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# "LANGUAGE POLICE" OR VISIONARY IDEALISTS? CULTURE AND IDENTITY: CASE OF MODERN HEBREW

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## *Abstract*

This article is dealing with lexical creation of words in the Modern Hebrew language, expressed, among others, by metaphors and phrases influenced by foreign languages. In addition, we will deal with etymological structures of words in Modern Hebrew. These words are characterized by semantic and etymological creativity and innovation. In the article, we will compare theories dealing with language changes in a living language. Are these changes a natural procedure in a living language, and therefore non-existent (Coseriu, 1983; Parvi, 2015), or is it a process threatening a nation's identity and culture? It is a very important topic because it puts on the agenda the controversy between linguists, including Hebrew language researchers, about the question to what extent can one stop the entry of foreign words into a language, and is it necessary to do so? Is there a middle way, that allows a language's identity to be maintained and not ignore the patters of a living and dynamic language? The research tool will be semi-structured questionnaires, observations, documents and in-depth interviews. We will refer to the point of view of purist bodies regarding the lexical creation of borrowed words and their etymology, and on the other hand, we will discuss the views of liberal linguistics, according to which the role of linguists is to observe language and describe it, but not to direct it. The innovation is the attempt to narrow the gap between these two approaches and find, using the aforementioned research, ways of doing so.

**Keywords:** Lexical creation, etymological structure, liberal linguistics, purist linguistics, globalization.

# 1.   Introduction

The Hebrew language is a language that has maintained the identity and uniqueness of the Jewish national throughout its history. It is the most ancient world language which was preserved thanks to a system of rules set externally, and grammatical rules. Do Hebrew speakers have a responsibility to continue and preserve the language because of cultural affinity to Jewish heritage and history? This is a challenging task in light of the difficulties characterizing the 21st century:

1.The internet revolution has changed the world from a large place to a small global village. This phenomenon also affects the Hebrew language because people are greatly exposed to foreign words and expression, which take over the language.

2.Many commercial companies prefer to have foreign names, because it sounds prestigious and marketable.

3.Items/phenomena without Hebrew names lead to borrowing foreign words to name them.

4.The public prefers to know and use international language to promote employment, tourism, studies and more.

5.A living language is dynamic and means to serve communications. Dynamic language is not a problematic phenomenon, but an innovative means of creating and expanding words and meanings. According to Coseriu (1983) the purpose of linguistic activity is not to adjust language to rules, but successful communications. If we cannot flex words in their meanings, we will not allow an infinite variety of uses of circumstances and contents, which express messages about people's activities every day.

6.The linguistic system enables the creation of infinite lexemes and semantemes, a process leading to the following semantic phenomena: synonyms, polysemy, metonyms and even changes in metaphorical meaning deriving from the abstention of certain words for socio-cultural reasons (Er'el, 1977). These are positive changes and therefore the question arises whether it is correct to stick to traditional patterns and meanings alone?

The article will focus on theories dealing with characteristics of a living language, the roles of spoken language and the universal responsibility of speakers to act according to norms of honesty and tolerance. According to Coseriu (1983), if we assume purity of a language, we will find norms that refer to accepting discourse. Coseriu calls this norm the principle of trust in coherent and meaningful discourse. He added that innovation in conversation has a low chance of being adopted and spread. There are no examples of linguistic mistakes entering the norm. We are faithful to our way of speaking, and therefore others' mistakes are not adopted by conversation partners. Moreover, adopting a word is a mental action that takes place in language as a technique on the level of linguistic knowledge (Coseriu, 1983).

## 2. Theoretical Foundation and Related Literature

### 2.1. Lexical Creation in a Living Language

Language dynamics prove that it is impossible to reveal constancy in human language, and therefore linguistic changes do not exist (ibid). In order to explain this argument, Coseriu relied on Aristotle's four causes model and argued that dynamism of language users can be explained by concepts of "active causativeness" and "purposefulness", that is to say that speakers are the reasons for language dynamism when their purpose is to create successful communications. It is impossible to determine scientific laws for

the field of linguistics because purposeful causality is connected to people's cultural aspects; the words people use are part of their freedom of choice. Creative linguistic phenomena do not need to be seen as change, but as renewal and implementation. For example, the process of interpreting metaphors, according to Coseriu, is creative. Interpreters partially identify with the explicit value, but at the same time separate from it when functionality serves as the key role.

The principle of interpretation does not belong solely to interpreters, but to the deontology of a language (ibid). Bakhtin, the father of the dialogic doctrine, added the social characteristic of a living language. He based his doctrine on studying literary creativity, and his followers argue that intertextuality is a cultural phenomenon without borders, which includes all human expression of any type. In the linguistic field, dialogic relationships will be expressed in common vocabulary, similar syntactic structure and meaning. For example: agreement or disagreement between speakers, repetition or completion, question and answer. Bakhtin argued that truth is not stored in individuals' brains, but exposed by collective efforts seeking truth among people in dialogic negotiations (Bakhtin, 1981). He maintained that the fact that language exists in certain social circumstances proves it entails dynamic developments, cannot preserve a synchronic system, and this because language is always in a state of being created (ibid). This dynamism is also reflected in modern spoken Hebrew. It is characterized by its grammatical foundations determined in Biblical times, but its ideological foundations are borrowed from various languages and many cultures.

The language, which changed so much generation after generation remained in its internal system "Hebrew" because of an external system's constancy: strict and permanent grammatical rules, and their external revelation in writing (Ben Haim, 1953). In the field of lexicographic acceptability, a remarkable apposition has begun in recent times: lexicographic criteria for including words in Modern Hebrew dictionaries have become more pragmatic, and their purpose is to reflect use in language (Nir, 2007). Alder (2003) added that the main planning activity of the Academy of the Hebrew Language focuses on lexical expansion and development of technical vocabulary. The liberal approach at the Academy positively views deliberate lexical development of technical language that relies on usual lexical configurations in new Hebrew, even if they are far removed from past, traditional, accepted ways or do not continue them directly. Espousers of this approach are not prepared to ignore what comes into being and what is renewed in the linguistic reality of our generation. They also argue that one should not fear borrowed configurations that enter Hebrew will spread to the general language and move away from other widespread means of expression. At the end of the day, the Academy of the Hebrew Language's lexical planning is a compromise between two different approaches, purist and liberal, regarding the nature and extent of modernizing Hebrew vocabulary (Elder, 2003). In addition to expanding language through the Academy's innovations, as described above, language development is expressed in lexical borrowing in a number of aspects:

A. Borrowing words that take place when a foreign word is borrowed as is.

B. Translated borrowing or borrowing meaning start when the language lacks concepts. In this case, the language borrows words from an influencing language and translates them when needed. For example, the word 'star', translates to 'famous artist' according to its meaning in a foreign language. This process instigates a change in the meanings system of a language, but does not influence its lexical system (Nir, 1993). Members of the Academy of the Hebrew Language argue that one should fear that phrases and semantic units pass into the written language in Modern Hebrew. They call it "hidden foreign word

introduction" dressed up as original Hebrew, of a glorified creation in literature and the press. In their opinion, this is not a language problem, but a social problem (Elder, 2003). However, Hebrew's contact with English is a natural process and the influence of foreign words and expressions on Hebrew is inevitable, and mostly takes place through the global electronic world.

C. Borrowed translation resulting from translating an expression from another language. Borrowed translation sometimes replaces idioms from their source, because deviations from the semantic standard are not felt like deviations from formative grammatical standards. Even the tolerance for such deviations is great, and public sensitivities to them is relatively low (Nir, 2007).

### 2.2. Matrix Model - Integral Linguistics

Coseriu (1983) developed a new theory linked to structural linguistics, called integral linguistics. Integral linguistic differentiates between exact sciences and social and cultural sciences. He developed a matrix model, according to which, one must relate to language in three fields: universal, historic and individual. This distinction is necessary when dealing with theoretical topics relating to various language problems such as translation from language to language, language correctness or incorrectness and understanding pejorative language.

According to Coseriu language fitness, which is the basis of creating human language, must be tested in multi-dimensional theory, according to a matrix model. The main characteristic of fitness is creativity. One can describe language fitness as the dynamics underlying theory. It is not in line with a system of laws determined in advance, but represents the second level ability to create changing systems of law (Parvu, 2015). Speakers are the criterion to judge word use according to the degree of its integrity toward the language and not according to its linguistic soundness. Coseriu emphasized the law of judgment including adjustment, soundness and causality. Coseriu's research deals with the complete structure of language phenomena from the point of view of the act of speaking (Parvu, 2015).

In Israel, research has been carried out about the etymology of modern Hebrew by Klifon (2013). The aim of this research was to examine the percentage of borrowed words in Modern Hebrew. It found that the etymology of the greatest group of spoken words in Hebrew is from Biblical texts, 67%. Foreign and borrowed words that have penetrated the Hebrew language constitute 15% of all words, and their contribution to Modern Hebrew is great. They are equal in size to the group of innovations in Modern Hebrew.

### 2.3. Author's Contribution to Existing Theory

In Israel, research about the spoken Hebrew language is only starting; there is a word corpus of spoken Hebrew from 2010 edited by Professor Shlomo Izre'el of Tel Aviv University(Izre'el,2002), which contains five million words recorded by people who attached microphones to their bodies for a day. The corpus was meant for Hebrew language researchers and a number have made use of it. This research intends to expand on the word corpus of spoken Hebrew by recording adult conversations in different circumstances: small talk, semi-structured interviews and observations. The aim is to examine to what degree the use of foreign words, metaphors and slang found in Professor Jeserel's corpus. In addition, we will conduct in-depth interviews with linguists and media personnel with regard to the various roles of

language and the degree of necessity to maintain its soundness. We will try and find a bridge between the two approaches existing today: the purist approach and the libreral approach by understanding that language in dynamic mainly serving communication needs. We will also discuss the question of its other roles: cultural language and national identity. As such, we will examine the question of whether semantic transparency is likely to be a solution to the fact that speakers will use words that the Academy has introduced? We will not ignore Coseriu and his followers' theory, who argued that speakers are the criterion by which use of a word is judged according to the degree of its integrity in the language and not its language correctness, and alongside this we will refer to language's uses other than communications. Does maintain language identity compel maintaining the system of a language's meanings and even its traditional Biblical etymology? We will try to get insights whether language personnel or language police or visionary idealists.

## 3. Conclusions

There are clashes between normative socio-customary norms (standard) and language reality in Israel. Customary norms vary in phrases and registers and they tend to change over time.

In addition, foreign influences on a certain language are the most common of them. Today, tolerance of foreign language influences has increased, and fears have decreased about their threat on speaking Hebrew. 10% of all the fundamental values found in dictionaries are borrowed words when the need arises to indicate a new concept that has not suitable expression in the Hebrew vocabulary. Degrees of using foreign languages do not resemble the various language registers: in literature and poetry, there is little use unlike newspaper reporting, interpretive articles and adverts. Foreign words do not always only meet communication needs, sometimes use derives from socio-psychological needs, the desire to be connected to the wide world. The result of foreign influence on spoken Hebrew is the creation of many etymological sources. From Klifon's (2013) research the conclusion emerged that in Israel, in the Hebrew language, even when it's revival is not on the agenda of native speakers, there is preference for Biblical language in cases where there are Hebrew alternative. Biblical language has a very important place, historically and culturally and therefore also linguistically, consciously or unconsciously. (Klifon,2013). This conclusion corresponds with Coseriu's view: speakers have an intuitive knowledge of the historic field of their specific language and by rule of judgment will continue to speak correctly on condition that expression will serve the purposes of conversation and its circumstances. Alder (2003) presented the Academy's view with regard to this issue and argued that the intention of language development by the Academy is not a functional purpose alone, but ideological as well, as it is based on classical grammatical traditions and linked to certain cultural views. It is reasonable to assume that through planning formal standards, the Academy strives also to influence informal Hebrew used in speech (Alder, 2003).

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