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On the Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel: A Sociolexical Consideration of the Hebrew of Israelis of North African Origin

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Abstract
This article addresses lexical features of the speech of native-born Hebrew-speaking Israelis from the geographic and socioeconomic periphery (i.e., *moshavim*, cities, and development towns in the north and south of Israel). Study of their language shows that their Hebrew incorporates a fair number of Judeo-Arabic words belonging to meaningful categories, such as foods, customs, beliefs, holidays, and nicknames, among others. These words are distinctively different from the Arabic words interpolated in Modern Israeli Hebrew, which derive from the local Arabic dialect. The findings demonstrate the existence of a Hebrew sociolect grounded in Judeo-Arabic and typical of a specific sociogeographic sector.

Keywords
Judeo-Arabic; contemporary Hebrew; lexical borrowing

The atypical, directed nature of its revival makes spoken Israeli Hebrew and its development an intriguing topic for a broad sociolinguistic consideration.[1] Modern Hebrew—at least at the beginning of the revival process—was shaped and developed from top to bottom: from writing to speech, from "the writers, poets, teachers, and scholars" (Bendavid 1971: 306) to the "entire public" learning to speak the language (Ben-Ḥayyim 1953: 46). This differs essentially from the natural development of languages, which first crystallize among the general public and only later receive official recognition as linguistic fact.

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1) On the nature of the revival of Hebrew, see Ben-Ḥayyim 1953: 46–83; Bendavid 1971: 297–329; Rabin 1972: 47–62; Efrati 2004; Bar-Asher 2012; and especially Eldar 2010 and the bibliography therein.

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One result of the approach to the revival of Hebrew as a 'project' was the creation of various means for inculcating the Hebrew language, including the widespread Hanḥalat Lashon endeavor. Initially taking the form of evening classes in the late nineteenth century, Hanḥalat Lashon became an established, multibranched state institution. *Ulpanim* were established, curricula developed, textbooks written, and newspapers published, and many auxiliary forces were drafted in service of the goal of inculcating Hebrew (Rabin 1972: 59–61; Weinberg 1992; Rubinstein 2000). Teachers of Hebrew played a focal role in this effort (Fischler 1990; Haramati 1991), as did scholars of Hebrew, who sought to channel and shape the developing Hebrew language. Fueling this effort was the desire "to restore to the nation in Zion, who were immigrating to the land from the four corners of the earth, an updated ancestral tradition in the language of the sons as a language of life, society, and creativity" (Kodesh 2000: 32), and "the placing of a *single* national language in the mouths of a nation with a veritable *babel of languages* like ours" (33, italics in original).

Thus, non-Hebrew-speaking immigrants to Israel experienced two simultaneous linguistic revolutions: studying and acquiring a new language, and reducing, or even shunning, the use of their native tongues, at least in the public sphere (Bachi 1956; Spolsky & Shohamy 1999; Shohamy & Spolsky 2002). The eradication of native languages and implantation of a new one was no simple matter (Morag 1990; Harshav 2008; Eldar 2010). Confronted by the tremendous tension between the new, unknown, and uncrystallized Hebrew language and the vibrant living languages the new immigrants brought with them, the leaders of the Hebrew revival attempted to shape the language on the model of classical Hebrew, on the one hand, and to block the influence of the linguistic substrates and 'natural-foreign' linguistic instincts of the speakers, on the other (Bendavid 1971: 315–316; Izre'el 2002; Harshav 2008; Eldar 2010).

This linguistic undertaking enjoyed great success. Many immigrants began to speak Hebrew on principle, while concurrently reducing the use of their native tongues (Bachi 1956; Schmelz & Bachi 1972–1973). Some even refrained, for ideological reasons, from speaking at home the languages brought from their native lands. Both processes largely and relatively quickly transformed Israeli society into a single-language society (Schmelz & Bachi 1972–1973; Spolsky & Shohamy 1999; Shohamy & Spolsky 2002).

Jewish Languages and Hebrew

This description of Hebrew as a prestige language imposed on a substrate of Jewish languages raises the question of what traces Jewish languages left in

Modern Hebrew as it was being forged. No matter the vigor with which the inculcation of a language is pursued, it is virtually impossible for the substrate to leave no traces in the new language (Weinreich 1967; Even-Zohar 1970; Izre'el 2002; Edwards 2009, and the bibliography therein). Indeed, the significant influence of Yiddish, the native language of the founders of Israel and of the majority of the first Hebrew speakers, on Modern Hebrew has received much scholarly attention (e.g., Blanc 1965; Kutscher 1982: 212–219; Harshav 2008); few studies, however, have addressed the influence exerted by other Jewish languages (Schwarzwald 1993, 1995: 83; Izre'el 2002: 231; Bar-Asher 2012: 4; Henshke 2013a).

Nonetheless, a distinction must be made between Yiddish and other Jewish languages, Judeo-Arabic in particular. Whereas Yiddish (and to a certain extent Judeo-Spanish) was the mother tongue of the revivers of Hebrew and accompanied the revival of spoken Hebrew from the start, Judeo-Arabic entered the arena at a later date. Most speakers of Judeo-Arabic immigrated to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s (Ben-Refael 1994: 95–96), when Modern Hebrew had largely crystallized after several decades of spoken and written use.

Consequently, the Yiddish-Hebrew relationship differs materially from the Judeo-Arabic–Hebrew one, for each Jewish language was in contact with a different Hebrew. Contact between Yiddish and Hebrew began when Yiddish was the vernacular and classical Hebrew was mainly a written language or used in *yeshivot* (e.g., Kutscher 1982: 183–192; Morag 1990; Harshav 2008). Because this contact continued throughout the entire period during which Modern Hebrew was being formed, it is not surprising that Yiddish exercised a profound influence on the foundations of Modern Hebrew.

In contrast, contact between Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew began, as noted, after Modern Hebrew had already taken shape. This was an encounter between two living languages: Judeo-Arabic and 'standard' Modern Hebrew, which already embodied the influences of Yiddish, local Arabic, Judeo-Spanish, and additional foreign languages that impacted its beginnings. Intriguingly, this meant that a rabbi who spoke Judeo-Arabic and was conversant with classical Hebrew and its habits of expression might not have fully mastered Modern Hebrew (Henshke 2006) and would certainly have been unfamiliar with its script: after all, it was the Ashkenazi handwriting that was chosen for Israeli cursive writing and not the Sephardi scripts used in the East.

However, those very same Judeo-Arabic speakers might use linguistic features whose origins lay in Yiddish or European languages, but were seen by them as part of Modern Hebrew. They perhaps wondered at the expression גן ילדים (*gan yeladim*—a loan translation from the German *Kindergarten*), but

began, nevertheless, to use it on their arrival in Israel. This was also the case for the new *paʿal-nifʿal* contrast: שכב-נשכב (*šaxav-niškav*), עמד-נעמד (*ʿamad-neʿemad*) (Blanc 1965: 193–200), and many others. I believe this phenomenon is of great importance for anyone seeking to describe the place of Judeo-Arabic in Modern Israeli Hebrew.

Also noteworthy is the attitude of Mizraḥi Judeo-Arabic-speaking immigrants toward the acquisition of Hebrew. For most, the Zionist worldview and its ramifications were embedded in their religious, halakhic world. Because that worldview also led them to ascribe great importance to unity, they did not espouse a militant Zionist stance (Morag-Talmon 2000; Zohar 2002; Tsur 2010); thus, for the majority of these immigrants, the negation of the Diaspora and Yiddish, the language war, and the ideal of the use of Hebrew alone were not of great significance. It was also the case that, alongside their acquisition of Hebrew, many Judeo-Arabic speakers continued to use the latter (Schmelz & Bachi 1972–1973; Hofman & Fisherman 1972). The multiglossic relationship between these two languages lasted for decades and continues to a lesser extent in the towns of the periphery and rural *moshavim* to this day.

Judeo-Arabic speakers related to Hebrew as a prestige language that had to be acquired in order to mix and advance in Israeli society—in the public arena, in school, and at work (Bentolila 1984; Ben-Refael 2002). Moreover, because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arabic was seen as possessing a low, potentially embarrassing status for its speakers. Nonetheless, Judeo-Arabic was in use among the immigrants in familial and traditional settings: in conversation, on Sabbath and holidays, during the performance of customs and traditional ceremonies, in relating folktales and legends, in poems and *piyyutim*, and in many other contexts (Ben-Refael 1994: 112–120, 141–143; 2002: 76; Lefkowitz 2004: 155–156).[2] It is therefore not surprising that these speakers did not entirely free themselves from their previous language patterns—nor did they wish to do so.

This language contact led to the creation of a sociolect that was bequeathed to the members of the second, third, and even fourth generations. At the base of this sociogeographical dialect is the Judeo-Arabic substrate. In many instances, this language is perceived as a low, substandard language that deviates from the norm (Schwarzwald 1981: 78–87; Berman 1987: 86–88; Ravid 1995; Ban-Shaḥar 1996: 57–63, 98–101; 2004; Or 1998). Its speakers were labeled 'disadvantaged' and many resources were directed to their improvement (Stahl 1971, 1973, 1977; Balgur 1974; Nir 1978; Vidislavsky 1980; Berman 1987: 86–88). But a more

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2) On the close family and communal ties of Moroccan Jews in Israel, see Shokeid & Deshen 1977: 195–210.

profound consideration of the language spoken by these Israelis indicates that in many instances it is neither an impoverished, ungrammatical language, nor a language of the 'uneducated' specifically.[3] Rather, its uniqueness lies in the fact that it has been definitively influenced by the Judeo-Arabic substrate and culture that form its basis (Henshke 2013b). This sociolect, which characterizes the language of the geographical and social periphery, whose speakers mainly belong to the Mizraḥi sector, is here termed the Mizraḥi sociolect.

The Mizraḥi Sociolect in the Eyes of its Speakers

There is both direct and indirect evidence for the existence of this Mizraḥi sociolect. Israelis from the center of the country who encounter the language of the periphery, and the residents of the periphery themselves, intuit the difference between their distinctive language and that spoken by the surrounding society. Youths from the center of the country who volunteer or work in the periphery repeatedly testify to their unfamiliarity with the Hebrew sociolect in use there, whose realizations, meanings, and contexts are not always transparent to nonlocals. Sensing this sociolect's uniqueness, the nonlocals deliberately sprinkle their language with local expressions, turning them into trendy speech in the process.

The residents of the periphery also sense the disparity between their language and that of the center. One informant from Yeruḥam put it most aptly:

בתל אביב אנחנו לא מבינים מה אומרים *עולם אחר*.

(In Tel Aviv, we don't understand what they're saying: *It's another world* [my emphasis]).

The sharpness of the expression "another world" led his interlocutors to tone down his statement, but they admitted that they too had experienced the divide between the Hebrew of the periphery and that spoken in the central cities.

A twenty-two-year-old woman from Dimona further clarified the phenomenon's extent and significance. Presently studying science at an institution of higher learning in Jerusalem, she reported that the move to Jerusalem heightened her awareness of the features of the southern sociolect in which she was raised. She noted its geographical extent—"It's everywhere: in the *moshavim*, Kiryat Gat, everywhere"—and its sociogenerational boundaries: "In *high school*

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3) Labov (1966, 1972) already noted a similar phenomenon with regard to African American Vernacular English.

we used it a lot" (my emphasis). Her testimony indicates that this sociolect is in general use by the residents of the periphery, old and young, including young students (the fourth generation of the North African *aliyah*).

Regarding the contrast between this sociolect and standard Hebrew, that same young woman noted: "In Jerusalem, flowing with that language is not so comfortable; with my friends from high school it's easy." She offered a more acute observation: "I utter all sorts of sentences and people don't understand what I want. *People don't understand what I want!*" (my emphasis). Other students from the periphery whom I interviewed made similar remarks. One recurrent motif was their surprise that their Hebrew, which had served them throughout their lives until their arrival in the 'metropolis,' was not entirely understood in Jerusalem.

The Mizraḥi Sociolect in the Eyes of Israeli Society

From an overall perspective, Israeli society can be broadly divided into closed and open societies. The closed societies, such as the *ḥaredim* (e.g., Friedman 1991) or Arabs (e.g., Amara 1991), create a defined barrier between themselves and society at large by using separate educational and public media systems and avoiding service in the Israel Defense Forces; some even use foreign languages as a matter of principle (Ben-Refael 1994: 152–159, 166–176). The situation in the periphery is entirely different. This is an open society that does not refrain from participating in society at large: it consumes Israeli media, its sons and daughters attend public schools and serve in the army and other institutions, and, most importantly, its members have unconditionally adopted the Hebrew language as their own.

Notwithstanding this society's openness and the absence of ideological or other boundaries between it and Israeli society in general, these Israelis developed a sociolect with distinctive phonology (Blanc 1957, 1964; Morag 1987; Schwarzwald 1981: 78–87; Bentolila 1984, 1986; Peleg 1992; Matras & Schiff 2005: 153–166), morphology (Ravid 1995; Henshke 2013b), syntax (Or 1998; Matras & Schiff 2005: 171–189; Henshke 2013b), semantics (Henshke 2013b), phraseology (Henshke, forthcoming a), and discourse. Although the boundaries of this sociolect are not clear-cut, we can pinpoint its sociogeographical location. Geographically we are speaking of towns and *moshavim*, and even cities, in the north and south of Israel and certain neighborhoods in the central cities; socially, we are speaking of the descendants of immigrants from Muslim countries, mainly North Africa. To be more precise, the primary carriers of

the sociolect in question are the children of Moroccan Jews, the largest ethnic group in Israel (Ben-Refael 1994: 95).

I maintain that this sociolect's persistence should not be summarily attributed to lack of education or economic means.[4] Rather, in my view, the Mizraḥi sociolect clearly reflects traces of the classic process of language contact. Such a linguistic perspective may explain the surprising fact that adults, youths, and children from families of different educational and economic standing continue to preserve this intriguing sociolect.

This sociolect's widespread dissemination, which was not the result of planning, and its varied, broad extent, is suggestive of the existence of multiple cultural influences in Israel (Ben-Refael & Ben-Chaim 2007). For our purposes it suffices to note two parallel cultural influences: the culture of Ashkenazi Jews and the culture of Mizraḥi Jews. The Mizraḥi-Jewish culture and its language comprise the foundations of this sociolect (Henshke, forthcoming b).

Although the influence of Judeo-Arabic varies in scope from person to person and community to community, the overall features of the Mizraḥi sociolect facilitate a clear distinction between the language of the center and that of the periphery, which draws on and is perhaps even grounded in the Judeo-Arabic spoken by its members. This regional-social dialect has almost no written literature, with the exception of quotations of its speakers or dialogues between speakers of this sociolect in literature. Its strength lies in speech.[5]

The Present Study

The above remarks underscore the need for a field study devoted to collection and analysis of the features of the sociolect under consideration. I collected the data for this study from conversations with Israelis ranging from twelve to sixty-five years of age from the geographical periphery (Dimona and Yeruḥam), as well as from what I term the 'social periphery': Israelis living in the center of Israel (Jerusalem and Ashdod) whose language and culture evidence the presence of Judeo-Arabic.[6] I also extracted material from recent Hebrew literature that represents the Mizraḥi experience and language published by leading

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4) See Morag's (1972–1973: 206–207) critique of these definitions.

5) On differences in language grounded in social status, see Labov (1966, 1972) and his followers. On Modern Hebrew, see Matras & Schiff 2005 and the references above.

6) I thank Zippi Bar-Yamin and Hayyim Malka of Yeruḥam for their warm reception and for their profound assistance in providing data and locating informants.

Israeli presses: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir, Keter, Am Oved, Gevanim, and Aḥuzat Bayit (Shilo 2005; Adaf 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Berdugo 2010).

The unique features of this sociolect relate to various linguistic fields and cannot be covered comprehensively here. I limit the discussion to the lexical influence of Judeo-Arabic in the periphery. It is well known that lexicon is the sphere most exposed to, and most rapidly influenced by, contact languages (Weinreich 1967: 56; Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 74–76; Romaine 1989: 63, and the bibliography therein; Myers-Scotton 2002: 41; Matras 2009: 166–172). A careful consideration of Modern Hebrew indicates that the natural interpolation and embedding of Maghrebi-Arabic words and expressions in Hebrew sentences is found mostly in the language of the periphery. Both children and adults spontaneously integrate Arabic words into their speech.

Between Judeo-Arabic and Israeli-Arabic

Arriving at a definition of the Arabic component of Israeli Hebrew is no simple matter. A distinction must be made between the Arabic brought by Jewish immigrants from their native lands and that spoken by local Arabs in Israel.[7] The early modern settlement of the land of Israel was accompanied by a movement that rejected Diaspora Jewry and turned to the local environment, namely the Arab population, instead. Thus, as early as the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century, Modern Hebrew was already exposed to the local Arabic, from which it adopted many words and expressions (Kutscher 1982: 209–212; Katriel 1986: 6–9). Any examination of the Arabic words that became embedded or absorbed in Hebrew must first inquire whether their source lies in the local Arabic or Judeo-Arabic.

A linguistic consideration indicates that the vast majority of local Arabic words in use in Israeli Hebrew appear in informal Hebrew, as documented in Hebrew dictionaries of slang: words such as אבלה (*ʾabla*, 'idiot' [female]),אהבל (*ʾahabal*, 'idiot' [male]), אהלן (*ʾahalan*, 'hello'), אודרוב (*ʾudrub*, 'go ahead'), אוקצור (*ʾuqsur*, 'briefly'), אחלה (*ʾaḥla*, 'excellent'), אחסן (*ʾaḥsan*, 'great'), אטרף (*ʾaṭraf*, 'craziness'), אטרש (*ʾaṭraš*, 'deaf person'), אימשי (*ʾimši*, 'go'), אינשאללה (*ʾinšallah*, 'hopefully'), אסלי (*ʾasli*, 'pure-bred'), אעוור (*ʾaʿwar*, 'blind person'), אשכרה (*ʾaškara*, 'really'), as well as אללה ירחמו (*ʾallah yeraḥm-o*, 'God have mercy on him'), אבו ארבע (*ʾabu ʾarbaʿ*, 'four-eyes') אבו לבנאת (*ʾabu l-banat*,

[7] I refer here to the Arabic spoken by Arabs residing in the boundaries of Israel, both before and after the founding of the state.

'father of girls'), אבוס אידכ (*'abus 'id-ek*, 'I kiss your hands'), אלי פאת מאת (*'ili fat mat*, 'let bygones be bygones'), and אעוזבילה (*'aʿuz bi-lah*, 'God forbid'), among many others (this list contains all the Arabic words starting with alef found in Ben-Amotz & Ben-Yehuda 1972; Rosenthal 2005).[8]

These slang words and expressions have their source in local spoken Arabic, not Judeo-Arabic: some (such as *'abla, 'ahabal, 'ahalan, 'aḥla, 'aṭraf, 'asli, 'aʿwar*, and *'aškara*) are not found in North African Judeo-Arabic. Others appear in Judeo-Arabic in a different form (such as *'udrub*, which in Judeo-Arabic has central vowels without the prosthetic alef [*ḍṛəb*]; and *inšallah*, which omits the alef and its vowel [*nšalla*]).

Dictionaries of Israeli slang make almost no reference to Judeo-Arabic. Ben-Amotz's dictionary, several editions of which were published in the 1970s, emphasizes the Yiddish and local Arabic elements, but I found no entries for Judeo-Arabic words there. In Rosenthal (2005) the Yiddish and local Arabic elements are still prominent, alongside the addition of English. Nonetheless, this dictionary does contain entries for several Judeo-Arabic words (שלוך, חמסה, פרחה).

I exemplify the distinction between Judeo-Arabic and local Arabic through the word *mažnun* (crazy, nuts) in use in contemporary standard Hebrew (Rosenthal 2005) and in the language of the periphery. From the linguistic perspective, this word's phonological, morphological, and semantic behavior differs definitively in these two language varieties. The language of the periphery often preserves the central vowel in the first syllable: *məž'nun*, as in North African Judeo-Arabic. Only in some realizations do we find the vowel /a/: *maž'nun*. But the realization of the second consonant as a voiced post-alveolar fricative (*məž'nun/maž'nun*) is often preserved in the periphery. The ultimate stress in the plural form is also heard there. In standard Hebrew, the first vowel is always /a/ in line with Israeli Arabic, and the second consonant is often pronounced as an affricate: *madžnun*. Moreover, the stress in the plural is penultimate: *madž'nunim*.

With respect to morphology, in the periphery the plural suffix can take the Arabic form (*məžnu'n**in**/mažnu'n**in***) or the Hebrew one (*mažnu'n**im***), whereas in standard Hebrew the feminine and plural forms (masc. and fem.) are always Hebrew: מג'נונה[9]/מג'נונית/מג'נונים/ מג'נונות (Ben-Amotz & Ben-Yehuda 1972).

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8) The transcription of these words reflects their appearance in the dictionary entries and does not reflect their pronunciation in Israeli Hebrew.

9) In the context of the other plural forms, this form must be interpreted as Hebrew.

What this indicates is that most of the Arabic words in use in Israeli slang originated in the local Arabic dialects and belong to the early Zionist rebellion against Judaism and the Diaspora, and to the early settlers' attraction to the local environment. They mark a distinct register in spoken Hebrew, whereas the Arabic words used in the language of the periphery originated in North African Judeo-Arabic and mark a sociogeographical distinction. The language of the periphery is not slang but rather the sociolect of an entire social group that is influenced by Judeo-Arabic and its culture. General Israeli society has scant knowledge of, or exposure to, this sociolect.

Borrowed Judeo-Arabic Words in Modern Hebrew

As noted, the focus of this article is Judeo-Arabic words that were incorporated into the Hebrew of the residents of the periphery.[10] Examination of these words shows the majority to be nouns and the minority adjectives and verbs. This is consistent with the universal phenomenon of borrowing that results from language contact (Romaine 1989: 63–64; Myers-Scotton 1993a: 164, 170; 2002: 240 and the bibliography therein).

It is also the case that the words from Judeo-Arabic used in the periphery are not arbitrarily chosen, but belong to several clearly defined categories: beliefs, customs, and social status; holidays and ceremonies; food; and nicknames; a less-defined category includes emotional-conceptual features.[11] These categories testify to a classic process of language contact (Weinreich 1967: 47–62) and reflect common sociocultural motives for borrowing (Myers-Scotton 1993b). Indeed, core words (Myers-Scotton 2002: 41–42, 239–240)—religious and cultural concepts—are the foremost category in lexical borrowing (e.g., Myers-Scotton 1993a: 169–171). This study illuminates this process in its examination of the language of speakers who largely adhere to their traditions and even identify themselves as 'traditional.' Because of the initial nature of the documentation and study of this Israeli Hebrew sociolect of the periphery, I propose that discussion of the ways and signification of code-switching be deferred;[12] here I restrict the discussion to borrowed words. I suggest that because the Hebrew

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10) Lexical borrowing is the first, immediate stage of language contact. See Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 74; Myers-Scotton 2002: 239–245.

11) These categories are also found in the works of Mizraḥi authors. See Horvits 1998; Muchnik 2004.

12) Some scholars distinguish between the study of borrowed words and code-switching in discourse. See Myers-Scotton's (1993a: 163–207; 2002: 231–245) critique and interesting position. On the different approaches to codeswitching, see the detailed survey by Walters (2005: 31–91).

of these speakers from the periphery lacks words for certain concepts from the categories of beliefs, customs, social status, and food—classic examples of the types of cultural concepts that are liable to be borrowed (e.g., Weinreich 1967: 56–57; Myers-Scotton 1993a: 167, 2002: 41, 239)—this 'forces' them to borrow Judeo-Arabic words to fill the gap. Below I present some examples for each category, drawn from my conversations with informants. Because of the preliminary nature of this study, I do not discuss the original meanings of the words in Arabic here or submit them to linguistic analysis. My goal is to note the phenomenon of the use of Arabic words in the Hebrew of the periphery and its scope.

Beliefs, Customs, and Status[13]

גז'דור (*gəždor*)—mourning, scoring the face with fingernails
לגז'דר (*legaždeġ*)[14]—to lament
ג'ראמה (*ġrama*)—a type of tip
חמסה (*xamsa*)[15]—a sign against the evil eye
שחור (*šḥur*/=*šxuġ*)—witchcraft
שלוח (*šloḥ*/*šlox*)—barbaric, primitive

All of these words reflect social and cultural concepts that were current among North African Jewish communities in Israel. They encompass joyful (*ġrama*) and sad customs (*gəždor*), sociocultural gaps within the community (*šloḥ*), and folk beliefs (*xamsa* and *šḥur*). The terms for these concepts, basic components of the sociocultural life of North African immigrants, were integrated into Modern Hebrew without translation, and they continue to play an important role in the identity of the third and fourth generations of the North African immigration.[16] Translation into Hebrew might have detracted from their depth, obscured their intimate nature, and perhaps also changed their meaning to some extent. Indeed, some of these concepts, such as *xamsa* (חמסה)

13) The transcription of the Arabic words in this section reflects the pronunciations attested by the informants who participated in the study.
14) This is an Arabic verb conjugated in the Hebrew *pi'el* pattern.
15) This expression is widespread in all Mizraḥi cultures, but its roots in the periphery lie in Judeo-Arabic culture.
16) See, for example, the 2009 case brought against a singer who referred to family members using "the racist expression *šloxim* (שלוכים)." Vered Levi, "Tsfu ba-me'ida . . . shloxim," Mynet website, accessed February 19, 2013, http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3822323,00.html.

and *šlox* (שלוח/שלוך) (Rosenthal 2005: 140, 372) and even *šḥur* (שחור),[17] have entered standard Hebrew.

Holidays and Ceremonies

אלג'ריבה (*lə-ġriba/al-gġiba*)[18]—thirty-third day of the *Omer* celebration
בסיסה (*bišiša*)—eating grains cooked in oil on the new moon of the month Nisan
מימונה (*mimuna*)—Mimouna, a holiday on *Isru Ḥag* of Passover
חינה (*ḥina*)[19]—pre-wedding henna ceremony

Traditional holidays and ceremonies are two of the foundations of ethnic identity. As bearers of the memory of the past that nurtures the current picture of the present and future, they also create a living bridge between the vibrant, vital past and the present. In addition, they comprise an important source for enhancing family and communal solidarity. Family and communal gatherings on holidays and traditional occasions strengthen intracommunal ties and, through ethnic self-definition, establish Moroccan-Israeli Jewishness as one of a range of Israeli identities.

Some of these words—*ḥina, mimuna*, and even *al-gġiba*—are familiar to many Israelis. There is consensus regarding the importance of these elements in shaping the distinctive identity of Israelis from the periphery, whose use of Arabic contributes to its preservation. On the one hand, public observance of North African customs fosters a sense of ethnic uniqueness and continuity; on the other hand, by showing the communities of origin in a favorable light, such observance contributes to the multilayered nature of the Israeli social environment. We must note, however, that in Israel these and other factors fostered a change in the original nature of Mimouna celebrations (Maman 1991; Einhorn 1971–1972; Ganon 2000). Now one of the outstanding markers of Moroccan-Israeli ethnic identity, these celebrations serve as a window through which the Moroccan community puts itself (mainly its food) on display to Israeli society, politicians in particular. Some view this as a tool for ethnic self-expression.

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17) *Šḥur* is the title of a successful 1994 film directed by Samuel Hasfari. See "Sh'chur," Wikipedia, accessed February 19, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sh%27Chur.

18) This is a famous ceremony held at the synagogue in Djerba (as its name indicates) that attracted many pilgrims from the North African region.

19) The henna ceremony is found among Jews and Arabs in the East. Its role in the periphery belongs, in my opinion, to its Jewish cultural roots.

Food

1. Names of dishes with no Hebrew equivalent
   ברכוכש (*bərkukš*, couscous cooked in milk and butter), בקילה (*bkila*, steamed beet leaves), הריסה (*haġisa*, harissa), יויו (*yoyo*, fried, honey-coated cookies), כוסכוס (*kuskus*, couscous),[20] מופלטה (*mufleta*, fried, honey-filled pastries), מחיה (*maḥya/maxya*, arak), מספן (*masapan*, marzipan-filled cookies),[21] מקרוד (*makġud*, fried, honey-coated semolina cookies with date filling), שְׁבָּקִיָּה (*šəbakiya*, fried, honey-coated latticed dough)
2. Names of dishes with a Hebrew equivalent
   בישבש (*bišbaš*, fennel salad), כאוכאו (*kawkaw*, peanuts), כוואר׳י (*kwaġe*, meatballs), כעכ (*kaʿk*, Mizraḥi bagels), מחשי (*maxši*, stuffed vegetables or chicken), מרגז' (*mərgaz*, spicy sausage), מְרִינְגֵז' (*merindžiz*), סכינה (*sxena, tshulent*), סלדה מטבוחה (*salada matbuxa*, spicy steamed vegetable salad), ספנז' (*sfənž/ sfinž*, doughnut)

Food carries strong emotional and social significance and may serve as a defining criterion for social groups; indeed, foods are profound markers of ethnic identity.[22] Like language systems, food reflects a particular view of the world (Caplan 1997; Horvits 1998: 64–66; Held 2009: 110–114).

This viewpoint was voiced by Shimon Adaf (2004: 97) in one of his novels, in a long passage treating the attitude of a Moroccan Jew in Tel-Aviv toward his mother's cooking: "The strong flavors of the food his mother cooked rested on his tongue . . . every crumb embodying the characteristics of the whole from which it was taken like a string of DNA." In my view, the expression "string of DNA" succinctly articulates the place of these dishes in the Israeli-Mizraḥi ethnic identity. Thus, the names of the dishes, which are intrinsically linked to the foods themselves, are readily integrated into Hebrew, creating a warm multisensory bridge to the underlying Mizraḥi tradition.

I have divided the names of the foods listed above into two categories: the first consists of dishes with no Hebrew equivalent, such as *kuskus, mufleta, makġud*, and *maḥya*. Because Hebrew lacks suitable lexical alternatives, these

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20) Couscous is found in many communities, but its integration in the Hebrew of the periphery belongs to its North African Jewish roots.

21) Schwarzwald (1993) notes that מספן is found in all Spanish-Jewish communities. Evidently it found its way from there to the North African Jewish kitchen.

22) Note that the names of the dishes were collected from my conversations with my informants. I did not consult ethnic cookbooks, which are replete with Arabic names.

names were unsurprisingly integrated into Hebrew as is and have also become part of standard Hebrew. Couscous is regarded as an Israeli dish and its Judeo-Arabic name has been adopted by all; *mufleta* and *maḥya* appear in literary works, newspapers, and the media, especially in the context of Mimouna.

The second group, which comprises words with worthy Hebrew parallels, is of greater interest. Thus *kwaġe* is 'meatballs' (Hebrew parallel קציצות [*ktsitsot*]), *ka'k* is 'round sweet bagels' (Hebrew parallel כעכים מתוקים [*keʕaxim metukim*]), and *kawkaw* is 'peanuts' (Hebrew בוטנים [*botnim*]). Notwithstanding the readily available alternatives in spoken Hebrew, the residents of the periphery prefer to preserve their Judeo-Arabic names, as if the food and their names are inseparable. One of my younger informants reported that young people and children also use these names. Evidently, the special flavors, familial-social context, and related communal memories of these dishes prevent these twenty-first-century Israelis from translating their names into a language over which they have mastery: Hebrew.

Note, however, that the speakers from the periphery also use these dishes' Hebrew names: חמין (*xamin*) can replace *sxena*,[23] and some informants testified to parallel use of both names for the Mizraḥi version of *tshulent*. סלט מבושל (*salat mevušal*) can be heard alongside *salada matbuxa* for 'cooked salad.' This is also the case for *bišbaš* 'fennel' (Hebrew parallel שומר [*šumaġ*]), *kawkaw* 'peanuts' (Hebrew parallel בוטנים [*botnim*]), *maḥši* 'stuffed vegetables' (Hebrew parallel ממולאים [*memulaʕim*]), and *kwaġe* 'meatballs' (Hebrew parallel קציצות [*ktsitsot*]).

Some of these Arabic words have come to signify the names of Mizraḥi foods in standard Hebrew. Thus *matbuxa*, a cooked vegetable salad in a spicy sauce (Hebrew מטבוחה), is very popular in Israel, and this shortened form of *salada matbuxa* has become part of everyday Hebrew. The same is true for *meġgaz,* a spicy homemade frankfurter (Hebrew מרגז'); *maxši*, Mizraḥi-style stuffed chicken or innards (Hebrew מחשי); and *sfinž*—flat, fried dough (Hebrew ספנז'). *Kwaġe* as well has undergone semantic differentiation and refers only to Moroccan meatballs (Hebrew כוורי), whereas *ka'k* (Hebrew כעכ) refers to Mizraḥi bagels that have no precise equivalent in standard Hebrew. But as opposed to the other examples, the last two words have not broken the boundaries of the periphery. There are also words that do not signify Mizraḥi specialties yet have been retained in their Judeo-Arabic form, such as *bišbaš, kawkaw*, and *merindžiz* (meringue).

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23) The Yiddish word *tshulent* is also heard in the periphery.

Nicknames

Alongside words from the Mizraḥi cultural sphere that have no Hebrew alternatives and were borrowed to fill a lexical void in Hebrew, the Hebrew of the periphery contains words borrowed from Judeo-Arabic that do have Hebrew equivalents, such as the names of foods in the second list, thus obviating the need to borrow them from Arabic. Such words should be categorized as core words as well, alongside religious and cultural concepts. These emotion-saturated words belong to two groups: fond and derogatory nicknames. I provide some examples below.

Fond nicknames
אבויה (*abu-ya*)—my father
ג'זאלה (*ġzala*)—pretty
ז'ין (*žin*)—beauty
לעזיז (*la-ʿziz*)—dear
מזיאן (*məzyan/mizyan*)—beautiful, good
מכווחה (*mkəwḥa/mkuxa*)—assertive woman
עזיזי (*ʿzizi*)—my dear

Derogatory nicknames
באשל (*bašəl*)—stupid
דבה (*debba*)—fat woman
דְּבּוֹזָה (*debboza*)—obese woman
הבילה (*hbila*)—crazy woman
מג'נון (*məžnun/mažnun*)—nuts
מדרובה (*mədruba/madruba*)—unfortunate woman
מהבול (*mahbul*)—crackpot
מהינדה (*mhinda*)—strong woman
מזג'וב (*məzġob/mezġob*)—orphan, unfortunate

Although most of these words have direct, fluent Hebrew translations, here too the speakers from the periphery prefer the Arabic terms. Because their emotional component evidently remained deeply imprinted in the linguistic code (Weinreich 1967: 77–78), these words retained their full emotional signification and their link in collective memory to Mizraḥi traditions and culture; accordingly, they must be classified as cultural borrowings.

Alongside these nicknames, a group of Judeo-Arabic words was preserved that eludes precise functional definition, and whose Hebrew equivalents are

readily available to all Hebrew speakers. I refer to כופה (*xofa*, 'fear'), מסקוקה (*məskuka*, 'broken'), מסתף (*msəttəf*, 'very organized'), סתיפה (*stifa*, 'organized pile'), and פאלטה (*falṭa*, 'bad mistake'). Closer consideration reveals that almost all these words possess an integral emotional component that comes from these speakers' communal-cultural identity. The emotional component of fear at times apparently led these speakers to prefer the Judeo-Arabic word *xofa*: evidently, the use of what is viewed as a mother tongue is seen as apotropaic. A similar explanation underlies the use of the word *məskuka* by a young child whose toy top broke. He cried and said: הסביבון שלי מסקוקה (my top is broken). The pain of this young child in describing what happened to his top evidently led him to return to the warm, supportive mother tongue. The same is true for the fear and disappointment resulting from a *falṭa*,[24] a bad mistake whose consequences cannot be foreseen.

The reasons for the use of the adjective *msəttəf* and the noun *stifa* must be sought in the realm of values. These terms reflect the great value ascribed by those of North African descent to cleanliness and order, and good housekeeping especially. Apparently the Arabic word *msəttəf* is seen as best expressing the exemplary nature of a well-ordered closet and marks feminine-ethnic identity; the Hebrew expression מסודר (organized) does not yet embody similar values.

To sum up: the categories presented here illustrate the classic process of the borrowing of cultural and communal core words that move along a vertical line from the concrete to the abstract: from material culture—food—to the communal calendar, to social status and customs, and concluding with the rich world of feelings, values, and folk beliefs. These concepts exist, and have even been enhanced,[25] in the speech of second- and third-generation Israelis of North African descent.

Conclusion

This article attempted to demonstrate the multilayered nature of contemporary spoken Hebrew, and to identify the role of North African Judeo-Arabic as a central component in this mosaic. The large number of Moroccan Jews in

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24) *Falṭa* has Spanish origins. See Colin 1994–1996.

25) See H. Pedaya's remarks on the third-generation members of the oriental communities whose language is spreading from "the home to the public arena" ("Safa ve-safot . . . kelim shluvim," Seminar Ha-kibbutsim website, accessed February 19, 2013, http://info.smkb.ac.il/home/home.exe/391/74666). I thank Dr. Michal Held for the reference.

Israel, and of North African Jews in the Israeli population in general, and in the periphery in particular, led to the creation of a discernible sociolect by these Hebrew speakers. Often mistakenly seen as the product of cultural deprivation or lack of education, this sociolect's foundations lie in the Judeo-Arabic language and culture.

From among the many possibilities, I chose to examine one aspect of this linguistic contact: Judeo-Arabic words integrated into the Israeli Hebrew of speakers from North Africa and their descendants. As demonstrated above, these words illustrate the speakers' cultural world, creating an important bridge to this community's Diaspora past.

Despite the integration of North African immigrants and their descendants into Israeli society over the past sixty to seventy years, this sociolect continues to thrive and spread among *youthful* speakers from the periphery: teenagers and also young children. Until they leave the communities in which they were raised, most of these speakers remain unaware of their unique language. Other speakers of this sociolect—those in the 'social periphery' defined above—view it as a distinguishing identity marker that separates them from general Israeli society. Despite their recognition of its idiosyncrasies, these youthful speakers return to it at every opportunity, and this sociolect forms an integral part of their Israeli identity.

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