

Trends in Linguistics

State-of-the-Art Reports

edited by

W. Winter

University of Kiel, Germany

11

CONTEMPORARY HEBREW

by
HAIIM B. ROSÉN

1977
MOUTON
THE HAGUE • PARIS

© Copyright 1977
Mouton & Co. B. V., Publishers, The Hague.

*No part of this book may be translated or reproduced in any form, by print,
photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission
from the publishers.*

ISBN 90 279 3106 2

Printed in Hungary

FOREWORD

The invitation extended to me by Professor Werner Winter to contribute a volume on Contemporary Hebrew to the *Series Critica* was a welcome occasion to try to reassess our knowledge of this language sixteen years after I had attempted, in my *Ha'ivrit šelanù*, to open this field to up-to-date linguistic research. I have endeavoured here not only to sketch a picture of Israeli Hebrew as a representative of a specific type of language organism, but also to supply the mould into which the material facts of this language must be cast in order to arrive at an adequate description of its working mechanism. This will be found amalgamated with a history of scholarly advance and achievement; the reader will have to judge whether my efforts to depict the relative impact of my own contribution with the amount of balanced objectivity required in a survey such as the present one have been successful.

It is my pleasant duty to acknowledge gratefully the financial assistance granted by the Department of General Studies of the Israel Institute of Technology of Haifa for the purpose of compiling the bibliography. Sincere thanks go to Mrs. Sarah Munster, assistant at the Department of Linguistics of the Hebrew University, who located, with penetrating understanding of the subtleties of the subject matter, all flaws of English expression; those that remain are my own responsibility.

Jerusalem, May 1971

H. R.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Transcription.....	13
1 Name and identity	15
1.1 The uniqueness of Contemporary (Israeli) Hebrew ...	15
1.2 Names proposed	15
1.2.1 Neo-Hebrew	15
1.2.2 Modern Hebrew	17
1.2.3 Spoken Hebrew	18
1.3 Designations in linguistics	18
1.3.1 Israeli Hebrew	18
1.3.2 Contemporary Hebrew.....	19
1.4 Nonsynonymous designations	19
1.4.1 Spoken Hebrew	20
1.4.2 Childrens's Hebrew	20
1.4.3 Native Hebrew	21
1.5 Semitic features of Israeli Hebrew.....	24
1.5.1 Its genealogical and typological "character" ...	24
1.5.2 Lacunae in the phonemic system.....	25
1.5.3 Morphological features	26
1.5.4 Syntactic properties	27
2 The study of contemporary Hebrew	30
2.1 Stages of development	30
2.2 First part of the century: views on the Revival	30
2.2.1 Forerunners	30
2.2.2 Study of the revival phenomenon	31

2.3	The early thirties: study of foreign elements	34
2.3.1	Foreign "influences" and <i>innere Form</i>	34
2.3.2	Yiddish and Slavic elements	35
2.4	Inclusion of forms of special language	37
2.5	The mid-forties and the fifties: views on living Hebrew	38
2.5.1	Appreciation of facts of language	38
2.5.2	Semiprofessional occupation with language and evolutional views	39
2.5.3	The clash between descriptivism and normativism	40
2.6	Descriptive linguistic research	42
2.6.1	Structural approach to Israeli Hebrew	42
2.6.2	Systemic description	43
2.6.3	Syntax	45
2.7	The sixties: consolidation	48
2.7.1	Monographic studies	48
2.7.2	Integration and didactic application	48
2.7.3	Descriptive syntactic analysis and syntactic categories.....	49
2.7.4	Patterns and constituents	50
2.8	Methods to study Hebrew versus Hebrew to study methods	53
3	Phonology	55
3.1	Phonetic data	55
3.2	The shape of orally transmitted Hebrew	55
3.2.1	Community pronunciations and <i>Schulaussprache</i>	55
3.2.2	Emergence of a phonetic <i>koiné</i>	57
3.3	The phonemic system	57
3.3.1	The Israeli Hebrew phonemes	57
3.3.2	Questions of analysis	58
3.3.2.1	Vocalic length	58
3.3.2.2	Monophonematic evaluation of compos- ite articulations	59
3.4	Extrasystemic and marginal phonemic features	59
3.4.1	Phonematic indicators of foreignness	59
3.4.2	Marginally situated lexical entities	60

3.4.3 Phonological treatment and characterization of extra-Hebraic vocabulary	61
3.4.4 Abnormal phoneme groupings	62
3.5 The phonological structure of Israeli Hebrew in diachronic view	63
3.5.1 Loss of a junctural distinction: pausal versus contextual	63
3.5.2 Resulting loss of quantitative distinctions	66
3.5.3 Phonemicizations and level shifting	66
3.5.4 Emergence of morphophonemic alternations; loss of laryngeal articulations; new diphthongs	67
3.6 Delimitative features	68
3.6.1 Boundary signals	68
3.6.2 Initial consonant clusters	69
3.7 Suprasegmentals	70
3.7.1 Prominence	70
3.7.2 The Biblical Hebrew accent system revisited	71
3.7.3 The pertinent stress features of Israeli Hebrew	72
3.7.4 Accentually subordinate morphemes	75
3.7.5 The lexical pertinence of stress	76
3.7.6 Stylistic value of stress	80
4 Content and lexicon	82
4.1 The absorption of the inherited lexicon	82
4.1.1 Old and new words, old and new meanings	82
4.1.2 The Biblical layer of vocabulary and exegetical tradition	83
4.1.3 The impact of Bible translations	83
4.1.4 Extra-Jewish traditions	84
4.1.5 Shift of semantic centre	85
4.1.6 Spurious semantic change	85
4.2 Westernized semantic circumscription	86
4.2.1 Hebrew-European correspondence of unit lexemes	86
4.2.2 Calques and loan translations	86
4.3 Israeli Hebrew content structure	87
4.3.1 Western conceptual ranges	87

4.3.2	Semantic motivation and notional structure ...	89
4.3.3	Hebrew-European parallelism of semantic motivation	90
4.3.4	Adaptation of types of morphological processes to types of semantic motivation	91
4.3.5	New derivational categories	92
4.4	Etymological relations	94
4.4.1	Etymological consciousness	94
4.4.2	Word coining	95
4.4.3	Synchronic etymology	95
5	Parts of speech	98
5.1	Criteria of classification	98
5.1.1	Categorial dimensions	98
5.1.2	Word classes	100
5.1.3	The nominal-verbal dichotomy	101
5.2	Infinitive	102
5.3	Gerund	104
5.4	Participle	106
5.5	Verboids	107
5.5.1	Syntactic properties	107
5.5.2	Verboids and the extrapositional (<i>casus pendens</i>) construction	108
5.5.3	The extrapositional transformation and its stylistic status	109
5.6	Impersonals	113
5.6.1	Syntactic status	113
5.6.2	Tense value	115
5.7	Adjectives	116
5.7.1	Emergence of the adjective class	116
5.7.2	Syntactic status of adjectives	117
6	Word formation and compounding	120
6.1	Types of morphemes	120
6.1.1	Root	120
6.1.2	Radical	120
6.1.3	Base	124

6.2 Stems	125
6.2.1 Suffixes and prefixes	125
6.2.2 Nominal, verbal, and compound nominal stems	125
6.2.3 Word openings, word endings	126
6.3 Derivation	126
6.3.1 Morphological means	126
6.3.2 Transformational suffixes	127
6.3.3 Contents of productive derivational suffixes	127
6.3.4 Relations between suffixal and nonsuffixal derivation	128
6.4 Strong and weak morphological types	130
6.4.1 Definition and criteria of classification	130
6.4.2 The distinction of strong and weak types	131
6.4.2.1 Adjective morphology	131
6.4.2.2 Verb morphology	135
6.4.2.3 Noun morphology	141
6.5 Compounding	144
6.5.1 Structure of compounds	144
6.5.2 Degrees of compounding	146
6.5.2.1 Univerbated compounds	146
6.5.2.2 Compounds with composition suffix and their typological importance	148
6.5.2.3 Loose compounds	150
6.5.2.4 Compounds and syntagms	152
7 Inflexional categories	153
7.1 Nominal categories	153
7.1.1 Gender	153
7.1.2 Determination	155
7.1.3 Quantity (nominal number)	164
7.1.4 Case	168
7.1.5 Nominal status; nominal transitivity	177
7.2 Categories indifferent to part of speech	179
7.2.1 Aspect	179
7.2.2 Person-sex	188

7.3 Verbal categories	190
7.3.1 Voice	190
7.3.2 Tenses	193
7.3.3 Appeal (categorical relations of the imperative)	198
7.3.4 Valence	200
7.3.5 Extrasystemic (surviving) distinctions; lexicalizations	204
8 Syntactical categories	206
8.1 The sentence	206
8.1.1 Forms of sentences	206
8.1.2 Constitution of a sentence: concord sentences and concordless sentences	207
8.1.3 Variables and invariables	208
8.1.4 The sentence patterns	209
8.1.5 Mutual inderivability of sentence patterns; pattern meanings	217
8.2 The category of predication	223
8.3 Negation	225
8.3.1 Predication negation and specific negation	225
8.3.2 Pronouns of specific negation	227
8.3.3 "Double" negation	228
8.3.4 "Redundant" negation	229
8.4 Mood	230
8.4.1 Order properties	230
8.4.2 Volitivity	230
8.4.3 Volitivity in possessional sentences	231
8.4.4 Conjunctive	233
8.4.5 The history of the syntagmatical expression of mood	234
8.5 Syntactic status	235
8.5.1 Inclusion; the general subordinative particle	235
8.5.2 Subordinative conjunctions	235
8.5.3 Markers of the subordinate clause	236
8.5.4 History and typological aspects	237
9 Bibliography	238

TRANSCRIPTION

The transcriptional equivalences that apply between Latin characters and unpointed (unvocalized) script in Israeli Hebrew forms are marked (+) below.

-	'	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	k	l	m	n	o	p	r	s	š	t	u	v	x	y	z	
	+	+				+																+				א
			+																				+			ב
									+																	ג
					+																					ד
+										+																ה
																+						+	+			ו
																								+		ז
																					+			+		ח
																				+						ט
						+				+														+		י
											+												+			כ
												+												+		ל
													+													מ
														+												נ
																						+				ס
+		+					+										+									ע
								+										+								פ
				+																						צ
											+															ק
																						+				ר
																							+	+		ש
																								+		ת

Note that *c* is a dental affricate (German *z*), *x* an unvoiced post-velar fricative (*ach*-sound).

For the value of the accent signs ' and ` see § 3.7.3.

The representation of Biblical Hebrew forms is by one-to-one transliteration:

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש טת
t s s' r q s p ' s n m l k y t h z w h d g b '

ī ū ē ō ē ā ō ī ē ā ū ě ā ō = (d'agēš)

E.g. בְּדַבְּרְכֶם *b'dab'erkem*

1 NAME AND IDENTITY

1.1 THE UNIQUENESS OF CONTEMPORARY (ISRAELI) HEBREW

The uniqueness of Contemporary or Israeli Hebrew is adequately described by characterizing it as a language the very existence of which is part of the national self-identification of the community that uses it; a language created by intended rebirth; a language whose creation as a vehicle of communication was an ideological act and also the result, at least in part, of scholarly research; a language scientifically studied and analysed within some seventy years following its emergence, but given a name of its own in scholarship only as a result of the recognition, by virtue of that same scholarly study, of its historical autonomy.

1.2 NAMES PROPOSED

1.2.1 *Neo-Hebrew*

Any designation of this language, which contains the element 'new' (such as Neo-Hebrew, *néo-hébreu*, *neuhebräisch*) is inadequate, simply because such names were used, prior to the formation of Israeli Hebrew (IH), for Mishnaic and later for mediaeval rabbinical Hebrew, which were, at the time, the only known layers of postbiblical Hebrew. Following the emergence of Israeli Hebrew, the historical incision can no longer be made so as to create a division between what was biblical and what came after, but rather to set aside from Israeli Hebrew whatever preceded it in history (BERGSTRÄSSER 1928: 47). It will serve our purpose well if we unite BIBLICAL HEBREW and what was termed, mainly by Protestant

scholars up to half a century ago, *NEUHEBRÄISCH*¹ under the common name of CLASSICAL HEBREW, a name that very suitably depicts the position these layers occupy in the mind of the speaker of Contemporary Hebrew versus his own language. What Hebrew has in common with other languages whose history involves a layer termed *classical* is the not insignificant fact that the present-day language is named as a modification of a more comprehensive designation.²

While the designations of the type *néo-hébreu* are useless, for the reasons stated, the names involving the adjective *modern* are no more suitable, although they have the one advantage of opposing current Hebrew to classical language (AËSCOLY 1937: 4). In two respects, "modern" Hebrew is different from other languages which bear that title: it is not just the *n*th stage in the evolution of Hebrew (ROSÉN 1952b: 5; 1958c: 65-6), because for the purposes of historical linguistics, it would not suffice to state the chronological succession of *états de langue*, but one would also have to determine in what way the preceding *états de langue* have supplied language material to their successor; for Hebrew the situation is different from all other "modern" languages in that any given item stemming from an "ancient" stage is not necessarily channelled

¹ BERGSTRÄSSER (1928: 46-7) has the division into *Althebräisch*, *Mittelhebräisch*, and *Neuhebräisch*; this matches his terminology for the other living Semitic languages, where the current form is always called *Neu-*, while the earliest attested one bears a name with *Alt-*. It is precisely this analogy which we must consider out of place.

² A singular confusion has led to terminological difficulties in Soviet usage. Following Byzantine ecclesiastical usage, "Jews" are "Hebrews" in Russian, as a consequence of which early Zionist usage represented 'Jewish-national' as *'ivri*, and Russian *еврейский* stands for what is ethnically connected with Jews: as the designation of a language, *еврейский язык* is 'Yiddish'. For the Hebrew language, *древнееврейский* 'Old-Hebrew' had to be used, which, of course, is not the counterpart of *еврейский*. Soviet linguists have practically no other way than using the native forms of the language names: *иврит*, *идиш* (cf., e.g., ZAND 1965). In German-speaking countries, it was customary for some time to call the current language *'ivrit* to distinguish it from *hebräisch*, the Holy Tongue. We feel that the use of the native designation *'ivrit* in any of the European languages would place Israeli Hebrew among the non-European native speech forms that do not rank as languages of civilization within the European cultural conscience.

through, or even present in, chronologically intermediate stages. The second reason for the inadequacy of the term *modern* is that Contemporary Hebrew is by no means more modern (in terms of *Weltbild*) than previous literary language; it is not by virtue of the revival that modern thought can be moulded into Hebrew (irrespective, of course, of the linguistically irrelevant introduction of technical terms at whatever moment the civilizational necessity arose); this is why authors who use the term *modern* waver as to when "modernism" became apparent and whether it was coincident with revival (cf., e.g., COHEN – ZAFRANI 1968: 14; THORNHILL 1951: 103).

1.2.2 Modern Hebrew

MODERN HEBREW is a convenient rendering of the Hebrew term that is still preferred by those who wish to imply by nomenclature that current Hebrew is not a linguistic entity commanding some autonomy towards everything that preceded it: *'ivrit xadaša*, literally 'New Hebrew' (cf., e.g., ORNAN 1968a: 1). Now, while this is wanted to match linguistic terminology for languages conventionally termed *Modern = Neu*³ (*xadaša* is the adjective used for 'Modern Greek', 'Neuhochdeutsch', etc.), it was not conceived as such: in his programmatic article on "Ancient Hebrew and New Hebrew", J. KLAUSNER (1929: 10) makes it apparent that what he has in mind is the emergence of a "new" language, in the sense that it contains previously nonexistent expressional tools; the dogmatic position taken by KLAUSNER over many years was, moreover, that Hebrew must continue the use of expressions found in the later layers whilst discarding whatever was discarded by the latter.⁴

³ *'Ivrit xadaša* has never been used, to my knowledge, in the sense of 'Neuhebräisch'.

⁴ Cf. BENDAVID (1965: 250). It is worthwhile to quote, in this context, a little known forerunner of KLAUSNER's (ROSENBERG 1893: 146): "Shall we use Biblical or postbiblical language? or shall new forms and expressions be introduced? The closest related language, Aramaic, shows that current language (neo-Aramaic) is the result of great changes, even metamorphoses in the course of millenia. Consequently, Biblical Hebrew, which is a closed period, cannot become a *Volkssprache* any more than Ancient Greek, Gothic, Church Slavonic, etc.; the revival of Hebrew is feasible only by further developments, that is change: whatever lives, changes."

This is not the case; so we do not recommend the term *'ivrit xadaša* any more than we do *Modern Hebrew*.

1.2.3 Spoken Hebrew

Other early attempts at naming the language use the fact that it is spoken as its distinguishing mark. True, the revival converted Hebrew from an "unspoken" language into a spoken one, and formal writing was, on average, closer to classical language than common oral usage; however, the characteristics that made Israeli Hebrew stand apart from Classical Hebrew linguistically – structurally, functionally – were present in contemporary writing as much as in contemporary speech. See 1.4.1.

1.3 DESIGNATIONS IN LINGUISTICS

1.3.1 Israeli Hebrew

It must have been precisely the non-chronological ("unhistorical", "untraditional") nature of the term ISRAELI HEBREW that aroused opposition to it as the expression of a certain viewpoint within Hebrew studies. At this writing, almost twenty years after having introduced the name,⁵ I can find no purely or preponderantly linguistic treatment of the language using any other. Only where the discussion is tainted "ideologically", and written in Hebrew, are other terms sometimes propagated.

Israeli Hebrew was not meant as a geographical designation;⁶ I think there was some emotional load in that term when it was finally adopted: the name of Israel symbolized the culmination of the materialization of the aspirations to nationhood in the field of language as well as in the realm of territorial independence. There is no other way to circumscribe what is meant by *Israeli Hebrew* than to say that it is the national language (*Staatssprache*) of

⁵ Cf. VRIEZEN (1956: 6), BLANC (1956b: 188), KUTSCHER (1957: 38). The term first appears in writing in ROSÉN (1952b: 4–5).

⁶ So interpreted by ULLENDORFF (1957: 251–2), probably in the light of occasional "Palestinian Hebrew" or "Spoken Hebrew of Palestine" found in earlier discussions (SPIEGEL 1930: 17; CHRISTIE 1931: 5).

Israel, the first language of nearly a million Jewish natives of Israel, largely monolingual, and the second, but prestige language of close to two million multilingual speakers (the non-native Jewish and part of the non-Jewish population of Israel).⁷

1.3.2 *Contemporary Hebrew*

CONTEMPORARY HEBREW would be an innocent term that would avoid all issues; it has the disadvantage of being historically unstable (we cannot speak of the "Contemporary Hebrew of the thirties") and of calling to our minds other "contemporary languages" (*Gegenwartssprachen*) that derive their right to this title by their giving expression to notional, conceptional, and intellectual frames of "modern times", but are not quite essentially different from non-contemporary shapes of the same language of a generation ago. In some respects, Israeli Hebrew is, in fact, such a "contemporary" language, but it is not only this aspect which we have to discuss linguistically. TÉNÉ has had the useful idea of employing for his treatise the noncommittal title of "Contemporary Hebrew" (TÉNÉ 1968), while discussing therein a language termed *Israeli Hebrew*. We shall follow this lead. That *Contemporary Israeli Hebrew* would, at the least, be highly pleonastic, needs, I feel, no further explanation.

1.4 NONSYNONYMOUS DESIGNATIONS

SPOKEN HEBREW, CHILDREN'S HEBREW, or NATIVE (ISRAELI) HEBREW are not synonyms of Israeli Hebrew, and their use for anything which these terms do not mean, must be objected to.

⁷ A statistical survey up to 1954 may be found in BACH (1955). – Slight variations of the term *Israeli Hebrew* risk, in our opinion, being somewhat misleading. Concerning "Native Israeli Hebrew" (TÉNÉ 1969: 61) see below, 1.4.3. The use of *Israeli* without *Hebrew* attached to it is objectionable, more so if it is itself modified by various subdividing adjectives (BLANC 1957a: 400; 1964a: 135–7; e.g., "General Israeli"), since an allusion that Israeli Hebrew was not really, fundamentally and intrinsically Hebrew, would taint scholarship with ethnico-cultural ideological attitudes, which we had better not allow to distort our insights.

1.4.1 Spoken Hebrew

There is no diglossy in Israel, although – of course – differences are noticeable between spoken and written usage. We do not think that these stylistic differences are more profound than their analogues in most nations, at any rate they do not justify considering the spoken form of Israeli Hebrew as a separate linguistic entity. It is true that the full revival of Hebrew was achieved by its conversion to a spoken language;⁸ Hebrew was “revived as a spoken language” (KUTSCHER 1956: 32), but neither was revival identical with spokenness nor was the reintroduction of speech sufficient for the revival. Israeli Hebrew clearly has at least two layers, one spoken and one written (ORNAN 1968:1–2), and many will find this primary division insufficient. Consequently nothing warrants the adoption of the term Israeli Hebrew exclusively for the spoken style (as proposed by MORAG 1959: 247; modified 1967: 639); if this is done, we are left with no specific term for written contemporary usage, and the impression is created that the latter needs no term of its own, owing to its intrinsic similarity to Classical Hebrew. RABIN (1958b: 248) advocates the recognition of a “Modern Literary Hebrew”, but then, is non-literary writing a form of spoken language or a language of no standing? An extreme position was taken by BEN-HAYYIM (1953: 50, 54) who, in this highly polemical publication outright opposed “spoken” to “cultured” language, ascribing practically all deviations from classical grammar to the former. This had been the habit of quite a few scholars prior to the stabilization of descriptive research, and in studies conducted up to the mid-fifties, one can find numerous observations made on contemporary usage, but spoken of as though they were exclusive characteristics of colloquial Hebrew, since it was commonly accepted that written language was (or, at least, was supposed to be) quasi-pure Classical Hebrew.

1.4.2 Children's Hebrew

There is Hebrew CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE, which should be, and to some extent has been, studied (H. M. COHEN 1951: 91–97; BAR-ADON 1959 and 1963a, b) in contrast with adults' language; but again, up to the fifties, perfectly common features of Israeli Hebrew were presented by various authors, reluctant to admit the use of non-

⁸ Although attempts at speaking Hebrew were made prior to the revival (cf. RABIN 1958a: 7; 1969: 34; 1970).

classical language in the mouths or pens of educated adults, as though they were children's style. Most of the published work of that period ostentatiously devoted to the description of children's Hebrew contains little more than unordered enumerations of linguistic phenomena that were, at that time as at any other, distinctive of Israeli Hebrew. Two authors (BARLES 1937: 185-90; AVINERY 1946: 145) have gone as far as ascribing takeovers from foreign languages to children's speech or considering loan translations as one of its characteristics. AVINERY (1946), devoting an entire chapter (pp. 144-80) to "The language of our children", lists, amongst other things, the following fundamental features of Israeli Hebrew (of all age groups) as characteristic of children's speech: adverbial use of masculine singular adjective forms (see 6.4.2.1); the unverbated compound *'af 'iš* 'not a man' (*le-'af 'iš* 'to nobody'; 6.5.2); determinated status of superlatives with *haxi-* use of *klum* 'rien' with no formal negation in a verbless sentence (8.3.2); and finally the use of the *'et*-case ('accusative') in construction with the kernel *yeš l-* 'alicui est . . . , have' (p. 5.5.3), even examining "children's usage" in the light of some biblical attestations of 'unsyntactical' *'et-* (cf. ROSÉN 1966: 214-6). Similarly, familiar style features (such as *še-* + potential tense '*que* . . . + subjunctif'; see note 181) were discussed along with typically journalese expressions under the heading "On children's and popular language" by the late Y. PERETZ (1943: 296-300; 1944: 58-9), a fighter for the non-recognition of Contemporary Hebrew as a linguistic entity in its own right.

1.4.3 Native Hebrew

The distribution of age groups in the Jewish population of Palestine during the first half of the present century was such that children were distinct from adults not only by their age, but generally speaking, by the fact of being natives. There is even a popular designation for native-born children: *Sabras*. This created the risk of identifying children's speech with native speech, and of lumping both together in contrast to the language of adult immigrants. Some authors

discussed phenomena observable in "Sabra Hebrew"⁹ and conveniently left open the question whether what was meant was the language of native children, of children in general, or of natives of any age: what we ordinarily find discussed in such studies are common Israeli Hebrew features, irrespective of the birthplace or the age of the speaker.

Of course, recent immigrants are recognizable as such either by a deficient knowledge of Hebrew or by more pronounced linguistic habits hailing from their primary tongues; however, once the linguistic integration of any one of these speakers is completed, once he has mastered Hebrew to the same degree as the old settlers and has minimized his foreign accent, from that moment on his speech is distinguishable neither from that of other immigrant groups nor from that of adult natives,¹⁰ or at least there are enough features common to all immigrant groups and natives alike to constitute a complete language system, precisely the one we call Israeli Hebrew. Moreover, there is no assimilation of language habits to those of the native born; on the contrary, the few phonetic characteristics or slang usages that can be identified as peculiar to native youth are usually abandoned once the subject concerned reaches what can be termed mature age,¹¹ and the native starts talking ordinary standard Israeli Hebrew. No characteristics have been noted of a specifically native language on either the syntactic or morphological levels; there are lexical slang features that must be properly identified as language of school children, adherents to youth movements, or soldiers – age groups that are naturally preponderantly native. There seems to be one subphonemic phenomenon that is really exclusively ascribable to young native speakers: the materialization of /r/ with the cardinal value of a voiced postvelar fricative, and its consequent position in the

⁹ E.g. PATAI (1953) (in fact this is a list of how the sabras "pronounce the letters").

¹⁰ The broad distinction between Oriental and non-Oriental phonetic styles (3.3.1) has nothing to do with being a native or a recent immigrant.

¹¹ S. Z. KLAUSNER (1955: 213) has the facts right, but their linguistic evaluation wrong. Terminology does not play any role here (*pace* BLANC 1956b).

phonemic grid different from that of standard IH /r/ (apical vibrant). The first to observe this was WEIMAN (1950: 19). On the other hand, the highly syncopated and slurred speech of many youngsters, that very frequently reduces dramatically the number of syllables and vocalic or consonantal phonemes made audible in a word group, must be relegated to the realm of style and cannot serve as a basis for constituting a specific phonemic system of "native Israeli Hebrew".

We are, consequently, somewhat at a loss as to what NATIVE HEBREW is. According to BLANC (1957b: 33), who introduced the term, it is a synonym of "Israeli Hebrew", and he later made it abundantly clear that the distinction between native and non-native was one that applied to the speakers, not to the language (BLANC 1964: 133):

A distinction [...] can [...] be made between non-native speakers [...] and native speakers, whose speech bears no direct relation to their forebears' native language.

The "native sound system" (BLANC 1968: 243-247) differs by nothing from the Israeli Hebrew one, and can conveniently be retermed "native General Israeli sound system" (BLANC 1968: 243-7), without a "non-native General Israeli sound system" being in existence. The former can be heard only from speakers born after 1915, which is again a sociological (rather: statistical) truism. The predilection of some authors for "native" Hebrew must have been called forth on socio-statistical grounds:

The essential socio-linguistic feature of contemporary Hebrew is the emergence of native speech, and its growing stabilization. (TÉNÉ 1969: 50).

Misinterpreting "native Hebrew" as a type of language runs the risk of a resultant search for features of "non-native Hebrew" and of suggestions like that of MORAG (1967: 643) that liturgical Hebrew words in traditional spelling pronunciations used by members of various communities in a way corresponding to their habits prior

to their acquisition of current and living Israeli Hebrew represented a non-native form of Israeli Hebrew speech. Summarizing our abstention from recommending the use of the adjective *native* in discussions of the linguistic features of Israeli Hebrew, we must reiterate that what few phonetic traits there are of nativeness in Hebrew speech tend to disappear in the course of the young natives' integration in adult society, in the same way as foreign traits stemming from the immigrants' primary languages are being conscientiously obliterated in the course of that same process of integration. One could even say, to sum up, that most young sabras had, *sit uenia uerbo*, a slight "native accent".

1.5 SEMITIC FEATURES OF ISRAELI HEBREW

We cannot appropriately conclude a chapter on the identity of Israeli Hebrew without expressly stating our view that it is a Semitic language.

1.5.1 *Its genealogical and typological "character"*

To recall that the question of the Semitic identity of Israeli Hebrew is one concerning its genealogical, and not its typological relationship is to solve the problem.¹² Israeli Hebrew is a language in which inherited (Hebrew, Semitic) means of expression have been assigned to the materialization of a given (European, primarily Slavo-Teutonic) categorial system. The first assignments of the nature indicated constituted the "revival" of the language. I do not quite see how things can be viewed any differently; the *innere Form* of Israeli Hebrew is different from that of biblical or postbiblical language, it cannot be Semitic, since there is no such thing as the

¹² "La parenté génétique [...] consiste dans le fait que chaque élément d'une langue est relié par une fonction à un élément d'expression d'une autre."
 – "La parenté typologique [...] consiste en ce que des catégories de chacune d'entre elles sont liées par une fonction à des catégories de chacune des autres."
 (HELMSELEV 1963: 158)

“internal form” of a language family, and the culture represented by Israeli Hebrew is hardly the property of any other known Semitic language, living or dead. Maybe there will never be another living language as fascinating for the linguist as Israeli Hebrew because of the striking disparateness of its genealogical and its typological relatives.

1.5.2 Lacunae in the phonemic system

Intuitively constructed formulas to this effect have been not uncommon in the characterization of Israeli Hebrew ever since BERGSTRÄSSER (1928: 47) spoke about

ein Hebräisch, das in Wirklichkeit eine europäische¹³ Sprache in durchsichtiger hebräischer Verkleidung ist.

A “genuinely Semitic” Hebrew was an ideal orthoepists and most purists were trying to achieve, interpreting this notion, however, in the shape of a Brockelmann-style Arabocentric protolanguage. It was not borne in mind that “typically” Semitic distinctions such as *t* : *t* have not been preserved in oral traditions of Hebrew other than in Arabophonic environments. The lacunae in the sound inventory of Israeli Hebrew in comparison to reconstructed Hebrew have nothing to do with the allegedly diminished Semitic character of the language: losses analogous to the merger of **h* and **h* and the continuation of both by *h* (which again merges with a fricative allophone of the unvoiced velar), to the non-distinction of *ʕ* and *ʔ* (where non-syllabic glottal articulations are lost, but their “reflexes” preserved in the form of vocalic shadings and quantity), to the non-distinction of “emphatic” (velarized?) stops from their non-emphatic counterparts, or the disappearance of *q* through merger with other phonemes, and finally to the loss of quantitative distinctions

¹³ Inappropriate terms in this context are: *Indo-European* (genealogical, misses the point), *Europeanized* (this implies a process, but Israeli Hebrew was not less European at first and more European later, it was created as European as it is now).

in the consonantal sphere – all these can be paralleled from quite a few dead and living Semitic languages and they are no indication of the genealogical affinity of a language.

We need not go into the notoriously circular question of exactly what set of characteristics defines a language as belonging to a given genealogical entity, in our case Semitic (cf. ULLENDORFF 1958). The morphological system of Israeli Hebrew tallies with that of Biblical Hebrew to an extent hardly ever experienced with different stages of the same language. Despite some surface alterations, the systemic image is not changed; moreover, essentially Semitic morphological processes are maintained even where a clash is created between Israeli Hebrew and its typological relatives that would favour other types of expressional means.

1.5.3 Morphological features

While the root is hardly productive any more, there is a lexeme which structurally corresponds exactly to a root – the radical (6.1.2): to derive, e.g., adjectives from *sedër* 'order', *šapaàt* 'flu', or *mišmaàt* 'discipline', a discontinuous morpheme is extracted from the nouns after the optional elimination of the postformatives: *s-d-r*, *š-p-a*, *m-šm-a*; these morphemes have three positions, just as Semitic roots, but are not necessarily identical with the roots. The derived adjectives 'orderly', 'flu-stricken', and 'disciplined' would be derived from the motivating morphemes by one common pattern morpheme (6.1.3), *me-u-a-*: *mesudar*, *mešupaa*, *memušmaa*. This is as typically Semitic as can be.

Typically Semitic again is the personal suffixation of nouns: *roš-i* 'my head', *ktiv-i* 'my writing'.¹⁴ Employing a more circumlocutory expression of (quasi-)possessive relations, since late

¹⁴ Of course, apparent suffixation can also be created, e.g., in Indo-European, with clitic possessives; cf. Mod.Gk. *to spíti mu* 'my house'; but there the clisis is not forcibly linked to the noun (*i kall su aderfi* 'your beautiful sister'). An Indo-European language in which true personal suffixation of nouns is found, is Persian; this engenders a *Sprachbund* feature with Turkish, Arabic, and – of course – Hebrew.