.g., *a-yéled nirdám* 'The boy fell asleep,' or SVE (E being an extended intransitive), e.g., *u makhá al a-tipúl bo* 'He protested against his treatment.' Israeli linguists often claim that Israeli constituent order, AVO(E) / SV(E), demonstrates the impact of Mishnaic Hebrew, which had it as the marked order (for emphasis/contrast)—as opposed to Biblical Hebrew, usually characterized by Verb-Subject-Object order (see *vayómer adonáy el moshé* 'Said God to Moses').

   As Rosén (1981, 49) notes, the Israeli constituent order is highly flexible as in German and Russian. It includes what is known in America as Y-Movement (i.e., Yiddish movement, left dislocation, cf. thematicization, and topicalization, cf. Prince 1981). A customer enters a department store in New York and asks the assistant, 'Do you have Nike shoes here?'—'No, I am sorry, goodbye!', comes the reply. The owner happens to overhear, and he takes his employee to one side and rebukes him. 'You should have said, "We have no Nike, but I can give you Adidas, New Balance, or Hamgaper [Israeli company],"' he explains. The next day, a customer asks the assistant, 'Do you have toilet paper?' He replies, 'We're out of toilet paper. *Sandpaper—I can give you!*'. This reply is, of course, possible in Israeli, but one needs to use the correct intonation.

Verb-Subject disagreement

I often hear the sentence *koév li a-béten*, literally 'hurts (masculine) me the stomach (feminine),' i.e., 'My stomach hurts.' If we follow traditional grammar, this is a 'terrible mistake' since there is no agreement between the verb and the subject that follows it. The utterer of this sentence knows that *béten* 'stomach' is feminine but still says *koév* 'hurts (masculine).' So what is going on here? Well, have a look at Yiddish: *es tut mir vey der boykh*, literally 'it hurts me the stomach,' i.e., 'My stomach hurts': The verb 'hurts' precedes the subject 'stomach.' So Israeli *koév* seems to reflect Yiddish *es tut mir vey* 'it hurts,' which does not have to agree with the following subject.

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Similarly, I once heard a native speaking student at Tel Aviv University asking her colleague *matsà khén be-enékha a-artsaá a-zòt?*, lit. 'found (masculine) grace in your eyes the lecture (feminine) this?', i.e. 'Did you like this lecture?'.

There are also cases of number disagreement. For example, *éyze dvarím shalákhta li?* 'Which (masculine singular) things (masculine plural) you sent to me?', i.e., 'Which things did you send me?'. Here, the disagreement is not between the verb and the subject but within the noun-phrase constituting the direct object (*éyze dvarím*).

Modifier preceding Noun

In Israeli, as in Hebrew, the modifier usually follows the noun it describes. However, there are cases in Israeli where this is violated. Consider the following:

- נדב קינוחים *nadáv kinukhím*, lit. 'Nadav desserts,' i.e., 'Nadav's desserts,' rather than what one would have expected from Hebrew קינוחי נדב *kinukhéy nadáv*, lit. 'desserts-CONSTRUCT Nadáv.'
- סמי בורקס *sámi burékas*, lit. 'Sammy bourekas", i.e., 'Sammy's bourekas (börek)," rather than what one would have expected from Hebrew בורקס סמי *burékas sámi*, lit. 'bourekas-CONSTRUCT sámi.'

Juxtapose these expressions with Israeli שושן פורים *shushán purím*, lit., 'Shushan Purim,' i.e., 'Purim of Shushan,' the day on 15 Adar on which Jews in Jerusalem celebrate Purim. The word order in *shushán purím* follows the Yiddish. In Hebrew, it should have been פורים שושן *purím shushán*. I have found hundreds of business names following such Adjective+Noun word order.

Auxiliary verbs

Analyticity is not restricted to Noun Phrases (NP). There are many non-Hebrew, periphrastic, complex verbal constructions in Israeli. In Israeli, both the desire to express swift action and the grammatical construction (using 'auxiliary verbs' followed by a noun) stem from Yiddish. However, one should not regard such a construction as a nonce, *ad hoc* lexical calque of Yiddish. The Israeli system is productive, and the lexical realization often differs from that of Yiddish. Consider the following Yiddish expressions all

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meaning 'to have a look': געבן אַ קוק *gébṇ a kuk*, lit. 'to *give* a look,' טאָן אַ קוק ***ton a kuk***, lit. 'to *do* a look' and the colloquial כאַפּן אַ קוק ***khapṇ*** *a kuk*, lit. 'to *catch* a look.' Compare these with Israeli שׂם *sam* 'put' as in צעקה שׂם *sam tseaká* 'shouted' (lit. 'put a shout'), נתן *natán* 'give' as in נתן מבט *natán mabát* 'looked' (lit. 'gave a look'; cf. העיף מבט *heíf mabát* 'looked,' lit. 'threw a look,' cf. English *threw a look*, *threw a glance* and *tossed a glance*)—cf. the Hebrew-descent הביט *hibít* 'looked at').

Consider also the semantic shift in Hebrew הרביץ תורה (Israeli *irbíts torá*) 'taught the Law' > הרביץ מוסר (*irbíts musár*) 'rebuked' > הרביץ מכות (*irbíts makót*) 'beat strokes, hit hits' (i.e. 'beat, hit,' 'deal out hits') > Israeli הרביץ *irbíts* 'hit, beat; gave' > הרביץ מהירות *hirbíts meirút* 'drove very fast' (מהירות *meirút* meaning 'speed'), הרביץ ארוחה *irbíts arukhá* 'ate a big meal' (ארוחה *arukhá* meaning 'meal') etc.—cf. English *hit the buffet* 'eat a lot at the buffet,' *hit the liquor/bottle* 'drink alcohol.' In other words, an analytic construction is preferred to a synthetic one. Consider also Israeli דפק הופעה *dafák ofaá*, lit. 'hit a show,' i.e., 'dressed smartly.'

Overt borrowing

There are scores of visible loanwords in Israeli from Yiddish (note that the Israeli spelling is often different from the Yiddish). Consider the following Israeli words beginning with שׁ *sh* [ʃ]: שפיץ *shpits* 'sharp tip, spearhead', שוויץ *shvits* 'swagger, panache,' שוונג *shvung* 'swing, zest,' שלוק *shluk* 'gulp, sup, sip,' שמוק *shmok* 'dick, schmuck, asshole,' שלומפר *shlúmper* 'slob,' שמונצס *shmóntses* 'gadgets, odds and ends,' שמ(א)טס *shmátes* 'rags,' and שפכטל *shpákhtel* 'spatula, trowel.'

Other Yiddishisms in Israeli include the following: קונץ *kunts* 'trick', גרפס *greps* 'burp, belch,' ברוך *brokh* 'foul-up, hitch, mishap, disaster, fiasco, mess,' פיצ'פקס *píchefkes* 'gadgets, frills,' נ(ע)בך *nébekh* 'nebbish, miserable,' מיידלה *méydale* 'girlie,' בובלה *búbale* 'sweetheart,' פרווה *párve* 'parve, neither dairy nor meat,' אוטו טו *ototó* 'any minute (now), shortly,' קוטר *kúter* 'whiner, complainer, grouch, sourpuss, griper' (cf. לקטר *lekatér* 'to whine, complain'), פלונטר *plónter* 'tangle, mess, snarl-up,' בוק *bok* 'clod, dolt,' בוידע(ם) *bóydem* 'attic,' and אלטע זאכן *álte zákhen*, lit. 'old things,' referring to 'second-hand merchandise' or to the person selling them from a car/wagon (cf. junkman), used even by Israeli Arabs.

There are many gastronomic Yiddishisms, for example, בייגלה *béygale* 'bagel,' גפילטה פיש *gefílte fish* 'stuffed fish,' קרפלך *krépalakh* 'kreplach, ravioli,' קניידלך *knéydalakh* 'dumplings, (matzah) balls,' לטקס *látkes* 'potato pancakes,'

בלינצ'ס *blínches* (*blintshes*) 'blin/blini, pancake, crêpe,' and קישקס *kíshkes* 'stuffed intestines.'

Clothing Yiddishisms include גטקס *gátkes* 'long johns', קפוטה *kapóta* 'capote, long coat/cape,' and שטריימלך *shtréymalakh* (plural) 'shtreimel, beaver hat, round, broad-brimmed hat edged with fur worn by some Hasidic Jews.'

Although the following Israeli words are of Hebrew pedigree ultimately, they entered Israeli from Yiddish. Note that their pronunciation and specific meaning by and large follow Yiddish rather than Hebrew: חברהמן *khévreman* 'swell guy, good sport', חבר'ה *khévre* 'guys, the gang,' חוכם *khúkhem* 'wise-guy, dumb ass, fool,' בקיצר *bekítser* 'shortly, practically,' העיקר *haíker* 'the main thing,' מילא *méyle* 'so be it, never mind, all right then,' ממילא *miméyle* 'in any case, by itself,' בלבוס *balebós* 'landlord, burgher,' משפוחה *mishpúkhe* 'family, (the whole) tribe,' and כלבויניק *kolbóynik* 'a table bowl for rubbish (in a kibbutz); one who knows how to do everything.'

Often, Israelis use a Yiddishism without realizing that its ultimate (morphological) origin is Hebrew. Consider the following:

- Israeli תכלס *tákhles* 'to the point, in practice, in reality, nitty-gritty, the realities or basic facts of a matter, the heart of the matter,' traceable to (Mishnaic) Hebrew תכלית [takʰˈliːt] 'purpose' (<Biblical Hebrew 'end, edge, border').
- Israeli דוס *dos* 'Orthodox Jew,' traceable to (Mishnaic) Hebrew דת [dåt] 'religion' (<Biblical Hebrew 'law') (cf. Yiddish דת *das*; *dos* being Ashkenazic Hebrew).
- Israeli בלגולה *balagúle* 'uneducated person, wagoner, coachman', consisting of two Hebrew elements, בעל [ˈbaʕal] 'owner' and עגלה [ʕăgåˈlå] 'cart,' but introduced in Yiddish.
- Israeli בלבוסטה *balabúste* '(boss-like) energetic, orderly landlady/housekeeper,' from the Yiddish בעל-הביתטע *balebóste*, consisting of two Hebrew elements, בעל [ˈbaʕal] 'owner' and בית [ˈbajit] 'house,' as well as the Slavonic-descent Yiddish feminine suffix טע [te].

Cf. Adelaide (Australia)'s *Ballaboosta* restaurant, which happens to be Lebanese: I went there for the first time because of the name (I thought it was an Eastern European Jewish restaurant); I stayed there for the food…

- Israeli שולם *shólem* 'peace (between friends, after a quarrel),' traceable to Hebrew שלום [ʃåˈloːm] 'peace.'
- Israeli טוכס *túkhes* 'bottom, bum', traceable to Hebrew תחת [ˈtåħat] (Israeli *tákhat*) 'below.'

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This phenomenon is the opposite of 'calquing' (cf. 'semantic loan'), namely the use of a Hebrew lexical item induced by its meaning in Yiddish, without the native speaker realizing that Yiddish played a role. This use leads to a discussion of disguised borrowing, the covert lexical influence of Yiddish and other European languages on Israeli.

Calquing (loan translation)

According to my calculations, approximately 50% of the 18,000 idioms and phrases in Rosenthal's 2009 *milón hatserufím (Dictionary of Hebrew Idioms and Phrases)* are calques of languages other than Hebrew. Consider the following Israeli phrases (see other examples in Zuckermann 2011: 196) that result from calquing expressions in Yiddish, sometimes accompanied by other languages, following the Congruence Principle:
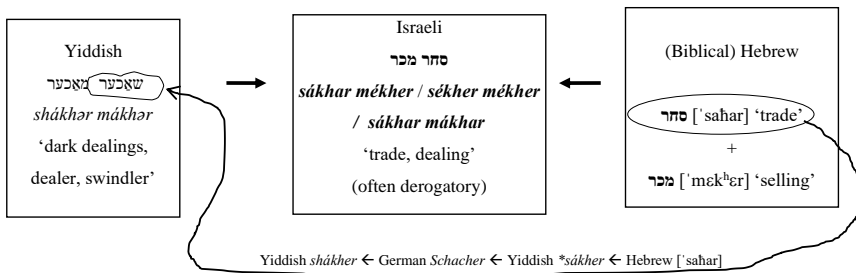
- תפס את אלוהים בביצים *tafás et eloím babeytsím*, lit. 'caught God in the testicles', i.e., 'was very successful', calques האט געכאפט גאט ביי די אייער *hot gekhápt got bay di éyer*.
- משוגע על כל הראש *meshugá al kól arósh*, lit. 'crazy on all the head', i.e. 'crazy', calques משוגע אויפן גאנצן קאפ *meshúge áfn gántsn kop*.
- לב שבור *lev shavúr*, lit. 'heart+broken,' i.e., 'broken heart,' calques א צעבראכן הארץ *a tsebrókhn harts*.
- סנונית ראשונה *snunít rishoná*, lit. 'swallow+first,' i.e., 'first swallow,' i.e., 'one swallow does not make a spring,' calques די ערשטע שוועלבעלע *di érshte shvélbele*.
- יום הולדת *yom ulédet*, lit. 'day+birth,' i.e., 'birthday, birthday party' calques געבוירן-טאג *gebóyren-tog*.
- לא כל הנוצץ זהב *lo kol anotséts zaáv*, lit. 'not all the glitters gold', i.e. 'all that glitters is not gold', calques ניט אלץ וואס גלאנצט איז גאלד *nit alts vos glantst iz gold*.
- הכה בברזל בעודו חם *iká babarzél beodó kham*, lit. '[he] hit in the iron while it was hot,' i.e. 'strike while the iron is hot,' calques שמיד דאס אייזן כל זמן ס'איז הייס *shmid dos áyzn kol zmán siz heys*.
- מפחד מהצל של עצמו *mefakhéd meatsél shel atsmó*, lit. '[he is] afraid from the shadow of himself,' i.e. 'afraid of his own shadow,' calques שרעקן זיך פארן אייגענעם שאטן *shrékn zikh fárn áygenem shótn*.
- לכל כלל יש יוצא מן הכלל *lekhól klal yesh yotsé min aklál*, lit. 'to every rule there is exiting from the rule', i.e. 'every rule has an exception', calques אין יעדער כלל איז דער א יוצא מן הכלל *in yéder klal iz der a yóytse min haklal*.
- רך כמשי *rakh kaméshi* 'soft as silk', calques ווייך ווי זייד *veykh vi zayd*.

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Israelis know that the Israeli word *perestroika* is a borrowing of the Russian-descent internationalism. However, few Israelis are aware that the above expressions are 'foreign' calques. Synchronically speaking, the **forms** in this phrase are 100% Hebrew; there is nothing to betray the non-Hebrew co-sources (Yiddish, Polish, Russian), which provided the **pattern** (cf. calques in Howell 1993). Then, it is no wonder that so many people miss much of the European impact on Israeli.

Phono-Semantic Matching

The following phono-semantic matching is partially 'incestuous' (Zuckermann 2003, 94-102) since Yiddish *shákhər* can be traced back to Hebrew *sáħar*:

Fig. 3. Israeli סחר מכר *sákhar mékher* 'trade'

Yiddish	Israeli	(Biblical) Hebrew
שאכער מאכער *shákhər mákhər* 'dark dealings, dealer, swindler'	**סחר מכר** *sákhar mékher* / *sékher mékher* / *sákhar mákhar* 'trade, dealing' (often derogatory)	**סחר** [ˈsaħar] 'trade' + **מכר** [ˈmɛkʰɛr] 'selling'

Yiddish *shákher* ← German *Schacher* ← Yiddish **sákher* ← Hebrew [ˈsaħar]

Concluding Remarks

A woman in Israel was travelling on a bus with her young son. While she talked to him in Yiddish, he answered in Israeli. So, she urged him again and again:

רעד אויף ייִדיש
red af yídish
'Speak in Yiddish!'

An impatient Israeli was listening to the private conversation and told the woman:

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גברת, למה לעזאזל את מתעקשת שהילד ידבר יידיש ולא עברית, פה זה ישראל

givéret, láma leazazél at mitakéshet sheayéled yedabér yídish veló ivrít, po ze israél

'Madame, why on earth do you insist that your son speaks Yiddish and not Hebrew, this is Israel here!'

The mother replied:

אני לֹא רוצה שהוא ישכח שהוא יהודי

aní lo rotsá sheú yishkákh sheú yeudí

'I don't want him to forget that he is Jewish.'

The impatient Israeli reflects the Mediterranean style of discourse prevalent in Israel beautifully. However, as this article demonstrated, he fails to recognize the cross-fertilization between Hebrew and Yiddish, as it manifests itself in any aspect within the Israeli language. Unknowingly, even the impatient Israeli speaks Yiddish within his Israeli.

Yiddish **survives** *beneath* Israeli phonetics, phonology, discourse, syntax, semantics, lexis, and even morphology, although traditional and institutional linguists have been most reluctant to admit it. Israeli is not רצח יידיש *rétsakh yídish* (Israeli for 'the murder of Yiddish [by Hebrew]') but rather יידיש רעדט זיך *yídish redt zikh* (Yiddish for 'Yiddish speaks itself [beneath Israeli]').

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