

## Research Questions That Can Improve the Teaching and Learning of Hebrew

Since its launch in 2013, CASJE has devoted sustained effort to laying the intellectual foundations for stimulating improvement in the teaching and learning of Hebrew in North America. This effort has been directed, first, toward gaining a better understanding of core problems in the field of Hebrew language education, and, second, to formulating the contours and content of a program of applied research program to address those problems and improve the teaching and learning of Hebrew in significant ways.

If pursued (in part or in full), this research program will enable Jewish education policymakers (funders, central agencies personnel, administrators, Federation planners, etc.) and practitioners, educational leaders, teachers, and parents to make more informed decisions about the work of Hebrew language learning in North America. What follows are the research questions that constitute that program of research and their implications for policy and practice.

We recognize that those interested in the field of Hebrew language education have different goals; some are invested in Hebrew in order to stimulate greater communication in the modern spoken language (the oral proficiency school); others are committed to cultivating Hebrew skills for decoding and understanding the Jewish literary canon (the textual competence school). The research questions presented below and their implications for practice take in to account both sets of goals.

We expect that these questions will be answered through different kinds of studies, for example, descriptive, conceptual, correlational or experimental. Some studies might be designed as small scale and exploratory. Others might be conducted at a scale that makes it possible to draw definitive or dependable conclusions. The table below shows how when driven forward by a vision that identifies discrete but interrelated questions research can contribute to an accumulation of wisdom with potential to advance fields of educational practice.

## A Program of Applied Research in Hebrew Language Learning in North America

The intellectual foundations for this effort were established as follows: CASJE commissioned a **briefing paper**, [Purposes and Practices of Israel/Hebrew Education: Towards a Joint Agenda for Applied Research](#). We then brought together thought leaders to respond to the central ideas in the paper, in a live video discussion, a **Google Hangout**. In Fall 2014, CASJE convened a group of front-line practitioners, researchers interested in Hebrew teaching and learning, and foundations that support this sector, for two discussions about issues facing the field: a day-long in-person **“Problem Formulation Convening,”** and a week-long online **“Blogcast.”** In all, approximately 40 unique individuals (educators, education leaders, education researchers, and funders) participated in over 20 hours of thoughtful and challenging discussion.

	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	RESEARCH APPLICATIONS
<b>Learning goals</b>	<p>Why is learning modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew a critical dimension of a Jewish education in North America?</p> <p>How does learning modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew influence the learner’s thinking and feeling about (a) being Jewish, (b) Judaism, and (c) Israel?</p> <p>What are the specific contributions of modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew to other educational endeavors such as Israel education, Jewish identity development and Jewish religious education?</p>	<p>Articulating the rationale for modern spoken Hebrew and/or traditional textual Hebrew in cultivating Jewish identity, connection to Israel and religious and spiritual development;</p> <p>Making more informed determinations about the relative time and resources to be devoted to modern spoken Hebrew and/or traditional textual Hebrew in educational settings in order to achieve particular goals and outcomes;</p> <p>Informing decision makers about the possible benefits of integrating the teaching of modern spoken Hebrew and/or traditional textual Hebrew with other activities and goals in Jewish education contexts.</p>
<b>Contexts</b>	<p>Where is Hebrew language teaching and learning taking place in North America? What unique features of those settings promote Hebrew language learning?</p> <p>How do social, cultural and educational characteristics of the contexts in which learners encounter modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew promote or impede their learning?</p>	<p>Illuminating the creation and evaluation of environments within pre-schools, day schools, supplementary schools, Israel trips and camps that promote the learning of modern spoken Hebrew and/or traditional textual Hebrew;</p> <p>Understanding the strengths and limitations of the different contexts on the learning of Hebrew.</p>

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	<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>RESEARCH APPLICATIONS</b>
<b>Educators, curriculum and pedagogy</b>	<p>Who is teaching modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew in North America today and what are their beliefs and predominant practices?</p> <p>What pedagogical and curricular approaches to teaching modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew are most effective with which students under what conditions?</p> <p>What do effective teachers of modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew need to know and be able to do?</p>	<p>Verifying who's teaching modern spoken Hebrew and traditional textual Hebrew, what curriculum materials they're using and how they go about teaching;</p> <p>Identifying which curricular and instructional practices to promote, with which students, and in which particular organizational environments to optimize the learning of modern spoken Hebrew and traditional textual Hebrew;</p> <p>Recruiting the most promising candidates to teach modern spoken Hebrew and traditional textual Hebrew;</p> <p>Training, inducting and developing the most effective teachers of modern spoken Hebrew and traditional textual Hebrew.</p>
<b>Learners</b>	<p>Who is learning modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew in North America today, and what do they perceive to be the purpose of their learning?</p> <p>How does learning modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew differ according to the age, maturity and attitudes of the student?</p> <p>What are students of modern spoken and/or traditional textual Hebrew actually learning?</p> <p>How do trajectories of learning Hebrew as a modern spoken and/or traditional textual language relate to the learners' thinking and feeling about (a) being Jewish, (b) Judaism, and (c) Israel?</p>	<p>Making informed curricular and pedagogical choices about how to meet the needs of Hebrew learners;</p> <p>Designing developmentally appropriate experiences for learners of Hebrew that would promote their intellectual, emotional and spiritual development.</p> <p>Assessing the effectiveness of different Hebrew language learning opportunities.</p> <p>Determining what skills and dispositions learners need to have and develop as they are learning modern spoken Hebrew and/or traditional textual Hebrew.</p>