Linguistic socialization and social identity
Arab students in a mixed college in Israel[1]

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Abstract

The following article brings results from an error analysis of data collected from Arab students whose L1 is Arabic and L2 is Hebrew. The subjects participated in a Project of Democracy and Co-Existence between Arab and Jewish students, which took place in a teacher training college in Israel in the school year of 2001-2002. The research focused on checking the extent of the variability that occurred in the Hebrew used by the subjects because of their interaction with the Jewish students (for whom Hebrew is obviously their L1). The data is comparative and pertains to the differences found between the achievements in Hebrew of the participants in each one of the two optional groups: the Democracy group, which consisted of Arab students only, (hence referred to as "homogeneous"), and the Co-Existence group, which consisted of both Jewish and Arab students (hence referred to as "mixed"). All Arab participants also attended, as part of their formal requirements, a course in Hebrew throughout their studies in the college.

Theoretical background

The research, which checks the linguistic aspects of the relationship between two national groups – Jews and Arabs, stems from a socio-psychological theory called the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (hence ODT), (Brewer 1991) (see below), which itself can be regarded as a follow-up of a few variants of the classical social and sociolinguistic theories which thrived in the late 70s and throughout the 80s.

The first is the Social Identity Theory (SIT), according to which a group creates not only a social, but also a psychological reality, so that every member of it, apart from having the individual identity, which he bears from the moment of his birth, also shares the identity of the group he belongs to (Tajfel 1982, Turner et al 1987). In other words, one's personal identity is comprised of both his individual identity, which consists of various personality traits, and of one's social identity which the individual acquires by belonging to a certain social group on the basis of traits shared by all of its members, such

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[1] The research described in this article is part of a doctoral dissertation bearing the same name.

as: gender, nationality, religion, political party, academic status, sports group, place of residence etc. According to this view, there is a dialectical relationship between the individual and the society, which is mediated by the social identity and which unfolds in three phases:

- Human beings are born into an existent structure and into a fixed category (according to gender, skin colour, parental affiliation, place of birth, status etc.), in this respect, the social structure is prior to the human being.
- If all the members of the existing groups accept the existing ideology (which usually belongs to the dominant group), and at the same time identify with the characteristics of their own category, they acquire a definite social identity.
- This identity generates their self-concept, which might be either positive or negative. At the same time, belonging to a subordinate group might cause its members to generate a negative identity followed by a low self-esteem. In this case, they might be willing to try to improve their social status. This is the point when a series of changes might be launched and the whole social structure becomes dynamic.

Two strategies might be engaged for this sake: social mobility and social change. We will elaborate here more on the former since it is more relevant for our purposes.

This strategy depends on the view that the borders between the social groups are permeable and enable the individuals to pass from one group to another relatively easily. If the passage succeeds, thanks to hard work, helpful social acquaintances, linguistic accommodation (see below), etc., they, and probably their relatives as well, will be redefined as members of the dominant group, getting all the relevant social benefits.

The follow-up of this milestone theory was the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory (hence EIT) (Ball, Giles and Hewstone 1984), which applied the SIT to the relationship between majority and minority groups in a society. This theory opted to predict the linguistic changes that would possibly occur in the languages of various ethnic groups under different circumstances. The advantage of this theory is its ability to integrate social structure and individual linguistic behaviour in the case of various ethnic groups operating simultaneously.

The next step was the Linguistic Accommodation Theory (hence LAT) (Giles 1984), which is actually embedded in the EIT and aims at both explaining the systematic differences which occur in this ethnolinguistic arena and predicting the possible trends of development. In fact, the linguistic changes fall into two major categories:

- a convergence process, when the speaker is trying to adopt (to a lesser or greater extent) the linguistic characteristics of the addressee while abandoning those of her own. This is aimed at weakening the original traits of her social belonging in order to help her pass into the addressee's group.
- a divergence process, when the speaker sticks to her original linguistic characteristics and emphasizes her original identity.

One of these two processes might be used by the speakers wishing to either improve their social identity or rather emphasize their unwillingness to integrate.

And yet, since things are often not as schematic as they might seem from the above scenarios, let us have a closer look at the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (hence ODT), which seems to reflect our case much more accurately. According to this theory, human beings are motivated to achieve a balance between contrasting needs: on the one hand, the need to assimilate in order to accentuate the feeling of belonging to groups which enjoy positive social value, and on the other hand, there is the need to diverge in order to preserve the feeling of independence and the original, unique identity. Brewer assumes the two-directional movement is simultaneous.

The ODT was, indeed, the socio-psychological starting point of the following research. The SIT and its follow-ups were accepted as valid, but because we deal here with two national groups, it is not surprising that we have found a mixed pattern which seems to have reflected simultaneously the contrasting wishes on the part of the subjects in question: to gain acceptance on the one hand without loosing their original identity on the other.

Research on Israeli multiculturality

In addition to these classical sociolinguistic theories, we should now examine some of the data obtained from the current fieldwork in the sphere of multicultural group-work in Israel. We will offer here just a brief overview, since the focus of that work is not linguistic. However, the social dilemmas, which have been uncovered there, shed some very significant light on the results obtained by this research, since the linguistic modification we are dealing with occurred among the participants of a multicultural group as well.

The following summary pertains to a number of research papers all conducted in Israel in the late 90s on various aspects of the Israeli multiculturality (Kacen & Lev-Wiesel, 2002). The existing data encompasses a great deal of the social variety and social polarity of Israel: Jews and Arabs, Oriental Jews and those coming from the Western countries, secular, moderate religious and orthodox communities, veteran citizens and new immigrants, northern Arabs and southern Bedouins, residents of urban centers, and rural settlements (such as kibbutz or moshav). In addition to these, we also find the heated political disputes between Right and Left Wing ideologies, representing respectively those who dream about keeping all the conquered territories and those willing to give them back and support the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Such a structure inhibits the prospect of successful social integration. The deeper the discrepancies and the more vocal and outspoken the sectorial ideologies are, the poorer the economic resources, and the bigger the needs, the more tense and hostile the inter-group relations become. The increasing hostility, which has lately become characteristic of the whole of Israeli society, endangers the general status quo and is hazardous to the stability of the whole social system.

In view of this, the current discourse in Israel, both personal and public, not surprisingly expresses a lot of heated emotions, covering the genuine anxiety for fragile, personal welfare. Mautner, Sagi and Shamir (1988) claim that a dialogue between conflicting groups today reflects a competition and a

struggle over resources rather than a real dialogue. Bar-On (1999) finds the outcome of this situation in a demonisation of the "other".

Such a social climate leads to the loss of a rational attitude to the various conflicts and to the emergence of externalised, irrational emotions of hatred towards the opposite stands. There is no doubt that, as long as this heated atmosphere does not change, it would be rather difficult to view the Israeli society as really multicultural, where different cultures exist side by side in a relative harmony and enjoy both respect and legitimacy from the individuals as well as from the establishment itself (Leonetti, 1994).

The following are some of the conclusions reached by the group of researchers working with several conflicting groups in Israel (all data provided by Kacen & Lev-Wiesel 2002):

All the researchers unanimously agree that it is not enough to provide an opportunity for an encounter between conflicting sides, especially when the conflict is historical, ideological and national and has been fostered for a great many years. They claim that a real dialogue can be created only provided emotional and cognitive barriers have been overcome first. Otherwise, any attempt to create a mutual openness will probably fail right from the start:

- Sagi, Steinberg and Faheraldin, who studied a mixed group of Jewish and Arab students at the Ben-Gurion University in Beer-Sheva (a group very similar to the one reported in our research), claim that a significant encounter between the participants of such a group can only occur at the micro-level, focusing on what they call "the personal rather than the collective I".
- Lev-Wiesel claims that a genuine encounter between conflicting groups is always emotional, not rational.
- Bar-On (2000), working with second generation Holocaust victims and their German creators, believes that the encounter was possible due to the empathy that was created as a result of each participant first being encouraged to tell his own personal story.
- The personal experience can either precede or follow other phases of the group encounter, for instance, conflicting political stands are externalized, but the encounter becomes significant only after emotional bridges have been constructed between the conflicting sides.

We will later examine the linguistic implications of these conclusions.

Before we start presenting the data, it seems appropriate to look into the nature of the unique national group in question.

The Arab Minority in Israel

The Arab population in Israel comprises a national minority of 20% of the total population. This national minority interacts with the Jewish population, which is the national majority in the country. However, on the Israeli scene the concept of nationality is tricky, since there is no separation between religion and nationality in the state, and since the ordinary meaning of the concept as it is known from other Western countries, here is referred to through citizenship. Furthermore, Israel has never devel-

oped a notion of Israeli nationality, which would encompass all its citizens as it is in the case of the American nationality, for instance, including all American citizens, or in the case of Spain, where the notion of Spanish nationality includes both Castilians from Madrid and Catalonians from Barcelona.

Things are even trickier in the Arab sector. Israeli Arabs are Israeli citizens just like Jews, but their nationality is considered Arabic. Furthermore, parallel to the notion of the "Jewish people", the Arabs have the notion of the "Arab people", though they assign it a totally different meaning. From their point of view, the Arab people is comprised of a few nations mainly according to the territory they live on, and as a result, we get the Egyptian nation, the Saudi-Arabian nation, the Iraqi nation etc., and in the Israeli case, they refer to themselves as the Palestinian nation (or part of it) whose place of residence is Israel.

All this plays a role when we come to understand some of the reasons for the tension that exists between the Arab population and the state of Israel. The Arab sector strives to be regarded as a national minority both because it has feelings of belonging to the Great Arabic People (living mostly in the Middle East) and because there is no all-encompassing Israeli nationality that would embrace it as well. However, the state of Israel is strongly hesitant on this issue, mainly because it fears the political implications of a case, such as claim for territories within the state, or other signs of political sovereignty (Samooha 1996).

As a consequence, the Arab sector is traditionally viewed by the state only as an ethnic group which is entitled to a lot of freedom with respect to linguistic, cultural and various folkloristic matters, but to no freedom at all with respect to issues of national independence with a symbolic significance, such as a flag, a capital city or a national anthem.

Indeed, if we examine in more detail the language policy pertaining to the Arab minority, we will find autonomy on the following issues: First, Arabic is considered as one of the two official languages of Israel, side by side with Hebrew. As a result, all official forms are either written bilingually or have an Arabic version. Signposts on roads or in public places are bilingual as well. In addition, Arabic is recognized officially as the L1 of the Arab citizens and consequently is used as the formal language of instruction throughout the educational system, from kindergarten up to high school. Hebrew, however, is taught as a compulsory L2 from fourth grade onwards. It is only in the academic institutions, colleges or universities, that Hebrew becomes the language of instruction. In addition to this, there is also free press in Arabic, as well as a newsreel on both radio and television.

These facts play a important role in trying to understand the linguistic behaviour of Arab citizens in Israel, facing the choice of manoeuvring between the two languages at their disposal (we ignore English, which is their compulsory L3, since it is irrelevant in this context).

Attention should be drawn to yet another fact: There is a large discrepancy between the northern Arabs, be it Muslims, Christians or Druze and the southern Arabs called Bedouins. The gaps are significant on most levels in favour of the northern group, but the situation is especially painful when it comes to education. This is not the appropriate place to elaborate on these matters, but we will just mention the fact that all the Bedouins of the south, to which all the informants of this research belong, were former nomads, some of them partially still are, some have been forced to settle in modern villages, which the

elderly often despise, since they view this as a hostile act of resettlement. At most places it is possible to find emerging disputes between the older and younger generations over all issues pertaining to modernity, be it the extent to which one should still adhere to tradition, accept the dictates of the government with respect to the place of residence or feel motivated to learn the Hebrew language beyond the compulsory basics.

We will refer to this issue again while analysing the results of the research in front of us.

The Kaye College of Education

Let us first start with a brief look at the setting the research took place in.

Kaye College is a teacher-training college situated in Beer-Sheva, which is the biggest city in the southern part of Israel. It has about a thousand regular students, studying for their B.Ed. in Teaching, and about the same number who studies in special, short-term target courses of various types. About 30% of the regular students are Arabs, mainly Bedouins from the South. Only about 10% of the total number of the Arab students, and usually even less, come from the north of Israel, and they are usually on a higher level than those from all the southern vicinity.

On the whole, the Arab students study in the framework of their sector, where courses dealing with Arab culture, language and tradition as well as courses in Methodology and Didactics (applied specifically to the Arab sector) are taught in Arabic. This is true for the vast majority of the Arab college students, apart from the very few ones (around 20-30) who specialize in the junior-high stream and take integrative courses with the Jewish students in Methodology and Didactics as well.

All Arab students take three compulsory courses in Hebrew (one per year). In addition, they study together with the Jewish students in the compulsory courses of Computers and English, which are taken in the first year only.

It is quite clear from this picture that there is only scarce, and often close to no interaction between the Arab and Jewish populations in the college, apart from those few Arab students studying in the junior-high stream, or the very rare cases of Arab male students who specialize in Physical Education (roughly 2-3 a year, and sometimes none) and who join the general P.E. stream (which is mostly Jewish).

This is why the Co-Existence project, which is available for the Arab students when they are in their third year of studies, provides them with a unique opportunity to meet the Jewish students under different circumstances and perhaps for the first time to develop a significant acquaintance with them.

We will now take a closer look at this unique framework.

The Project of Co-Existence and Democracy

The project is a unique unit in the college where students of both sides meet in a framework of workshops in one of two possible streams, 'Co-Existence' and 'Democracy':

The Project of Co-Existence and Democracy
103 students
Co-existence:
3 mixed groups, in total: 29 Arab students (9 + 10 + 10) and 25 Jewish students (9 + 8 + 8)
Democracy:
3 homogeneous groups, in total: 49 Arab students (16 + 16 + 17)
The research was conducted in the college in the school year of 2001-2002

For various internal reasons related to a non-identical structure of the studies in the Jewish and the Arab sectors, all Arab third-year students were included in the project, whereas for the Jewish students it was an elective course. In order to grant the Arab students with at least a certain feeling of choice, and at the same time to solve the problem of the uneven number of students on both sides, two optional streams were created for the Arab students: one, which consisted of a mixed population of both Jewish and Arab participants and focused on matters of co-existence, and the other, which consisted of Arab students only (hence called "homogeneous") and focused on matters of democracy with a specific emphasis on the rights of a minority in a modern, democratic state.

In both frameworks, the language of instruction was Hebrew. In the mixed groups, Hebrew was used both by L1 speakers (the Jewish students) and by L2 speakers (the Arab students), while in the homogeneous groups, it was used by L-2 speakers only. In both kinds of groups, the students participated in workshops (rather than in frontal lessons), sitting in a circle discussing matters or taking part in activities that the instructor brought up. All participants went on two outings, one per semester, and all prepared one minor project at the end of the first term and a final, major project at the end of the year. All projects were done in teams (usually pairs or quartets). In the case of the mixed groups, all teams, who spent quite a substantial time on preparing the projects, always had to be mixed too.

The aim of this research was twofold: first, following the LAT (see above), the aim was to check to what extent the Bedouins' participation in mixed or in homogeneous groups and experiencing varying amounts of interaction with the Jewish students, indeed affected their performance in Hebrew.

In other words, in terms of this research, the differences in the performance of Hebrew which were expected to be found between the participants of the mixed groups and those of the homogeneous groups were explained in the following way:

Since all the informants took compulsory courses in Hebrew, it was believed that a possible discrepancy between the Hebrew of the participants of the mixed groups and those of the homogeneous groups with respect to various parameters of Hebrew could well be expected. It was further assumed that the discrepancy in performance would be in favour of the participants of the mixed groups. Such results could validly be interpreted as a consequence of being exposed both to more linguistic input in the target language and to stronger social integration and intra-group communication (Ellis 1998, Krashen 1985).

However, a possible correlation between better results in L2 acquisition with a greater motivation to integrate with Israeli society at large, and the students of the college in particular, could possibly be seen as a result of convergence compatible with the LAT. Apart from conducting a sheer linguistic analysis, this is why we also looked into the participants' attitudes to the target language and then checked the correlation between the two.

Data was collected from both the mixed and the homogeneous groups four times during the school year in two ways: Since spontaneous speech was impossible to get as due to the participants' refusal to be recorded, they were asked to write short pieces of free writing in Hebrew on any one of a list of subjects offered to them. In addition to this, syntactic competence was also checked by having them choose between correct and erroneous sentences presented to them on questionnaires.

It should be noted that minor differences were already traced in favour of the future participants of the mixed groups on the very first test in Hebrew, which was given right before the project had started. This, of course, can be explained in several ways and we shall elaborate on this point in the concluding section.

The data was measured on three parameters of the students linguistic competence – the grammatical, the stylistic and the lexical. These three parameters were chosen since each one of them reflects a different aspect of language: grammar, which is a rule-governed system, reflects the formal aspect and as such, lends itself to formal instruction; style reflects the subjective aspect since it is usually a matter of choice (Crystal 1992), and the lexicon provides a very interesting tool for assessing both linguistic competence in terms of richness and appropriateness of vocabulary, and attitudinal changes. It was assumed that these three aspects may offer a convenient tool for detecting traits of either convergence or divergence.

The tool for assessment was error analysis which measured, in quantitative terms, the progress made with respect to each parameter throughout the year, and then compared the results between the two kinds of groups: mixed and homogeneous.

A general remark concerning methodology should be made here, however: In all the calculations, the sentence was regarded as the basic unit of measurement so that every error, be it grammatical, stylistic or lexical, got maximum one point, no matter how many times an error of the same kind appeared in a sentence. The number of errors of the same kind in one and the same sentence was ignored intentionally but errors of different kinds were calculated. This was done to enable comparison between the groups.

Let us now look at what happened on each of the three levels in question (Chart no. 1):

The difference between the groups with respect to errors

Figures represent percents

at the beginning of the project:

	grammatical	stylistic	lexical
mixed	22	81	12
homogeneous	25	84	16

in the middle of the first semester:

	grammatical	stylistic	lexical
mixed	23	78	11
homogeneous	25	83	15

in the middle of the second semester:

	grammatical	stylistic	lexical
mixed	20	64	9
homogeneous	24	78	14

at the end of the year:

	grammatical	stylistic	lexical
mixed	14	45	6
homogeneous	20	78	14

Chart no. 1

Grammatical level

Errors found at this level fall into several categories: First, there is a large group of syntactic errors, with cases such as subject-verb disagreement in terms of number or gender. Since Hebrew is a language where both nouns, verbs and adjectives can be pluralized, it would be unacceptable in a sentence to have a subject in the plural and its verb in the singular. Besides, nouns in Hebrew are classified as either masculine or feminine, and furthermore, adjectives and verbs have gender as well. A lack of correlation between these parameters in a sentence is considered erroneous as seen in the following example:

betach she-hajamim ha-achronim shinta et daati.
(surely that the days the last changed my mind.)

The problem arises because the noun which functions as the subject, and its adjacent adjective appear correctly in the plural of the masculine form, whereas the verb that follows is both in the singular and

in the feminine form. In other words, we have here a case of double disagreement, both in terms of number, plural-singular, and in terms of gender, masculine-feminine.

Another kind of grammatical error falls into the category of either misplacement or a total lack of prepositions, connectives or other vital components, such as demonstratives or pronouns:

ani choshevet ha-jeladim son'im et habanot sham.
(I think the kids hate the girls there.)

This sentence lacks the connective "that" following the verb "think" which in Hebrew is indispensable. (The reason for this very frequent error is most probably negative transfer from Arabic, where such sentences are possible).

Another kind of grammatical error is a lack of balance in terms of attaching the article "the" only to one out of two words in a phrase:

ani roah tzad ha-sheni hu lo tov.
(I see side the other it's no good).

In Hebrew, in a sequence of adjective-noun, the article "the" should either precede both words or not appear at all; otherwise an unbalanced, and therefore an unacceptable structure follows.

From the research the following result with respect to grammar were found. The difference between the two types of groups exists but is not very significant on the first test. Then, about two months later, on the second test, we see an increase in errors in the mixed group although we see no progress in the homogenous group: from 22% at the beginning of the year to 23% in the middle of the first semester. There may be two different reasons for this result. First, it might be a random, insignificant occurrence. In this case, we would say that among these participants, just like among those of the other group, two months after the beginning of the project, there was still no real progress made.

Secondly, perhaps we might not unreasonably assume that since these highly motivated participants got very positively encouraged to communicate with their peers from the other national group, and since the atmosphere was reported as fairly supportive, the subjects might have felt quite comfortable to speak freely. Under these circumstances, the increase in errors probably reflected an increase in their initiative and in the total bulk of the speech that they produced, including an increase in more complex sentences. In other words, this new complexity resulted in producing more errors, especially as regards structure.

If this explanation is accurate, these errors should be seen in a positive light, since they actually reflected much greater and more vivid communication than they handled only a short time earlier.

Then the trend changed towards the end of the first half of the second semester. At that point we can see a decline in errors in both types of groups. The participants in the mixed groups made quite a remarkable progress, going down from 23% to 20% errors, while in the homogeneous groups there was just a slight movement from 25% to 24%. The fourth test at the end of the year showed a substantial

progress on the part of all participants, with better results in the mixed groups. Here, the subjects moved from 20% on the third exam to 14% on the final one, which produces a total of 27.2% improvement since the beginning of the year. At the same time, the subjects in the homogeneous groups moved from 24% on the third exam to 20% on the final one, which results in a total improvement of 20% since the beginning of school year.

All in all, it is quite evident that grammatical knowledge of Hebrew was acquired in both groups, probably non-relatedly to the subjects' participation in the double-streamed project. The progress might quite reasonably be related to the compulsory lessons of Hebrew taken by the Arab students.

Still, two differences between the two types of groups should not be ignored. First, the participants of the mixed groups made a much more remarkable progress than those in the homogeneous groups in quantitative terms. In addition to this, qualitatively speaking, they seemed to be much more willing to express themselves. Their pieces of writing were much longer than those of their peers in the homogeneous groups and they used more complex language while trying to express themselves. In the homogeneous groups, most of the subjects used simpler sentences, both structurally and lexically, and to a great extent, this simplicity and relative linguistic poverty stayed unchanged throughout the year.

Stylistic level

In this category, we find errors mainly of the following kinds: a mixture of formal and informal register appearing simultaneously in the same discourse, and sometimes even in the same sentence, redundant connectors and anaphoras and a large number of run-on sentences:

*ha-avira shesarera bemahalach hapgishot **hi** meshakefet mi anachnu.
(the atmosphere that prevailed in the course of the meetings **it** reflects who we are).

*hapeulot shehoavru **hem** mat'imim lishnei hatzdadim.
(The activities that were carried out **they** are suitable for both sides).

In the above sentences, the anaphoric pronoun which is placed between the extended subject and the verb is redundant, and therefore erroneous, in Hebrew. This sentence presents another problem, namely that it is a borderline case between grammatical and stylistic errors. This is so, since, structurally speaking, we have a redundant component. However, the case of the redundant anaphora has become a major trait of the Hebrew spoken by Arab speakers and has penetrated even folkloristic imitations of such speech. (The second sentence has a grammatical error as well but it is ignore here on purpose).

Another stylistic mistake is mixing formal and informal registers in the same sentence:

*hashiurim haju achla aval ani lo margisha shehem mevinim ma avar al amejnu.
(The lessons were cool but I don't feel that they understand what passed on our nation.)

The problem with this sentence is that the first clause contains the slang word *achla*, which has the meaning of "cool" or "great" and is used mostly by young speakers. Interestingly, it was borrowed into Hebrew from Arabic, and now the Arab speakers imitating Hebrew slang, use it as part of their conver-

gence to the "cool Israeli youth", using it as an Israeli modernism, as a sign of belonging to the "cool users of slang", not as a word from Arabic! However, the second clause of this sentence includes the very formal word *amejnu*, meaning "our nation", and is a formal combination of the standard, uncombined form of *am shelanu*, meaning exactly the same. No native speaker of Hebrew would use both the word in slang in the first clause and this combined formal word in one and the same sentence. With respect to these two words, it is reasonable to surmise that this unacceptable usage is simply a matter of a lack of awareness of their operating on different levels of formality.

In fact, stylistic problems are sometimes difficult to detect since they are hidden in otherwise grammatical sentences. And yet, they form the dominant characteristic of the erroneous speech performed by the subjects in both types of groups.

Once again, we see that right from the start, the subjects in the mixed groups did better than their peers in the homogeneous groups (81% vs. 84% respectively). However, unlike the situation on the syntactic level, the changes that took place here were indeed remarkable in two ways: first, all subjects made constant progress in terms of style, though the dramatic changes which took place in the mixed groups going down in big leaps from 78% on the second exam to 64% on the third, then further down to 45% on the final, resulted in 44.4% of total improvement the mixed group achieved, compared with only 7.1% of improvement in the homogeneous groups.

These figures strongly suggest that style is mainly affected by communicative interaction (the way it happened in the mixed groups) and no results even slightly reminiscent of this rank can ever be achieved through formal instruction only.

However, not all stylistic features were affected in the same way. Erroneous switch of register was the first to decline, though as it has been pointed out to a much greater extent in the mixed groups. With respect to the run-on sentences, little progress was made in both groups, though again the mixed ones yielded better results, and the slight progress which did occur, was sometimes overshadowed by the attempt to express complex ideas. With respect to misplaced or redundant connectors, the picture is not one-dimensional. In some cases, this kind of error has disappeared completely, while in others, especially in the homogeneous groups certain connectives such as *ve-gam*, meaning "and also", seem to be most stubborn, possibly a matter of fossilization.

Lexical level

This aspect of linguistic competence is closely connected to the stylistic one, and yet, it is the most intricate to test. For various reasons the lexical level is difficult to assess. Only in very few cases a certain word is clearly a matter of wrong choice. An example from English might clarify the point. Although the adjectives *high* and *tall* obviously share some semantic features, it would be wrong to say * *a high person* or **a tall* mountain. However, what do we do with a sequence such as:

Oh, thank you for the nice food.

How do we know whether the speaker, obviously wishing to complement the food he liked, actually wanted to say "nice", or rather had the idea of "tasty" in mind. But having forgotten the word in the

foreign language he was using, he said instead "nice", hoping it would convey at least some of the positive feelings he had.

How can we be sure about these vague cases at all? And what should we do about a mistaken sequence of the following kind:

I have friends who spoke me about the course.

Should we regard the missing preposition *to*, which was supposed to follow the verb *spoke* as a syntactic error or rather as a lexical one, assuming that the speaker confused *spoke* with *told*?

In addition to this problem, a strikingly poor vocabulary is another problem not susceptible to a quantitative analysis. No doubt, it would be useful to explore these matters with qualitative tools, but this is not our concern here.

As we can see, the assessment of the lexical competence through the prism of error analysis is not an easy matter at all. As mentioned earlier, we ignored the fact that some sentences had more than one erroneous lexical item, and assigned every erroneous sentence (with one error or more) just one point, as we did with the syntactic and the stylistic parameters.

Here too, from the very start we could see a discrepancy between the performance of subjects in both groups. The 4% gap in favour of the mixed groups at the outset turned into 8% at the end of the year. The meaning of this is that the participants of the homogeneous groups have undergone almost no significant lexical change at all, and the progress of 12.5% they made was very scarce. At the same time, the subjects in the mixed groups have made an extremely remarkable progress of 50% fewer errors at the end of the year.

Conclusions

The results of this research show the unbeatable consequences of a social interaction that creates not only the physical setting for spontaneous speech and an extensive exposure to the target language, but also those rare and dear moments of real dialogue. As reported by Kacen and Lev-Wiesel (2002), it was only after those "dialogical moments" (Steinberg, in Kacen and Lev-Wiesel) were created and emotional openness followed, that it was possible to observe a change of conduct on the part of the participants. The results obtained by this research seem to reflect the same reality and support the same conclusions from a linguistic perspective. There is no doubt that dealing with conflicting groups and having them sit in a circle and participate in a workshop seems to create favourable circumstances. These might enhance a whole variety of social dynamics, which in turn, might be well reflected through the linguistic prism.

There is no doubt that the greatest effect of the interaction between both populations takes place on the stylistic and lexical levels. Here, the convergence to Hebrew speakers seems very remarkable and clearly noticeable. The grammatical development, however, does not seem to be the result of an unconscious process of convergence, but rather a result of formal instruction which was enhanced by rational reasons such as the need to meet academic requirements of a college, and the awareness that it is within

the interests of the subjects themselves to acquire Hebrew in order to settle better in life, socially and economically.

This point should be well understood. The motives for grammatical and stylistic or lexical improvement are quite different. While grammatical competence in L2 usually reflects the level of mastery of the target language, it is the richness of the lexicon and mastery of the local style which will usually render the outsider (who can be any kind of outgroup, either total foreigner or a member of a minority group) a rewarding feeling of belonging. On the Israeli scene, a successful adoption of stylistic features might help the foreign speaker to sound more mainstream Israeli, more like someone from the dominant group.

What should be remembered here is that due to the language policy in Israel, which practically enables the Arab citizens to speak Arabic as their legitimate L1 freely in Israel, and have it as the official language of instruction at schools, there is no danger that Arabic is ever going to disappear or be forgotten by its native speakers. In this respect, the classical models of the SIT and LAT as they were designed by Giles, Taylor, McKirnan and their colleagues in Europe, considering various minority languages in Europe, America and elsewhere, do not fit the Israeli situation. These models do not fit since they refer to linguistically endangered minorities. Linguistically speaking, the Arab minority in Israel is very strong. This is precisely the reason why some of the Arab speakers, provided they have the motivation to integrate in Jewish mainstream society, choose to elaborate on their Hebrew. They do so through partial or total linguistic convergence without any need to undergo anything that would remotely echo Hamlet's dilemma. It is not a question of this language or that one, of to be or not to be. This is why Brewer, with her two-directional model is much more appropriate here. It is possible both to acquire remarkably good Hebrew (for utilitarian or other reasons) without feeling a traitor who abandons his tribe, and yet remain a very proud Arab, who studies and uses his language whenever and wherever he sees fit.

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