Netta Abugov* and Dorit Ravid

Home language usage and the impact of Modern Hebrew on Israeli Hasidic Yiddish nouns and noun plurals

Abstract: This article investigates the current status of Yiddish as a home language and the impact of Modern Hebrew on Yiddish nouns and noun plurals spoken in Sanz Hasidism. In the Hasidic community, Yiddish and Modern Hebrew have been competing as native tongues in an inconsistent bilingual sociolinguistic situation for over 60 years. The aim of this study is two-fold: first, a sociolinguistic issue concerning the amount and character of Yiddish usage across generations; second, to explore psycholinguistic issue regarding the nominal lexicon (kind ‘child’) and its plural marking (kinder ‘children’).

Participants were first asked about the language prevalent in their parental home and in their current home. Then we administered a confrontational naming task to 48 Israeli Hasidic (IH) men and women who were asked to name 95 singular nouns from pictures and provide their plural forms. Results showed that over generations there is a tendency towards using only Yiddish as a home language accompanied by substantial variation and change both in the nominal lexicon and in the plural system. Both facets indicated that participants who grew up in Yiddish-only homes and still maintain this linguistic exclusiveness produce fewer Modern Hebrew-related lemmas.

Keywords: Hasidic Yiddish, home language, Noun plurals, language contact, Modern Hebrew

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1 Introduction

The Yiddish speakers who perished in the Holocaust were all native speakers of a vibrant living language spoken by many millions of both secular and religious Jews. Today, Yiddish is virtually extinct among secular Jews, it does not have an official status in Israel and it is only spoken natively in the context of Ultra-Orthodox (UO) Hasidic communities in North America, Europe and Israel. The
Israeli context is especially interesting, since Yiddish, a Jewish Germanic lan-
guage with a huge Hebraic and Aramaic lexicon, now occupies the same habitat
as Modern Hebrew – both now living languages in their own right.

However, native Israeli Yiddish is restricted to islands of Ultra-Orthodox Has-
idic Jewry surrounded by an ocean of speakers of Modern Hebrew. While most
speakers of Modern Hebrew are robustly monolingual, being fourth-generation
native speakers, as well as speakers for whom Modern Hebrew is a main lan-
guage of usage – the sociolinguistic Yiddish scene is usually bilingual, while the
balance between the two languages may change between individuals, families
and generations. The current study investigates the cross-linguistic influences of
Modern Hebrew on one grammatical system in Israeli Hasidic Yiddish embedded
in this languages-in-contact setting.

Few studies to date have engaged in examining the actual lexicon and gram-
mar of living, native-spoken Yiddish and even fewer have undertaken a system-
atic analysis of contemporary Yiddish. Most Yiddish research to date explores its
history and literature. To date, there are only two studies analyzing the Yiddish
spoken by Israeli Ultra-Orthodox. The first describes foreign linguistic compo-
nents in the language of the Palestinian Jewish community between 1920 and
1930 (Kosover 1954, 1966), and the second examines linguistic maintenance and
change in Israeli UO Yiddish (Berman 2007). Some research focuses on Yiddish as
a minority language in Israel (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999), and several studies
discuss the socio-linguistic aspects of Yiddish as one of the languages spoken
by the UO population (Poll 1980; Isaacs 1998, 1999). In addition, a single study
to date describes the UO family life and the socialization UO children undergo
(Goshen-Gottstein 1984) and several other studies discuss the UO educational
system (Bogoch 1999; Shiffer 1999). The acquisition of UO Yiddish among native
speaking children is currently studied in Israel (Abugov and Ravid 2013) and in
the US (Barrière 2008).

The current article examines two facets of Yiddish knowledge and usage in
the investigated Hasidic community. One is a sociolinguistic issue concerning the
usage of Yiddish as a home language across generations. The second is a psycho-
linguistic issue regarding the nominal lexicon and its plural marking. While Yid-
dish usage and the nominal lexicon of Yiddish are obvious targets for such anal-
yses, noun pluralization merits some further elaboration. More specifically, we
will present a systematic sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic analysis of the
nominal lexicon and the noun plurals system of the Yiddish dialect spoken in
the community of the UO Sanz Hasidim in Netanya, Israel. Like other Hasidic
Yiddish-speaking communities in Israel, its language practices are embedded in
a bilingual Yiddish-Hebrew context as its members experience differing degrees
of contact with the Hebrew-speaking majority. Recent linguistic research has
noted processes of language contact and language change in UO Yiddish in Israel (Berman 2007). We should thus assume that such ongoing processes also characterize the Sanz community, and that its version of Yiddish is undergoing change taking it further away from Standard Yiddish. In this situation of variation and change, Israeli Sanz Hasidic Yiddish merits a systematic empirical investigation intended to identify its lexical and grammatical characteristics.

Noun plurals have been targeted as one of the topics of this study given the prevalence and salience of nouns in the world’s languages in general; and, in particular, as a basic inflectional class which combines the two major features of Yiddish: its bilingual lexicon and Germanic grammar. Yiddish has always contained basic German and *Loshn Kóryesh* (‘the holy tongue’, henceforth LK) nouns such as *kind* (‘child’) and *xáver* (‘friend’). It stands to reason that language contact with Modern Hebrew should exert a particularly strong effect on concrete, familiar and commonly occurring nouns in singular and plural forms. From a grammatical point of view, Yiddish plural inflection is robustly embedded in the Germanic framework of suffixes such as -n, -er and -s (*tishn* ‘tables’, *kinder* ‘children’ and *teslesr* ‘carpenters’, respectively), as well as stem-internal modifications, e.g., *barg* / *berg* ‘mountain-s’, and the combination of suffixation and umlaut, as in *boim* / *baymer* ‘tree-s’. However, Modern Hebrew plurals on Modern Hebrew (and other non-Yiddish) loan words are also expected to occur in the community. In other words, we expect Israeli Hasidic Yiddish to continue being “contaminated” by the languages-in-contact situation and for its plural system to be susceptible to the impact of contact languages, mainly Modern Hebrew.

Against this background, Yiddish noun plurals provide a window on the constituents of the core nominal lexicon of contemporary Yiddish, on the one hand, and on language change processes in its plural system, on the other. Moreover, the analysis of noun plurals in adult Yiddish can shed light on how bilingualism affects not only the actual construction of an inflectional class in a language under the pressure of variation, but also methodologically, on the actual investigation of such a system.

## 2 Israeli Hasidic Yiddish

Yiddish is a Germanic Jewish language that contains a large quantity of Hebraic words. On the eve of World War II, Yiddish had about 15 million native speakers, most of who were annihilated in the Holocaust (Katz 1987; Weinreich 1980; Harshav 2006). Yiddish is spoken today by two main groups: the last survivors of pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, and a rising number of UO Jews (mainly Hasidim) worldwide. The exact number of native UO Yiddish speakers today is
inaccessible; rough estimated figures are half million worldwide (Katz 2007), but high birth rates and a strong will to maintain an UO lifestyle may gradually add to these figures.

Overall, the UO minority is a heterogeneous group regarding its members’ countries of origin, religious practices, dress-codes, sub-group leaderships and attitudes towards the state of Israel. All these elements interact in the daily life of these groups, and often act as a visible or invisible barrier between them and their secular surroundings (Baumel 2006; Hason 2001; Heilman and Friedman 1991; Levy 1988; Poll 1980). Nevertheless, the UO community includes two main groups: Hasidim, followers of the Hasidic movement, which is divided into sub-groups such as Belz, Gur and Sanz (often named for the towns and villages in Eastern Europe where they first appeared); and Misnagdim (or Litvish), historic opponents of the Hasidic movement. Most of today’s native Yiddish speaking population in Israel and worldwide is Hasidic (Katz 2007).

The segregated Hasidic community in Israel lives in a unique linguistic situation which includes three main languages; Yiddish and Modern Hebrew, two living languages competing as native tongues in a classical bilingual socio-linguistic setting, and Loshn Kóydesh which is restricted only for praying and not used for daily communication. The Yiddish-Hebrew balance changes between the different Hasidic courts, so that not all of them speak Yiddish as a native tongue. Israeli Hasidic Yiddish is mostly a spoken language. Reading is engaged in mostly by children, and only extremely conservative schools for girls use it in writing. Its native speakers do not tend to use dictionaries or grammar books (Goshen-Gottshtein 1984; Issacs 1998, 1999; Tannenbaum and Abugov 2010).

### 2.1 Ultra-Orthodox Yiddish dialects

A literary dialect called “Standard Yiddish” (Yiddish Klal-Shprakh) evolved at the end of the nineteenth century pulling the diverse Yiddish strands into a new written language that would be crystallized into a medium for a modern European literature. Since then, many Yiddish writers such as Mendele Mocher Sforim and Isaac Bashevis singer have adopted this dialect, and it is currently taught by many secular Yiddish institutes. Standard Yiddish is based largely on Southeastern grammar and Northeastern pronunciation (Kerler 1999; Kleine 2003; Weinreich 1980). However, Standard Yiddish is not the standard dialect of the UO community.

In contrast to the historical distribution into geographical Yiddish dialects, contemporary UO Yiddish in Israel includes two main communal dialects: Jerusalem Yiddish and Hasidic Yiddish. The former is spoken mainly in Jerusalem and resembles Northeastern Yiddish, and the latter is spoken by Hasidim from Hun-
gary, Galicia and Romania (courts of Belz, Vignitz, Sanz, etc.) and resembles Central Yiddish. These dialects differ mostly in phonology (e.g. Hasidic gayn vs. Jerusalem geyn 'go') and morphological differences in pronouns, definite articles and adjectives (Jerusalem Yiddish marks masculine animate nouns, while Hasidic Yiddish does not). The contact between Jerusalem and Hasidic Yiddish promulgates a process of language variation and language change in UO Yiddish, yet the motivation to maintain this difference is high (Berman 2007).

2.2 Yiddish and Modern Hebrew – Jewish languages in contact

Contact situations between languages and dialects call for different forms of cross-linguistic influences between languages, primarily language variation and language change (Auer, Hinskens and Kerswill 2005; Zuckermann 2009). The establishment of the Israeli state and the revival of Hebrew as a vernacular created, for the first time, intensive contact between Modern Hebrew, the language of the Jewish secular majority, and Yiddish, used for daily communication by the Hasidic population. Consequently, over the last sixty years IH Yiddish and Modern Hebrew have co-existed as two living languages in a language contact situation. Weinreich (1972) identifies this contact as “internal bilingualism” expressing the relationship between the two languages. Berman (2007) distinguishes between the Yiddish-Hebrew language contact and other language contact situations by relating to three important points: (1) the existence of Loshn Kóydesh as a “third wheel”; (2) the Hebraic element in Yiddish; and (3) the clear hierarchy between the three languages in terms of sacred versus secular which dictates the function of each of the languages. However, as suggested by Fishman (2002), though Yiddish is perceived as a sacred language which contributes to the Jewish distinctiveness and maintenance, it constantly intertwines with Modern Hebrew in the UO social domain.

Fishman (1972) indicates four possible domains which influence language acquisition, maintenance and change: home, neighborhood, education and religion. Whereas Loshn Kóydesh is used only for religious purposes, the division between Yiddish and Modern Hebrew is not apparent. Some UO families use Yiddish inside the house and Hebrew outside; in some families only the boys who learn Yiddish in the Yeshiva speak Yiddish, while the girls master Hebrew. Some speak Hebrew at home and Yiddish at school. According to Fader (2001, 2006) men and women in the US use Yiddish in different circumstances: women use Yiddish mostly with small children (baby talk), while men mostly use it during their religious studies. These blurred boundaries promote cross-linguistic influences especially from Hebrew to Yiddish.
Characterizing the type of bilingualism of the IH Yiddish speakers is a complicated task since the balance between Yiddish and Modern Hebrew is inconsistent. Much research is devoted to the different factors affecting bilingualism such as age of exposure and mode of exposure (De Houwer 1995). Yet, it is impossible to exclusively relate IH Yiddish speakers to one sort of factors. Some IH children may be born into a Yiddish speaking family, and others may be exposed to Yiddish later on. Some children attend a Yiddish speaking school, while others go to a Hebrew speaking school. Taking a more socio-historical point of view, this inconsistency may well be valid not only for the current generation, but also for previous ones. In other words, it is difficult to characterize the type of bilingualism and the usage patterns of Yiddish/Hebrew as a home language among IH speakers not only today but also over the last 60 years in Israel.

Cross-linguistic influences depend on the structure and principles of the two languages (Siemund 2008; Zuckermann 2009). Yiddish and Modern Hebrew exhibit two different structures: Modern Hebrew, a Semitic language, is synthetic rather than isolating, with a rich array of morphological structures displaying both fusional (that is, root-and-pattern) and agglutinative (that is, stem-and-suffix) devices (Ravid 1995, 2006), whereas Yiddish, true to its Germanic origins, includes mostly Germanic vocabulary (e.g., *tish / tishn* ‘table-s’) and displays Germanic syntax (such as SVO word order) (Weinreich 1980). Both languages are morphologically complex but in different ways. The domains selected for the investigation of this interface is the nominal lexicon and the system of noun plurals, a basic and widely occurring category in the world’s languages (Schachter 1985).

### 2.3 Noun plurals

Plural formation does not generate a new lexical item, but rather marks pluralization on a count noun. Therefore, in morpho-syntactic terms, plural formation is a part of the inflectional system. Yiddish plurals are essentially Germanic in structure, consisting of a set of competing markers. In addition, Yiddish has etymologically Hebrew forms, which adds further complexity to the investigation the system of Yiddish noun plurals.

#### 2.3.1 Standard Yiddish noun plurals

The point of departure of the current study is the system of noun plurals in Standard Yiddish (SY) which involves suffixation, stem modification or a combination
of the two, clearly reflecting the Germanic and the LK origins as presented in Reyzen (1924) and Glasser (1990). Although we assume that Standard Yiddish was never the spoken dialect of the Israeli Hasidic community, it serves as our point of reference since it is the only dialect which was systematically related to in the linguistic Yiddish literature.

As shown in Table 1, the system of noun plurals in SY consists of nine plural markers. Noun plurals are formed by five different suffixes -(e)n, -(e)s, -er, -im, -(e)x or by a zero morpheme. Two of these plural markers (-er and zero) may combine with a stem vowel change whose effect is similar to the umlaut in German. Two plural suffixes -im (-im) and -es (-es) are of LK origin and take Hebraic nouns. But unlike Hebrew, they do not serve as gender markers.

In order to better understand the context of this study, Table 2 presents the plural system of Israeli Hebrew.

Modern Hebrew has only two suffixes – though those with partial predictability are often misleading. But stem changes are more radical and diverse, and are related to the array of morphological nominal patterns. Moreover, stem changes are not restricted to one suffix (Ravid et al. 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural marker</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-(e)n</td>
<td>tish</td>
<td>tishn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-s</td>
<td>tate</td>
<td>tates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-er</td>
<td>kind</td>
<td>kinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>epl</td>
<td>epl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umlaut</td>
<td>kop</td>
<td>kep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umlaut + -er</td>
<td>boim</td>
<td>beimer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-im</td>
<td>xaver</td>
<td>xaveyrim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-es</td>
<td>xale</td>
<td>xale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(e)x</td>
<td>meydl</td>
<td>meydlex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Plural markers in Modern Hebrew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Regular suffix</th>
<th>Irregular suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>dli / dlay-im</td>
<td>kir / kir-ot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘bucket / s’</td>
<td>‘wall / s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>sira / sir-ot</td>
<td>ir / ar-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘boat / s’</td>
<td>‘city / s’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Israeli Hasidic Yiddish noun plurals

The system of noun plurals in IH Yiddish has not been systematically investigated to date. Berman’s work (2007) describes major linguistic phenomena in Israeli UO Yiddish. Berman exemplifies specific morphological changes in the system of noun plurals of Israeli UO Yiddish due to the influence of Modern Hebrew. For example, whenever there is a difference between the Yiddish and the Modern Hebrew plural marker, the Modern Hebrew marker usually takes over (shabusoys instead of shabosim ‘Saturdays’, shues instead of shuen ‘hours’). Berman’s examples of Yiddish child language also serve to demonstrate the influence of Modern Hebrew. For example, Modern Hebrew plural forms added to Yiddish nouns like shixim instead of shix ‘shues’. Berman’s examples suggest that there is a difference between Standard Yiddish and the UO Yiddish noun plurals system, and that UO Yiddish is undergoing change due to the impact of Modern Hebrew.

2.5 Predictions

Against this background, we expected the nominal lexicon and the system of noun plurals in contemporary Hasidic Yiddish of the Sanz community to differ from the system of the Standard Yiddish. More specifically, we expected the nominal lexicon and the plural system to contain multiple variations including new lemmas and plural categories. We also expected Modern Hebrew to be a major player, and to exert lexical and morphological impact on our target system (Berman 2007; Rayfield 1970).

3 Methodology

Procedure of this study included two main steps: (a) a sociolinguistic background questionnaire and (b) psycholinguistic nominal and plural tasks.

3.1 Population: Sanz Hasidic community

The population consisted of 48 adults (24 men and 24 women) aged 21–60 years old, most of whom thirty to forty years old (2nd and 3rd generation). They were all members of Sanz Hasidism and lived in Kiriyat Sanz, Natanya, Israel. All were married and spoke mostly Yiddish at home. Sanz Hassidism was founded by the Sanz-Klausenberger Rebbe Halberstam, who lost his family in the Holocaust. His
vision was to rebuild the community in Israel and reconstruct the cultural social
and religious way of life as it was in Galician Sanz. Natanya is the heart of the
community although there are some families in Jerusalem and Bnei-Barak, and
also communities in New York, London and Antwerp. Kiriyat Sanz caters to its
800 families’ independent religious lifestyle, including health care systems and a
large educational system from infancy to adulthood. All members of Sanz Hassi-
dism are bilingual, speaking Yiddish and Modern Hebrew and praying in Loshn
Kóydesh, yet Yiddish enjoys a higher status and functions as the first language for
most of the target families. Sanz educational systems emphasize the role of Yid-
dish as a spoken language and Modern Hebrew as a written one.

3.2 Procedure

Administration included two phases. In the first phase, participants were orally
asked two questions about their home language usage: “What language did your
parents use at home?” and “What language do you use at home?” Each partici-
pant was free to provide his/her own answer which was written by the researcher.
In the second phase, and following the questionnaire, participants were ad-
ministered two psycholinguistic tasks based on 95 pictures of everyday objects /
abstracts such as fork, elephant, day or wedding. The first was a Naming Task
where participants had to provide a lemma or a label for each of the 95 target
items (e.g., xasene for a wedding or pil and/or elefant for elephant). The second
was a Plural Task, which followed immediately, where participants had to plu-
ralize the label they provided in the Naming Task. The elicitation procedure went
as follows: pointing to a picture of a mountain, the researcher first asked (Task 1)
vus is dus? (‘What is this’) and the participant replied (for example) “barg”. Then
the researcher went on (Task 2) to inquire “un in loshn rabim” [and in the plural].
The participant then replied (for example) “berg”. Responses were both recorded
and written by the researcher.

3.3 Materials

Grammatically, the 95 target items were selected to represent the eight plural cat-
egories in SY (see Table 1). Content-wise, they represented pragmatic-semantic
categories of everyday life which should be familiar to adults. These included
animals (e.g., kac / kec ‘cat-s’), food (bar / barn ‘pear-s’), body parts (kop / kep
‘head-s’), cloths (hemd / hemder ‘shirt-s’), useful objects (meser / mesers ‘knife-s’),
locations (shtot / shteyt ‘city-cities’), agent nouns (xaver / xaveyrim ‘friend-s’),
Jewish terms (draydl / draydlex ‘dreidel-s’), temporal terms (shu / shuen ‘hour-s’) and events (xasene / xasenes ‘wedding-s’). Ten of the words were abstract words (vort / verter ‘word-s’) and were presented to the participants in Modern Hebrew without accompanied picture, and were asked to say that in Yiddish (singular and plural forms).

4 Results

We now present the results of the two steps. First we focus on the aspect of language usage among IH bilingual adults, and then we analyze the Naming Task and the Plural Task, focusing on the production of noun lemmas in their singular and their plural form.

4.1 Language use

The first question addressed the language prevalent in the participant’s parental home (“What language did your parents use at home?”); and the second question asked about the language prevalent in the participant’s current home (“What language do you use at home?”). Table 3 presents the results.

According to Table 3, most of the participants (83%) come from Yiddish-speaking homes, and 48% of them come from parental homes where Yiddish was the only language used by the parents. Here also, 96% of the subjects use Yiddish as their home language, showing to what extent Yiddish is central in their lives.

We further inquired to what extent there was a relationship between exclusive Yiddish usage at the parental home and at current participant’s home. In

Table 3: Prevalence of language usage in participants’ parental home and in participants’ current home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Parental home</th>
<th>Current home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiddish</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiddish and Modern Hebrew</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Hebrew</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
order to do that, we applied the statistical Sign Test to the data in Table 3. (The Sign Test is used to test the hypothesis that there is “no difference in medians” between the continuous distributions of two random variables X and Y, in the situation when we can draw paired samples from X and Y. It is a non-parametric test which makes very few assumptions about the nature of the distributions under test – this means that it has very general applicability but may lack the statistical power of other tests such as the paired-samples T-test).

The Sign Test showed significant differences ($p = 0.039$) between cells in Table 3. Out of the 23 participants whose parents did not use only Yiddish at home, 52.2% currently use Yiddish exclusively as their own home language, whereas 47.8% do not. Out of the 25 participants whose parents used only Yiddish at home, 84% currently use only Yiddish as their home language, while 16% do not. These results clearly show a double trend of adhering to Yiddish as an exclusive home language: not only do participants who grew up in Yiddish-only homes maintain exclusive Yiddish at their own homes, it is also the case that those participants who did not grow up in Yiddish-only homes are now using Yiddish as their only home tongue. Thus, there is a clear directional change towards using only Yiddish at the participants’ homes compared to the previous generation.

4.2 The Naming Task

The task consisted of 95 target items which had to be named. Participants labeled each of the target items, resulting in a list of singular Sanz lemmas. Importantly, and confirming our expectations, several target items yielded more than one lemma. For example, the picture of a king yielded *kéynig*, *méylex* and *king*. Thus, 95 target items yielded 170 lemmas, a mean of 1.8 lemmas per target item. We counted the number of lemmas given to each of the 95 target items as a measure of language variation in the Sanz IH nominal lexicon. The distribution of target items by number of lemmas per item is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that 55% of the target items were given only one lemma, whereas 45% were labeled more than one lemma. The Discussion section will present and discuss examples of items with differing number of lemmas.

The 170 lemmas constituting the nominal pool of this study were classified into two sources termed “Dictionary” and “Community” respectively. Lemmas were classified as Dictionary if appearing in at least one of the following dictionaries: Weinreich (1977), Harkavy (1928) or Niborsi and Vaisbrot (2002). Lemmas which did not appear in any of the dictionaries were classified as Community, that is, originating in the study community. Figure 2 presents the distributions of the 170 lemmas by Usage Type.
As shown in Figure 2, 62% of the singular nouns provided by the participants appear in one or more of the three dictionaries (e.g., *ay* ‘eye’, *tug* ‘day’, *xasene* ‘wedding’). In contrast, 38% of the nouns do not appear in any of the dictionaries (e.g., *lavor* for bowl, *agvaniya* for tomato). For example, most participants did not know the word for the target item ‘rabbit’, so no lemmas were produced. Below we provide an extended analysis of lemmas from the Community usage type, which is the dynamic and vibrant source of changes.

Regarding Community lemmas, 38% of the lemmas did not appear in any of the dictionaries of Standard Yiddish, yet were produced by Sanz native Yiddish
Home language usage

In order to characterize these lemmas we classified them into five lexical origins: English, Modern Hebrew, Loshn Kóydesch, Invention and Inaccurate Designation. Figure 3 presents the distributions of 170 lemmas by lexical origin.

According to Figure 3, most of the Community lemmas produced by our participants originate in Modern Hebrew (56%). For example, maxshev for ‘computer’ and pil for ‘elephant’. There were also 20% ad-hoc inventions, produced on the spot – for example, shponja mashin for ‘vacuum cleaner’ and velger for ‘rolling pin’. 16% of the Community lemmas originated in Loshn Kóydesch – e.g., oyfe for ‘hen’ and keure (cf. Modern Hebrew ke’ara) for ‘bowl’. Finally, 6% of the lemmas come from English as in monki for ‘monkey’ and bol for ‘ball’. Fewer than 2% of the lemmas were Inaccurate Designations in the sense that they labeled a related but not the target item, as in kapelush (a distinctive traditional hat) for ‘hat’ and dexter which literally means ‘roof’ for ‘table cloth’.

In order to investigate the relationship between percentage Community lemma lexical origins and exclusive Yiddish usage at current and parental homes, we conducted a Two Way Analysis of Variance. A significant interaction was found between percentage of Modern Hebrew-origin lemmas and exclusive Yiddish usage at current and parental homes (F(1,44) = 8.39, p < .01, η_p^2 = 0.16), presented in Figure 4.

Since the number of participants in this analysis is low while the effect of the interaction is high (η_p^2 = 0.16) and the direction of differences was expected, we conducted the LSD (Least Significant Difference) test to determine the sources of this interaction. Results showed that for participants who use only Yiddish at home, those whose parents also used only Yiddish produce fewer Modern Hebrew-origin lemmas (50.8%) than those whose parents did not use only Yiddish at home (62.4%) (p < .05). In contrast, for those participants who currently

Fig. 3: Percentage of Community lemmas by lexical origin
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do not use only Yiddish at home, those whose parents used only Yiddish tend to produce more Modern Hebrew-origin lemmas (67.9%) than those whose parents did not use only Yiddish (54.8%), but n.s. (p < .10).

4.3 The Plural Task

Recall that participants were asked to pluralize the lemmas (N = 170) they had provided for the target items. For example, teler 'plate' was pluralized as telers by all study participants. However, as with the Naming Task, and again, confirming our expectations, lemmas often had more than one plural form, testifying to the current state of linguistic flux in the community. For example blim ‘flower’ was pluralized as blimen and blimlex. Several lemmas entailed even three or more plural forms, e.g., ferdn, ferds and zero-marked ferd ‘horses’. Thus, 170 lemmas yielded 331 plural responses, a mean of 1.9 plural forms per lemma. This distribution is presented in Figure 5.

For the purposes of the current chapter, we pooled together all 331 plural responses yielded in the pluralizing task for our analyses and classified them by plural marker types (categories). We started by assigning each plural response in our inventory (e.g., -s, -ex) into the nine Plural Marker Categories of Standard Yiddish. However it was soon clear that as with the nominal lemmas lexicon, Sanz Hasidic Yiddish does not entirely adhere to its Standard origins. Thus, new forms of plural nouns emerged, sometimes combined as in -ers (e.g., layb / ers) or umlaut + n (hun / hinen), or altogether different such as Modern Hebrew-derived...
feminine plural -ot as in vilon / ot ‘curtains’. These new types were not found in the Standard Yiddish dictionaries.

In fact, this analysis yielded the new system of 18 plural markers specific to the Sanz dialect of IH Yiddish. Before presenting their detailed analysis, Table 4 shows the distribution of all plural responses into three major categories by origin: Germanic, Loshn Kóydesh and Modern Hebrew.

According to Table 4, the main source of IH Yiddish plural markers is Germanic, followed far behind by the second main sources – Loshn Kóydesh, with Modern Hebrew constituting the smallest Origin category.

Table 5 presents an exhaustive classification of the Sanz Yiddish plural markers into these three origin categories: (1) Germanic Plural Markers, including both extant Standard but also the new Sanz-specific markers, e.g. -n and -ns as in tishn / tishns ‘table-s’, and the suffix -ex with multiple, virtually endless variations – for example lextalax, lixtlex, lextalex, lexelex, lextlex for ‘candles’ and keclax, kecalax, kecalex, kecelex for ‘cats’ (see Abugov [2011] for an exhaustive analysis of the -ex); (2) LK Plural Markers – characterized by Yiddish phonotactics – e.g., Standard -es deriving from LK -ot, as in xayes ‘animals’ (though not exclusively added to LK words); (3) Modern Hebrew Plurals Markers usually attached to Modern Hebrew lemmas such as kofim ‘monkeys’ and vilonot ‘curtains’. According to Table 5, the number of plural markers has almost doubled
Netta Abugov and Dorit Ravid

Table 5: Plural Markers in IH Sanz Yiddish spoken in Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Plural Marker</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germanic</td>
<td>-(e)n</td>
<td>bar-n</td>
<td>pears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ns*</td>
<td>zok-ns</td>
<td>socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-s</td>
<td>ferd-s</td>
<td>horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-er</td>
<td>tištex-er</td>
<td>table-cloths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ers*</td>
<td>loyb-ers</td>
<td>lions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>fiš-fiš</td>
<td>fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>umlaut</td>
<td>kac-kec</td>
<td>cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>u + ers*</td>
<td>boim-baymers</td>
<td>trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>u + n*</td>
<td>barg-bergn</td>
<td>mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>u + s*</td>
<td>tayp-teyps</td>
<td>tapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>u + -er*</td>
<td>kop-keper</td>
<td>heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>u + ex*</td>
<td>kop-kepalax</td>
<td>heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ex</td>
<td>benkl-benklex</td>
<td>chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loshn-Kóydesh</td>
<td>-es</td>
<td>dire-dires</td>
<td>apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-im</td>
<td>dokter-doktoyrim</td>
<td>doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Hebrew</td>
<td>-ot*</td>
<td>vilon-vilonot</td>
<td>curtains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-im*</td>
<td>kadur-kadurim</td>
<td>balls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates new plural markers which do not occur in Standard Yiddish

Fig. 6: High-frequency plural markers

from nine in Standard Yiddish to 17 plural categories in IH Yiddish (see new plural categories marked by *).

Figures 6 and 7 present the distribution of the 18 plural markers in the investigated community as percentages out of total responses. First, Figure 6 presents
high-frequency plural markers, that is, those occurring with the greatest fre-
quency in the participants’ responses.

All high-frequency plural markers also occur in the Standard Yiddish plural system with – (e)n, -s, -ex and -es as the most frequent plural markers in Sanz IH Yiddish. Figure 7 presents low-frequency plural markers.

According to the figure, most of the low-frequency plural markers are new (in the sense of absence from the standard dictionaries), Sanz-specific plurals. The only originally SY low-frequent plural markers are zero and -im.

5 Discussion

The current study is a first attempt at investigating a Yiddish dialect using system-
atic socio- and psycholinguistic tools. In order to better understand the bilingual context participants live in we first administered a background questionnaire fo-
cusing in this paper on the language prevalent in the participant’s parental home and language prevalent in the participant’s current home. This endeavor clearly showed that over generations there is a tendency towards using only Yiddish as a home language, not only for participants who come from families who used only Yiddish at home, but also for participants who come from families where both Yiddish and Modern Hebrew were used at home. This result is in line with the Ultra-Orthodox “linguistic trend” to use as much Yiddish as possible, especially with the children (Abogov 2011). As shown before, being a Yiddish native speaker in the UO community is considered an advantage (for example, girls may get a better match etc.) (Tannenbaum and Abogov 2010). There are even some books “calling” people to use Yiddish – the true “MameLoshen”, lit. ‘Mother/Mama
tongue’, rather than Modern Hebrew – which is considered by some as a polluted language – a language that distorted LK and is now used in non-sacred contexts.

In Sanz community, in the past ten years the girls system shifted from being Hebrew-dominant to Yiddish-dominant (Abugov, forthcoming). These sociolinguistic developments provide a reasonable explanation for participants’ tendency to talk only Yiddish at home compared to their parental homes.

In addition, adult participants of our study belong to the “generation of consolidation” of IH Yiddish and their children are the true native speakers – raised in more isolated Yiddish speaking homes. In a way, it is like investigating Hebrew spoken by the first generation in Israel which was also in its consolidation stage. That is why only later generations are considered the genuine Hebrew native speakers, and from that time on studies are still following the changes in Hebrew. In Yiddish, as we found in the Sociolinguistic Background Study, we know that the adult speakers are indeed sort of the first generation after World War II.

Our psycholinguistic analysis focused on analyzing mostly concrete, everyday Yiddish nouns in the Ultra-Orthodox Sanz community from two different perspectives: the lemmas used to label them and their plural forms. Our general results indicate that Sanz Yiddish is keeping close to its Germanic origins, though with interesting and challenging extensions and expansions demonstrating that the IH Yiddish nominal lexicon is fraught with variation in both lexical and grammatical aspects. To address this issue, we pursued a systematic path in analyzing lemmas and plural forms in this study: on the one hand, we relied on Standard Yiddish dictionaries and grammars as a platform for the construction of target items and initial categorizations. However, as we expected in a Yiddish-speaking community living, studying and working in lively and intensive interaction with Modern Hebrew, these initial categorizations were not adequate for our goal, since both tasks elicited multiple responses – the 95 items of the Naming Task yielded almost double their number in lemmas, many of which had more than one plural form in the Plural Task.

5.1 The Sanz UO nominal lexicon

Participants’ lexical choices for the items they were asked to name yielded between one and five lemmas per each target item. Thus, we first extended our investigation into the 170 noun lemmas used to designate the 95 target items in the Naming Task. As can be expected of a multi-dialectal language existing in a constant languages-in-contact situation, more than half of the target items were designated by a single lemma (e.g., shtayn ‘stone’, briv ‘letter’, xusn ‘groom’) while
close to a half were assigned more than one lemma (Yiddish shlang and Modern Hebrew naxash for ‘snake’; Yiddish bal, English bol, Modern Hebrew kadur and tabele for ‘ball’, bal, bol, kadur and tabele for ‘ball’).

We proceeded to inquire into the usage patterns of these Sanz noun lemmas, finding that the overwhelming majority of lemmas appeared in one or more of the three dictionaries of Standard Yiddish. Many of these Dictionary lemmas designated core lexical constants such as body parts, kinship terms, temporal and cultural notions traditionally practiced in the community (e.g. ay ‘egg’, tug ‘day’, xasene ‘wedding’). The lemmas which do not appear in any of the dictionaries (designated Community in this study) mostly reflect modern life in Israel, indicating mostly household items and appliances (e.g. buba for ‘doll’, tayp for ‘radio’, bayk for ‘bicycle’), and animals, as elaborated below.

Relatedly, some of the participants did not know how to label certain target items in Yiddish. For example, 37% of the responses given by participants indicated that they did not know the Yiddish word for ‘elephant’. It is interesting to note that many of these don’t-know target items (complementing the 82% Dictionary and 14% Community lemmas to 100%) designated animals, which are not a salient feature of the UO cultural context. For example, one female participant thought that the word pil was the Yiddish word for ‘elephant’. A closer examination of this category indicates that our participants were familiar with animals either as a source of food or else as appearing in sacred scripts, and thus could recognize and designate kosher animals better than non-domestic and non-kosher animals. For example, most participants did not recognize the target item ‘rabbit’ (a non-kosher animal) since it is very probable that they had never seen it or its image, or heard any story with a rabbit in it. Along the same lines, some participants thought they were using Yiddish but were in fact unknowingly using Modern Hebrew words to designate animals (for example, a 25 year old women produced the Modern Hebrew lemma pil for ‘elephant’ thinking that she was producing the Yiddish lemma. This analysis sheds light on the cultural context of the Hasidic community which excludes pets and seldom includes visits to the zoo (AbuGov 2011), on the one hand, while interacting with secular life in Israel. Indeed, consistent with other findings (Berman 2007; Rayfield 1970), the languages-in-contact situation of Yiddish and Modern Hebrew is strongly reflected in the Sanz nominal lexicon: Modern Hebrew items constitute over half of the Community lemmas (e.g., kof for ‘monkey’, sus for ‘horse’, ma’arox for ‘roll pin’, matate for ‘broom’, and maxshev for ‘computer’).

We also found a relationship between percentage Community lemma origins and exclusive Yiddish usage at current and parental homes. Thus, participants who grew up in Yiddish-only homes and still maintain this linguistic exclusiveness produce fewer Modern Hebrew-related lemmas. This shows that exclusive
Yiddish usage over generations might be a useful tool for examining the impact of Modern Hebrew over Yiddish.

5.2 The plural system of Sanz Yiddish

Processes of language change, manifested in the variegated facets of the Sanz Yiddish nominal lexicon, were also clearly apparent in the grammatical system of noun plurals. This particular window on Sanz grammar revealed the linguistic flux and the impact of Modern Hebrew on the Yiddish plural system reflected in a state of linguistic variation. In sheer numbers, the 170 lemmas entailed 331 plural responses, that is, almost two plural forms per lemma – with about half of the lemmas having one plural form (e.g., teler-s ‘plates’, os-oysies ‘letters’, shlisl-ex ‘keys’) and one half resulting in two or more different plural forms (e.g., bilders for bild ‘picture’, trob, trobn, trobns and trobalax for trob ‘grape’). This numerical outcome underscores the two major findings of this study – the new Modern Hebrew category in the plural system of Sanz Yiddish, and the host of novel plural markers, as elaborated below.

Our first conclusion is that Sanz Yiddish plurals retain their Germanic identity: 95% of the responses were Germanic (e.g., kop / kep ‘head-s’, maranc / n ‘orang-s’, benkl / ex ‘chair-s’) or Loshn Kóydesh (bar micve / bar mics ‘bar mitzvah-s’, sayfer / sfurim ‘book-s’) in origin. Secondly, our analysis revealed a set of new Sanz Yiddish-specific noun plural markers such as -ers (tishtex / ers ‘table-s’) or umlaut + (e)n (tug / tegn ‘day-s’). An in-depth analysis of these additional nine plural markers revealed that six of them are of Germanic origin and three belong to the new plural marker category of Modern Hebrew. The new Germanic plural markers are all a combination of already existing Standard plural markers. For example, combining Germanic -n and -s formed the new suffix -ns as in tishns ‘tables’ and shuens ‘hours’. Another novel combination is between -er and -s which formed the new suffix -ers as in tishtexers ‘table-cloths’ and laybers ‘lions’. More combinations were also produced with the umlaut, adding to the familiar umlaut + er the marker umlaut + ers as in mol / maylers ‘mouth-s’, umlaut + n as in tug / tegn ‘day-s’ and umlaut + s as in barg / bergs ‘mountain-s’. Thus, findings indicate that while the overwhelming majority of Sanz Yiddish plurals are Germanic in character, Modern Hebrew exerts a small yet clear influence on this system.

Analysis of the frequencies of all plural markers reveals that high-frequency plural markers in the Sanz Yiddish plural system also occur in Standard Yiddish. Consistent with other findings (Zaretski 1926; Volf 1977) the most common plural markers in Sanz Yiddish are the Germanic -n and -s. Nevertheless, Germanic -ex...
and LK -es also paved their way as high frequent plural markers of Sanz Yiddish, closely followed by Germanic -er, umlaut and umlaut + er. Sanz Yiddish low-frequency plural markers consist of Standard based LK -im and Germanic zero, showing how unstable their status is. All other low-frequency plural markers are the additional Sanz-specific innovations, with Modern Hebrew -im and -ot closely followed by the combined Germanic -ers, and U + ex / ers / n and -ns.

This first attempt at characterizing the nominal lexicon and the plural system of IH Yiddish was undertaken in the absence of previous systematic psycholinguistic studies of Yiddish, and was based on the assumption that contact with Modern Hebrew would have a significant impact on this Yiddish dialect. The article has shed new light on sociolinguistic issues concerning the amount and character of Yiddish-only usage across generations in the Israeli Hasidic community, and on the core nominal lexicon of the community as well as on an important area in its inflectional morphology. The Sanz Hasidic community in Israel exemplifies a multiply variegated linguistic context in which children grow up and acquire a highly variable language.

Finally, although no studies to date systematically describe the impact of Modern Hebrew on IH Yiddish nouns and noun plurals, the sociolinguistic facts point to such an effect: the establishment of the Israeli state created a new sociolinguistic context characterized by an intensive contact with Modern Hebrew, laying the foundations for the claim that Yiddish is undergoing change in a new sociolinguistic context under the pressure of modern life expressed by Modern Hebrew. These changes are apparent in both the nominal lexicon and its plural forms: Modern Hebrew supplies an alternative source of grammatical plural forms, and the current plural system of IH Yiddish reflects both its historical origins and its new sociolinguistic context.

These results serve as a baseline to the investigation of plural acquisition in Sanz community (Abugov 2011; Abugov and Ravid 2013). Yet, further research should systematically investigate other Hasidic communities in Israel and worldwide as well as other linguistic structures that may be influence by similar language-in-contact situations.

References


