casje

Implications of Heritage Language Research for Hebrew Teaching and Learning

August 2016

Avital Feuer
University of Maryland

Preface

CASJE (Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education) is an evolving community of researchers, practitioners, and philanthropic leaders dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide the work of Jewish Education. CASJE was launched with lead funding from the Jim Joseph, AVI CHAI, and Mandell and Madeleine Berman Foundations.

Early on, CASJE stakeholders and partners identified the potential for research to contribute to the improvement of Hebrew language education. To date, CASJE's activity in this field has included an effort to gain a better understanding of core issues that might benefit from a systematic applied research program, and on formulating a series of questions that might guide such a program over time.

To that end, this literature review is the first in a series commissioned by the CASJE Board. These reviews explore the implications and applications to the teaching and learning of Hebrew of recent research in heritage, second and foreign language learning.

Avital Feuer, the author of this first review, is Associate Research Professor in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures and at the Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies, University of Maryland.

Michael Feuer
Co-Chair, CASJE Board

Lee Shulman
Co-Chair, CASJE Board

Contents

⬡ Introduction

For several decades, researchers have studied the field of heritage language (HL) teaching and learning. The intention of this review is to analyze these studies in order to find broader and more specific applications to inform the current situation in the Hebrew class. These applications are limited for several reasons. First, virtually all HL studies focus on the children of immigrants who speak or are learning the new region's majority language while attempting to preserve their HL (usually their home language). Most young American Hebrew learners, apart from a number of children of Israeli immigrants, speak English as their home and first language (L1). Second, though prior studies of HL learning are numerous, the research usually consists of qualitative case studies focusing on one aspect of learning (for example, attitudes toward the teacher, reactions to class activities, or parental influences on learning). There is very little in-depth analysis or connection of results and implications. Third, **"Hebrew" is an umbrella term[1] that includes biblical, liturgical, literary, modern and other genres and uses of the language** and that can be meaningful for social, communal, religious, affective, nostalgic, nationalistic, and instrumental reasons. **It is difficult to pinpoint** *which* **Hebrew we can study and compare to other HLs.**

In spite of these limitations, there are important insights about language learning in general and Hebrew language learning in particular. This review demonstrates why more research about Hebrew learning is needed. The examples cited show general categories of aspects of HL that have been studied and then connect these disparate cases to create a broader theme related to identity formation and motivation. **Viewing Hebrew learning through the lens of identity studies can** connect the variations and complexities of all of these contexts and **allow us to begin a discussion about applications and lessons for the Hebrew classroom.**

---

[1] Avni, S. (2012). Hebrew as heritage: The work of language in religious and communal continuity. *Linguistics and Education 23,* 323-333.

Definitions

"**Heritage language**" refers to a language other than the dominant language that is familiar, not foreign, to the user[2]. Park[3] defined HL as any language other than aboriginal languages brought to a host society by immigrants, and can also be referred to as community language, ancestral language, mother-tongue or ethnic language. It is important to note that most research in the field assumes that HL is spoken in the home and that exposure and input are available to the individual.

When research refers to "**second language**" (SL or L2) or "**foreign language**" (FL), different contexts are described. Second language, acquired after one's native language, is learned in the region where that language is dominant. For example, immigrant students from Bulgaria who learn English in the United States (in an English-dominant region) are learning English as a second language. Foreign language is learned in a region where it is not generally spoken by the majority population. An example of FL study is a Japanese class at an American university.

Hebrew learning in the United States falls somewhere between these **three language learning contexts**. For second generation immigrants, that is, children of Israelis who immigrated to the U.S., modern Hebrew is a heritage language in its traditional sense, though other forms such as biblical Hebrew could be considered "foreign" to them. That population is a small percentage of Hebrew learners in the U.S.; most learners are not second, or even third or fourth generation native speakers. For most learners, modern Hebrew falls into the category of foreign language, but still retains personal, ethnic, and cultural dimensions that liken it more to a heritage or ancestral language. Some learners may have some proficiency with written liturgical Hebrew because of synagogue participation but no modern Hebrew ability. Learners' parents and relatives may also hold some level of Hebrew proficiency, literacy or exposure.

There may be some parallels with third generation (or more) heritage language learners, but there are very few studies of this group, and very few applicable results. Luning and Yamauchi[4] interviewed 12 adolescents and their families and determined that after a century-long ban on Hawaiian language, teaching Hawaiian in K-12 schools influenced cultural pride and was viewed positively by parents and students. Endo[5] interviewed three fourth generation, elementary-age Japanese HL students and their parents in Japanese supplementary school, observed lessons and reviewed class materials. This study illustrated fun, hands-on methods of learning but also high attrition rates of students. Each study reported general "positive" attitudes but did not probe participants for in-depth explanation of these attitudes. Nei-

[2] Kelleher, A. (2010). What is a heritage language? *CAL Heritage Briefs*. Retrieved 1/19/2016 from http://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/briefs/What-is-a-Heritage-Language.pdf.

[3] Park, S.M. (2013). Immigrant students' heritage language and cultural identity maintenance in multilingual and multicultural societies. *Concordia Working Papers in Applied Linguistics, 4.*

[4] Luning, R. & Yamauchi, L. (2010). The influences of indigenous heritage language education on students and families in a Hawaiian language immersion program. *Heritage Language Journal, 7,* 46-75.

[5] Endo, R. (2013). Realities, rewards and risks of heritage language education: Perspectives from Japanese parents in a midwestern community. Bilingual Research Journal, 36, 278-294.

ther study delved into program goals, student and parent motivations or methods to assess achievement or change.

In addition, there are parallels with other revived languages such as Gaelic in Scotland and Catalan in Spain. Scotland's nationally coordinated effort to support and revive Gaelic is evidenced by the establishment of the Gaelic Language Board and a new-found focus on education programs[6]. After Spanish-only schooling was imposed in 1970, Catalan was maintained in homes and communities. When Spain's democracy was restored, public schools, government agencies, media and cultural institutions in Catalonia reverted to Catalan, relegating Castilian Spanish to a second language[7]. In these cases, the revived language is part of the cultural and historical fabric of the countries, and official national language policies set standards and support learning. In the U.S., Hebrew is not the historic and nostalgic national language so it constitutes a unique case.

Although based on these definitions, Hebrew in the U.S. is a heritage language for children of Israeli immigrants, this review does not focus exclusively on this small group, nor does it specifically discuss Hebrew charter school learners who may have no ancestral connection to Judaism. Rather, **this paper focuses on the majority of young Hebrew language learners who are ethnically Jewish but who do not speak Hebrew at home as their L1**. **These learners** do not benefit from home exposure from parents and relatives and **have no immediate or urgent need to use the language for communication with their family members. Nevertheless, they have an ancestral, ethnic or nostalgic connection to the language.**

This paper is divided into two sections. Part I describes external factors that contribute to heritage language preservation. Examples of external factors include school and community goals and support, family influence and national policy. Part II delves into internal factors that influence learning, such as learners' motivations and attitudes, ethnolinguistic vitality, psychological stages of development, and identity frameworks. We also discuss the few prior studies of Hebrew learning in the United States.

---

[6] Dombrowsky, L.M. (2014). Additional language education and language development goals: The example of Gaelic (learners) education in Highland Council, Scotland. *British Educational Research Journal 40*, 261-279.

[7] Ortiz, F. (2014). Catalan language revival fuels backlash in Spain. *Reuters*, retrieved 7/18/16 from http://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-catalan-idUSKBN0FJ2E920140714.

⬡ Part I: External Factors

This section provides specific examples of HL research studies. The studies selected exemplify research on individual learner and community motivations to preserve the language.

Evidence from many research studies points to external factors that influence heritage language maintenance or loss. Although the following summary comprises studies of second generation heritage language users, **the general themes of the studies' results may pertain to Hebrew language education.**

Home and Family Influences

Consistent evidence has shown that parental use of the heritage language at home encourages students' language maintenance[8]. Portes and Hao[9] collected and analyzed quantitative survey data on more than 5,000 8th and 9th graders in Miami and San Diego and found that consistent use of the HL at home leads to the possibility of children preserving the HL. Guardado[10] interviewed four families in Vancouver who experienced Spanish language loss and expressed the importance of the HL without actually encouraging its use. In a subsequent study by Guardado[11], three interviewed Hispanic parents expressed that their HL goals were for their children to become cosmopolitan, worldly and tolerant. In contrast to studies reporting positive effects of family language use, Brown[12] noted that the effects have not been sufficiently scrutinized. After interviewing four Korean college students and their families, he found complexities and changes over time: for example, as new siblings were born, Korean children used their HL less and less, and as their parents' English improved they became less insistent on their children preserving their Korean HL.

---

[8] Park, S.M. (2013). Immigrant students' heritage language and cultural identity maintenance in multilingual and multicultural socieites. *Concordia Working Papers in Applied Linguistics, 4,* 30-52.

[9] Portes, A. & Hao, L. (1998).E pluribus unum: Bilingualism and loss of language in the second generation. *Sociology of Education 71,* 269-294.

[10] Guardado, M. (2002). Loss and maintenance of first language skills: Case studies of Hispanic families in Vancouver. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 58,* 341-363.

[11] Guardado, M. (2010). Heritage language development: Preserving a mythic past or envisioning the future of Canadian identity? *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 9,* 329-346.

[12] Brown, C.L. (2011). Maintaining heritage language: Perspectives of Korean parents. *Multicultural Education, 19,* 31-37.

Because results of these prior HL studies are varied with no common theme, **it would be useful to study the ways Hebrew is used in the home and the attitudes toward Hebrew that children observe or mimic.** A deeper understanding of conscious and unconscious ways that parents present and use Hebrew based on their own personal religious or cultural experiences, ideologies, priorities, relationships with Israel, and comfort with the language is needed. This understanding could show how these factors affect children's attitudes, language use and proficiency.

School and Educational Influences

Rincker's[13] questionnaire of 154 HL school personnel in Saskatchewan, and Tse's[14] meta-analysis of many mixed-methods HL studies are two pieces that determined that out-of-school, private church- or community-affiliated supplementary schools are not effective in encouraging HL use. Fewer studies reported that supplementary HL schools had a positive effect on students' language and ethnic identity (for example, Oriyama[15]), and most of these studies did not delve into complexities, measurable outcomes, curriculum/program development or teaching methods. Rather, they simply showed interviewees' positive responses to the program or towards their HL. Showstack[16] reported on a heritage Spanish teacher who changed dialects and standard/non-standard form in order to include students with different regional language varieties. In the same vein, Wu, Lee and Leung[17] found that teachers and administrators of a Chinese charter school determined that Mandarin was to be the target language of instruction, though interviews of 14 middle schoolers showed that many students spoke Cantonese or Fujianese at home. Japanese community schools also enroll learners with dissimilar backgrounds and needs. They include students who are living temporarily in the U.S. and need to maintain Japanese in order to return home and be ready to enroll in school and pass exams alongside children of Japanese immigrants who want to experience their culture and HL in a fun way[15].

School structure and learning goals, whether explicit or not, are important in shaping students' educational experiences. Leeman, Rabin and Roman-Mendoza[18] described a Spanish community school with a specific focus on service and social activism, and presented

[13] Rincker, J. (1991). Community-sponsored heritage language programs and personnel in Saskatchewan. *The Canadian Modern Language Review 47,* 642-649.

[14] Tse, L. (1997). Affecting affect: The impact of ethnic language programs on student attitudes. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 53,* 705-728.

[15] Oriyama, K. (2010). Heritage language maintenance and Japanese identity formation: What role can schooling and ethnic community contact play? *Heritage Language Journal 7,* 76-111.

[16] Showstack, R. (2015). Institutional representations of 'Spanish' and 'Spanglish': Managing competing discourses in heritage language instruction. *Language and Intercultural Communication 15,* 341-361.

[17] Wu, M.H., Lee, K. & Leung, G. (2014). Heritage language education and investment among Asian American middle schoolers: Insights from a charter school. *Language and Education 28,* 19-33.

[18] Leeman, J., Rabin, L. & Roman-Mendoza, E. (2011). Identity and activism in heritage language education. *Modern Language Journal 95,* 481-495.

interviews with several university students who worked with elementary school students on various projects. Octu's[19] study of a Turkish school emphasized bringing together members of the Turkish speech community in order to build the reputation of Turkish people in the U.S. and for Turkish people to be viewed as a prominent ethnolinguistic group. In a Hawaiian language program integrated into public schools, educators, 12 teens and their families were interviewed about their program goals and stated that they aimed to teach and learn cultural values, encourage pride and supply students with tools for teaching older generations this previously banned heritage.

Hebrew classes, in general, are similarly heterogeneous and diverse, and each school has its own educational focus. In day schools, supplementary schools, camps, universities and private or communal institutions populated with learners of different backgrounds, educators must decide which dialect or register to model, which grammar rules or slang to include, whether to focus on biblical or textual language, how to present Israeli culture, politics and societal issues and most importantly, the reasons and goals students should learn Hebrew. The depth of these issues relate to identity and motivation: the nature and reasons why people are driven to maintain the language and how Hebrew fits into their personal identity frameworks.

Policy Influences

Ruiz's[20] model for language planning is generally used to describe policy orientations toward second language teaching and learning. He categorized planning into "language as a right," "language as a resource," or "language as a problem." In the "language as a problem" category, HL is viewed as a problem or obstacle to acquiring the majority language and succeeding in the new culture. This orientation can have undertones of racial discrimination or devaluing. The "language as a right" stance underscores the protection and respect of minority language rights through educational and institutional support. "Language as a resource" orientations go even further in their funding and encouragement of HL maintenance and development to create a multilingual and multicultural society. Depending on the context and students' experiences, Hebrew preservation may be affected by these orientations, and the topic deserves further study.

Other External Influences

Guardaro and Becker[21] found that in interviews with 34 Hispanic-Canadian families, **strong relationships with relatives in the country of origin positively affected willingness to**

---

[19] Octu, B. (2010). Heritage language maintenance and cultural identity formation: The case of a Turkish Saturday school in New York City. *Heritage Language Journal 7,* 112-137.

[20] Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *The Journal for the National Association for Bilingual Education 8,* 15-34.

[21] Guardado, M. & Becker, A. (2014). 'Glued to the family': The role of familism in heritage language development strategies. *Language, Culture and Curriculum 27,* 163-181.

use and maintain HL. Similarly, **return trips to the country of origin increased the likelihood that students would use the language, gain advanced proficiency and feel positively toward it**[22],[23]. Cho and Krashen[24] conducted surveys that determined that students who watched TV in the HL were more likely to maintain their language.

Summary

In-depth, qualitative research that involves parents, children, educators and community members is needed to uncover the external factors that affect Hebrew learning. **External influences**, as illustrated in this brief sampling from HL research, **could be critical to understanding the nature of Hebrew learning, particularly if viewed alongside internal factors and identity frameworks.** Every learner is unique and motivated by different factors; a modern Orthodox student with liturgical and biblical proficiency who plans to become a rabbi may have different goals and needs than a student who views Hebrew as a way to bond with an Israeli grandparent. What do these Hebrew students, other language students, and the samples of external influences, have in common? All relate to how learners create their identity frameworks and view current and future images of themselves.

---

[22] Hinton, L. (1998). Involuntary language loss among immigrants: Asian-American linguistic autobiographies. Paper presented at Georgetown Round Table for Languages and Linguistics.

[23] Lee, J. S. (2002). The Korean language in America: The role of cultural identity in heritage language learning. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15,* 117-133.

[24] Cho, G. & Krashen, S. (2000). The role of voluntary factors in heritage language development: How speakers can develop the heritage language on their own. *ITL, Review of Applied Linguistics,* 127-140.

◯ Part II: Internal Factors

Language is indelibly linked to identity. The way we think, communicate our innermost thoughts, express emotion and recount stories is related to our identities. Identity is how we view our self-image and how others view and label us within the constructs of society. **Choosing to use one language, dialect or register is reflective of how we feel and want to be viewed.** This section will discuss studies of language and identity and how these "internal factors" ultimately relate to Hebrew language learning in the U.S. We will explore how language learning motivation, once thought of as a simple binary of instrumental or integrative force, is now a field unto itself and connected to personal identity.

Integrativeness

In 1959, Gardner and Lambert published a study on language learning motivation, claiming that individuals were either instrumentally motivated (motivated to obtain employment or a college degree, for example) or integratively motivated (learning language in order to become closer with speakers of that language)[25]. This binary model was rooted in psychological theory and in later decades developed into the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB[26]) that surveyed such factors as levels of anxiety, interest in foreign languages, attitude toward the target language group and attitude toward the learning situation. The premise of their later theory of *integrativeness*[27] was a continuum of level of desire to become familiar with and integrate into the target language community. This notion indicates a strong connection between motivation to learn a language and desire to belong in a particular speech community, but does not examine varieties of language groups and their complexities, phenomena that are particularly important in the case of Hebrew. There is not only one Hebrew speech community or target language group; rather, there are a great many different groups based on location, age, register, time period and use. Some examples include colloquial Hebrew of young Israeli adults peppered with army slang and acronyms, the codeswitch and English-influenced Hebrew at American Jewish sleep-away camps, and the unique language of Israeli-

---

[25] Gardner R. & Lambert, W. (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology 13,* 266-272.

[26] Gardner, R.C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation.* London: Edward Arnold Publishers.

[27] Gardner, R. (2001). Integrative motivation and second language acquisition. In Z. Dornyei and R. Schmidt (eds), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

or Russian-born emigrants within their cultural groups.

Language Ego and Acculturation Theory

Guiora[28] wrote that **second language speakers often feel like they are "different people" when speaking the new language and subsequently behave differently**. Parallel to theories of ego in psychology, Guiroa's index of empathetic capacity gauged the level of an individual's sensitivity to others and receptivity to their behavior cues and feelings which, in turn, resulted in the ability to take on the identity of the other and attain native-like proficiency and pronunciation. In other words, the theory presumes that a person who maintains their L1 accent and does not take on the accent of the second language holds a lower index of empathy and resists full acculturation in the new society. Similar to Guiora's theory of language ego, Schumann's acculturation theory[29] states that individuals acquire a target language proportional to the degree to which they acculturate and adjust socially and psychologically to the new society. A fuller understanding of how Hebrew students, their teachers, parents and principals view target language speakers could more accurately direct program goals and teaching methods, both for those learning Hebrew as a HL or as a second or foreign language.

Developmental Stages

Tse[30] examined ethnic identity rejection and repossession among 39 Asian American HL members in their written narratives. They inhabit a stage prevalent in childhood and adolescence of "ethnic ambivalence" or "ethnic evasion." This stage is typical of the acculturation process of ethnic minorities and may be resolved in the stages of "ethnic emergence" when individuals explore characteristics and experiences of their ethnic groups and "ethnic identity incorporation," when these members resolve their identity conflicts and positively identify with their ethnic group membership. Applications from the field of psychology and child development would inform how, in similar terms, students feel about Hebrew learning.

Individual Language Experiences

Also relevant to the continuation and enthusiasm for Hebrew or other minority language preservation is the learning situation and language experience of the individual student. Self-efficacy[31] relates to the belief learners have about how well they can perform a particu-

---

28 Guiora, A. (1978). Personality and language behavior: A restatement. *Language Learning, 29,* 193-204.

29 Schumann, J. H. (1986). Research on the acculturation model for second language acquisition. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 7,* 379-392.

30 Tse, L (2000). The effects of ethnic identity formation on bilingual maintenance and development: An analysis of Asian American narratives. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 3,* 185-199.

31 Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control.* New York: WH Freeman.

lar task and how that could indicate future performance. Relationships to teachers, presence of learning disabilities, various learning styles and relationships to peers in the class will all inform students' understandings of their abilities and places within membership groups. All of these factors are encompassed in the concept of the "idealized L2 self."

Idealized L2 Self

Previous research suggests that language learning motivation and identity are more or less fixed and unchanging: according to the theory of integrativeness, one learns a language because it is useful, the "instrumental" end of the spectrum, or for "integrative" reasons, because they like the speakers of the language. In theories of language ego and accultura-tion, if a person does not gain native-like fluency, they are not fully acculturated in the host society. Modern ideas about identity demonstrate that a sense of self is fluid, ever-changing, based on context, and multifaceted. Dornyei's[32] *L2 Motivational Self System* includes the "ideal L2 self" which shows that **each person holds a vision of who they would like to become in the future. If that future self is a person proficient in the L2, the individual will strive to attain mastery in the language.** In addition, the framework's "ought-to L2 self" encompasses the characteristics learners feel they ought to have in order to avoid negative outcomes and in order to meet external expectations (like achieving good grades). The third category of the theory, "L2 learning experience" concerns factors involving the situation-spe-cific classroom, teacher, peers, etc.

A number of studies have used Dornyei's model to examine various facets of learning mo-tivation. For example, Papi and Teimouri[33] surveyed 1,278 Iranian English learners in high school and categorized them into five motivational groups. Partial correlation analysis showed that motivated behavior was a result of the relationship between the students' L2 selves and instrumentality promotion. After interviews with 21 migrants learning Swedish as a second language, identified by their teachers as being highly motivated, Henry, Dornyei and Davydenko[34] concluded that the surges of intense motivational behavior related to the L2 Self System meant sustained motivation for learning the language.

Magid[35] applied Dornyei's theory to motivate fifth grade students of English in Singapore. Students in a control group were asked to imagine scripted imagery situations to create a vision of their ideal L2 self, and were aided in creating goals and learning plans. After four months of mixed-methods interviews and surveys, the author concluded that the 90% of experimental group students became motivated to learn English, significantly more than the control group.

[32] Dornyei, Z. (2010). Researching motivation: From integrativeness to the ideal L2 self. In S. Hunston & D. Oakey (Eds.), *Introducing Applied Linguistics: Concepts and Skills* (pp. 74-83). London: Routledge.

[33] Papi, M. & Teimouri, Y. (2014). Language learner motivational types: A cluster analysis study. *Language Learning 64,* 493-525.

[34] Henry, A., Dornyei, Z. & Davydenko, S. (2015). The anatomy of directed motivational currents: Exploring intense and enduring periods of L2 motivation. *Modern Language Journal 99,* 329-345.

[35] Magid, M. (2014). An application of the L2 motivational self system to motivate elementary school English learners in Singapore. *Journal of Education and Training Studies 2,* 228-237.

Dornyei's theory embraces what prior research and other L2 identity frameworks sought, in pieces, to explain. Motivation to learn a language ultimately relates to who the learner wants to become. Furthermore, parents', teachers' and administrators' motivations about why the children should learn the language relate to who *they* want these learners to become. That image, conscious or not, is associated with the target language speech group (who will learners sound like when they obtain fluency?), and imagined community (among which group of people will they feel a sense of belonging?). **Upon analyzing students' L2 Motivational Self Systems and applying concepts as in Magid's study, we can directly impact the learning of Hebrew.**

⬡ Conclusion

There is no direct parallel in HL research to the contexts of Hebrew teaching and learning in the U.S. Unlike other revived languages such as Hawaiian or Gaelic, where the majority society and its government have deep historical and cultural ties to the language, in the U.S., Hebrew's ties are to a minority population. It is, for the most part, not a HL for children or even grandchildren of immigrants, nor is Hebrew strictly a foreign language for most learners because ethnic ties exist. Still, **it is possible to take pieces of findings from HL studies and create a picture to help generalize issues for all language users, and to frame hypotheses to be tested in future research.**

Studies of family and school influence in HL preservation has not delved deeply into the motivations and behaviors of participants. Data, consisting mostly of qualitative interviews, using general and not in-depth questions, is very sparse and shows that most participants felt that children's use of the HL at home yielded positive results in proficiency and positive attitudes toward the culture. Participants (parents and children) had mixed opinions about the positive effects of HL in supplementary schools. Findings and conclusions were superficial, and other than general responses about feeling positively, rather than negatively toward the learning situations, no more information was collected. Although this information does not explain how individuals specifically construct identities and learning goals from the HL, we can assume that increased exposure to the HL at home and in school will mean a greater likelihood of language acquisition, and that positive attitudes toward the learning context mean stronger motivation to maintain the HL (findings that are self-evident). Government policy toward heritage language varies by state. In terms of English language learners, Christian[36] found that students who enter U.S. schools with native-like proficiency in languages other than English are not encouraged to develop proficiency in those languages. Hebrew has been named a "critical language" (i.e. critical to U.S. national security) by the U.S. government with postsecondary programs funded accordingly. In addition, several Hebrew language charter schools receive funding, although many of the students and staff are not Jewish and have no ancestral connection to Hebrew. Clearly, more in-depth research is needed to determine which external factors provide positive and negative motivation for Hebrew language learning. **What these mixed and spotty results do provide is a sense that motivating factors vary based on the individual and learning setting, and any external motivating factors are pieces of an individual's internal identity construction.**

---

[36] Christian, D. (2007). Charting a path to bilingualism: Policy and practice support. *Modern Language Journal 91,* 271-273.

Further applications to Hebrew can be made when thinking of internal factors. Studying the language for instrumental/utilitarian or integrative reasons and allowing oneself to acculturate and fully embrace the traits of the new culture are factors that come together when an individual envisions who they want to become in the future. Hebrew may be included or excluded from that vision of self, depending on the individual's experiences surrounding that language. **Parents, whether they realize it or not, have an image of who they want their children to be and associate with, and how they want them to feel and experience the world** (often based in reaction to how they were raised). Similarly, teachers and administrators have a particular target language (TL) speech group and imagined community in mind and shape their curricula and goals according to whose language they want students to emulate (for example, Feuer[37] found that a university Hebrew professor had a vague notion of teaching her advanced students to sound like Israelis in Israel, though when interviewed, many of her students wanted to use Hebrew to converse with Russian-Israeli immigrant friends in Canada).

Moving past the commonly held understanding that Hebrew learning relates to an interest or closeness to Israel or Judaism, it is important to examine the intricacies that form identity and create a diverse body of Hebrew learners. Feuer[38] discovered that five Hebrew school parents had different goals for their children's learning: three parents encouraged Hebrew study as a way to participate in communal traditions, connect to grandparents and their histories of persecution; another felt Hebrew was an intellectual pursuit and could have sent her daughter to Chinese language classes; a third parent felt no personal connection to Hebrew but encouraged her daughter's independence and interest in the subject. University Hebrew students defined their Jewishness or belonging to subgroups in the Jewish community based on their levels of fluency in Hebrew. Those with native-like proficiency, even if they were not born in Israel, marked themselves as "Israeli" - different from those with weaker oral skills (those students who grew up with English as their L1)[37] Avni[39] similarly found that Jewish day school students had developed definite ideas about in-group membership and who could be included or excluded based on Hebrew knowledge and Jewish affiliation. In order to understand how learners create these categories, it is necessary to explore the imagined communities and subgroupings in the Jewish community and not assume a simple correlation between attitudes to Hebrew and Judaism or Israel. Hebrew **students, their parents and educators may hold very different assumptions of the target language community whose language is to be imitated and emulated.**

---

[37] Feuer, A. (2007). 'We didn't learn grammar, we learned Hebrew': Divisions and displacement in the Hebrew language classroom. *Language and Literacy, 9.*

[38] Feuer, A. (2006). Parental influences on Hebrew language learning in Hebrew Sunday school classes. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 19:* 266-277.

[39] Avni, S. (2012). Hebrew as heritage: The work of language in religious and communal continuity. *Linguistics and Education 23,* 323-333.

⬡ Questions for Future Research

In studies of heritage language learning and Hebrew, it is possible to generalize and thematize a common psychological goal of envisioning an ideal future self who is a member of a particular speech and cultural community. The idea of this self varies among individuals and is affected by personal experiences at home, personal experiences with teachers and peers, official policy and myriad other factors. It is only with a deep understanding of how individuals construct identity and fit language into that identity that learning goals can be determined and curricula structured effectively. Simultaneously, identity frameworks are influenced and developed in response to classroom experience and curriculum. Therefore, **the most effective future research in Hebrew learning settings is research of external and internal factors through the lens of identity creation and definitions, particularly in the model of the idealized L2 self.** In-depth interviews and analysis of the learning, daily routines, and ideologies of all players involved will uncover which external and internal factors serve as driving forces, and whether those motivators align or diverge from one another. If research finds that philosophies of learning, perceptions of the importance of Israel, assumptions of who the target language speaker is and what the language will be used for in fact *differ* between students, parents and educators, these findings would play a major role in re-thinking Hebrew education in the U.S.

CASJE is an evolving community of researchers, practitioners, and philanthropic leaders dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide the work of Jewish education. The Consortium supports research shaped by the widsom of practice, practice guided by research, and philanthropy informed by a sound base of evidence. To achieve these ends, CASJE aims to build the capacity needed to do high-quality applied research, nurture the institutions where research is conducted, and secure funding that supports and enables these important activities.

CASJE Board of Directors

GUIDING RESEARCH INFORMING INVESTMENT
ADVANCING JEWISH EDUCATION

**Consortium for Applied Studies
in Jewish Education**

casje.org