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Motivation and Heritage Learner Status:

Modern Hebrew in the U.S.

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

Dedication

To Elizabeth,

whose sacrifices and support made this possible

and to Kate,

who is a shining light in our world.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their crucial efforts in this endeavor: Dr. Diana Pulido for graciously agreeing to supervise this report and offering fundamental feedback at each step of the process; Dr. Esther Raizen for her constant guidance and invaluable insights concerning the current state of the Hebrew field; Dr. Donald Parry for his careful review of a draft of the report; and Elisa Parry for her expert editing. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Elaine Horwitz for providing an atmosphere that initially drew me to the field of foreign language education, and Dr. Veronica Sardegna for mentoring me along the way.

Abstract

Motivation and Heritage Learner Status:
Modern Hebrew in the U.S.

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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Most researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) concur that understanding motivation is vital to promoting success and both short and long-term interest among L2 learners (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Hebrew has become an endangered language in the U.S. (Spolsky, 2009), as partly attested by a decrease in Hebrew language enrollments at U.S. universities (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2009). With this decline, an analysis is needed to investigate the diverse motivations of U.S. university students who enroll in Modern Hebrew (Feuer, 2009; Kaufman, 2010). This report examines research on this topic from both Hebrew-specific studies and general SLA research, through a discussion of motivation, heritage language learners, and Hebrew learners. Relevant issues and implications are considered in light of five areas of discussion that are common to the Hebrew teaching field.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Because every language and learning context is unique, there is a wealth of potential studies to be carried out in second language acquisition (SLA) research. One important area within this body of research pertains to student motivation. Studies in this area yield varied results, given that learner attitudes differ depending on the learner's target language (Thomas, 2010), and the specific social context for that language (Rueda & Moll, 1994).

There is limited research about the motivations of second language (L2) learners of Modern Hebrew (also called Israeli Hebrew or Modern Israeli Hebrew)[1] in the U.S. context. Scholars and educators have discussed issues in the field of Hebrew; some have formulated practical suggestions toward improving motivation and increasing student enrollment and retention. Many studies, lacking empirical research, are no more than intuitions or observations (Feuer, 2009). Furthermore, there has been limited action in classrooms or academic venues to implement these suggestions, imperfect as they may be. As a result, there is frequently a disconnect between the rhetoric used and actual classroom practice (Morahg, 2000).

This report is concerned with the motivations of university students of Hebrew in the U.S. Scholars for several years have suggested that research be conducted in this specific area (e.g. Feuer, 2009; Morahg, 2000; Nahir, 1979). The goals of this report are threefold: (1) to review the current state of Hebrew education in the U.S., by examining

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[1] Hereafter Modern Hebrew will be referred to simply as Hebrew, except where needed for clarity.

both contextual and pedagogical factors; (2) to explore ways in which motivation to study Hebrew can be fostered, in light of both past suggestions for Hebrew specifically and implications that can be applied from general SLA research; and (3) to direct attention to gaps in the research and raise questions to open future research possibilities.

There exist several factors that contribute to improving language programs and influencing learners to persist in their study; motivation, one of the most significant factors (Rubin, 1975), is also crucial in language learning achievement (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004; Noels, 2005). Being mindful of learners' motivations for studying their target language—such as a desire to integrate into a culture or to obtain a desired occupation—is also vital to promoting recruitment and retention in language programs (Kaufman, 2008; Reynolds, Howard, & Deák, 2009).

While the research in this report is primarily useful to professors and researchers of Hebrew in the U.S., it will also be of value to researchers of SLA. This is due to the nature of Hebrew in the U.S. foreign language context, which possesses several distinct characteristics at both the contextual and classroom level that add to our current understanding of foreign language education, heritage language learning, and less commonly taught languages.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

HEBREW ENROLLMENTS

An approach to obtaining information about university learners' motivations with regard to an L2 is to consider enrollment data. Although there are many factors that affect enrollment levels, motivation is significant because, when considering language requirements, students often have multiple language enrollment choices; they may also choose whether or not to continue to study that particular language.

Roughly every three years The Modern Language Association of America (MLA) releases statistics on current U.S. university enrollments in languages other than English. As of 2009, Hebrew was the fifteenth most studied foreign language in the U.S., with an enrollment of 8,245. This number refers to actual enrollments in Hebrew courses, not to the total number of students studying Hebrew; thus students may be enrolled in more than one class at a time and thereby elevate the total number. This number of 8,245 is a 14.2% decrease from 2006. By way of comparison, enrollment numbers for Hebrew increased from 1990 to 1995, decreased in 1998, increased from 1998 to 2002, and increased again 2002 to 2006. Figure 1 sets forth university enrollments in Hebrew in the U.S. from 1990 to 2009. While it would be instructive to examine enrollments for Hebrew before 1990, it is not feasible because before that year the MLA combined Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew enrollments; a distinction was made in their survey beginning in 1990. This decline in enrollment numbers in 2009 affected nearly all six MLA-designated regions in the U.S.: Midwest, Northeast, Pacific Coast, Rocky Mountain, South Atlantic, and South
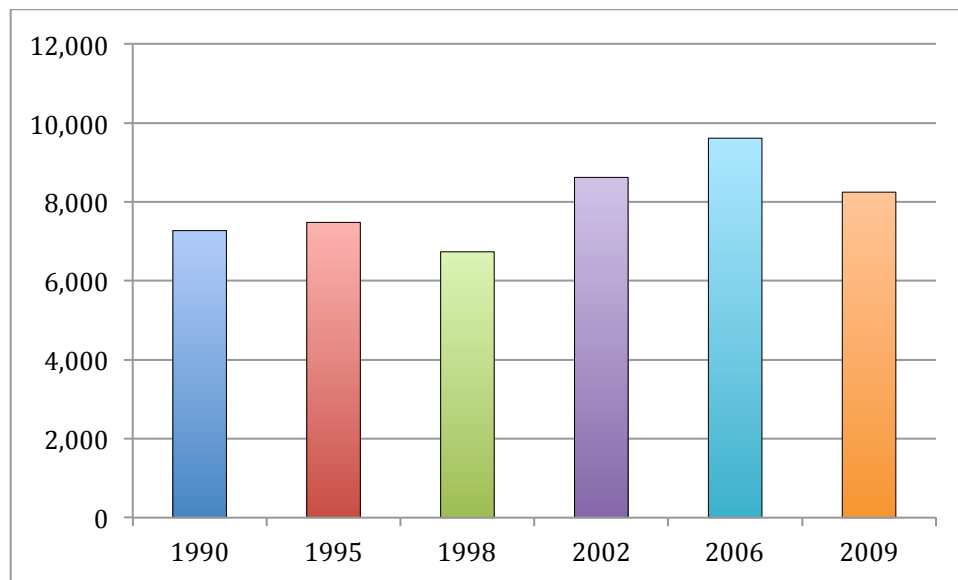
Figure 1:   University Enrollments in Hebrew courses in the U.S., 1990–2009

	1990	**1995**	**1998**	**2002**	**2006**	**2009**
Midwest	1,365	1,150	1,330	1,554	1,877	937
Northeast	3,594	3,809	3,120	4,335	4,485	4,099
Pacific Coast	759	822	796	866	1,047	900
Rocky Mountain	280	411	405	343	501	508
South Atlantic	978	975	827	1,241	1,403	1,513
South Central	295	312	256	280	299	288

Table 1:   University Enrollments in Hebrew courses in the U.S., by Region

Central regions. See Table 1, which provides the enrollment numbers for Hebrew separated into these six regions ("Database," 2011). Based on these figures, it is apparent that this overall decrease in enrollment numbers is not limited to only one institution or geographical area.

In addition to these changes, there was a shift in undergraduate and graduate enrollments from 2006 to 2009. In 2006, the MLA began making a distinction between introductory-level and advanced-level undergraduate students, thereby making it possible to compare introductory-level undergraduate students, advanced-level undergraduate students, and graduate students of Hebrew, which is the aim of the two pie charts in Figure 2. This figure illustrates that there was a substantial decrease in graduate enrollments, in addition to fluctuations in introductory-level and advanced level undergraduate enrollments.

While these figures from the MLA are beneficial for observing trends in Hebrew enrollments, there are problems with the methodology employed for data collection that researchers should take into account. For example, these numbers represent reports from registrars or offices of institutional research, which may not be directly familiar with each Hebrew program (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2010). In addition, it is often difficult to separate Biblical from Modern Hebrew in enrollment counts, particularly with regard to those programs which make no clear distinction between the two.

A series of surveys distributed by The National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMELRC) provides us with additional details about Hebrew enrollments. Each
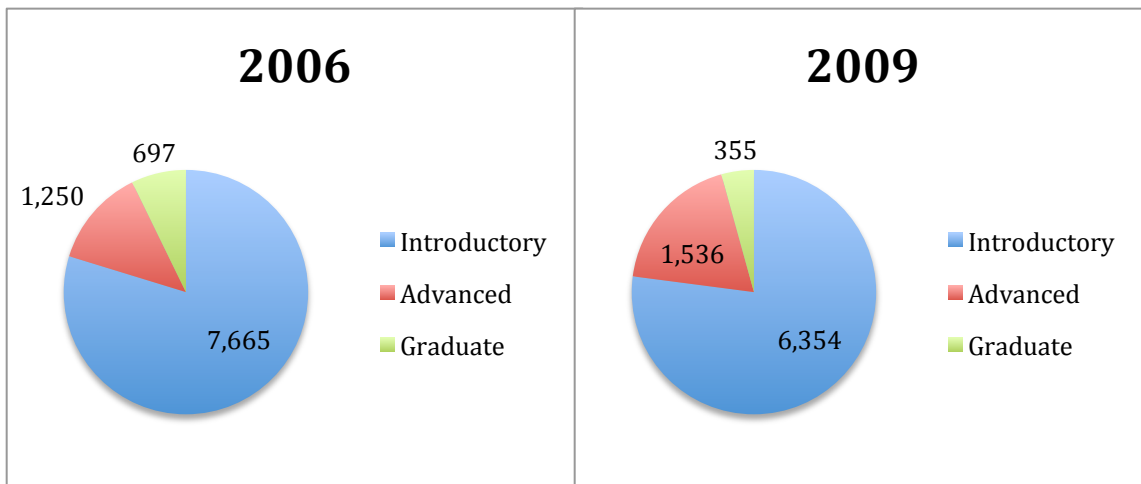
Figure 2:   University Enrollments in Hebrew courses in the U.S., by Level

survey differed in the number of responses; for example, the most recent survey (R. K. Belnap, NMELRC Survey of Hebrew Students, April 11, 2011), accumulated responses from 62 students of Hebrew, who came from 9 different institutions of higher education in various parts of the U.S. The previous survey (R. K. Belnap, NMELRC Survey of Hebrew Students, July 17, 2009) included 181 students from 21 different institutions. These surveys illustrate the diversity of Hebrew learners: Between the two, Hebrew students came from over 70 different majors.

One notable difference between the NMELRC survey figures and the MLA data concerns the amount of graduate students. In the 2009 NMELRC survey, 2% of the respondents were graduate students, and this percentage increased to 8% in the 2011 survey. This discrepancy between the MLA and NMELRC numbers may be as a result of a lack of response to the 2009 MLA survey by several institutions concerning graduate

enrollments and a "significant reporting error" (Belnap, 2011). Results from these surveys will be discussed more in depth within the section about Hebrew and motivation.

In sum, although the cause of general decline in enrollments from 2006 to 2009 is uncertain, it may be correlated with a combination of the institutional status of Hebrew in the U.S., Hebrew instruction, and student motivation (Feuer, 2009; Kaufman, 2008; Morahg, 1991). This report will examine each of these factors in turn, all with the goal of elucidating the issue of improving student motivation towards Hebrew.

HEBREW IN AMERICA

Given enrollment changes for Hebrew in the U.S., it is instructive to consider the root of these changes, which consist of both societal and classroom-level factors (called contextual and pedagogical factors by Shohamy, 1999). These factors potentially play a significant role in influencing student motivation. It is important to understand the surrounding culture and society where a language is being learned, partly because it can help or hinder the development of learner motivation in SLA (Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1985). Given the diverse background of Hebrew students, this is especially true for Hebrew.

Historically, there exists a close connection between Hebrew and Judaism. Although the Jews have spoken a number of languages throughout their history, Hebrew has always held a prominent position in Jewish culture and religion (Avni, 2011). Some researchers have even expressed that Hebrew is associated exclusively with Jews (Anis & Lambert, 1961), unlike many other languages that are spoken by a wide range of groups.

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A great number of Hebrew second language learners are Jewish heritage learners, meaning that they study Hebrew because of their ethnic or cultural background. This will be discussed more fully in a separate section.

The majority of Jews in the United States are descended from Ashkenazi Jews who came from Eastern Europe and spoke Yiddish (Zenner, 1985). Because of this, Yiddish was the primary language taught in Jewish education in the U.S. until it was decided to switch the focus to Hebrew because of the growing importance of Israel and Zionism in the Jewish world. Efforts to produce large numbers of American Jews who are proficient in Hebrew have been largely unsuccessful; relatively few speak or read any Hebrew (Glinert, 2000; Shohamy, 1999). There also exists a strong distinction between Israeli Jews and American Jews, who are often indifferent or averse to Israeli ideologies and culture. It is also unclear to some American Jews why the Israeli culture and language is a prominent part of classroom instruction, given their differences (Chazan, 1977; Spolsky, 2009).

Because of Hebrew's strong association with Israel, and the Yiddish-speaking heritage of American Jews (Shohamy, 1999), it can be challenging to find reasons and motivators for American Jews to study Hebrew. More specifically, it would seem less likely to find instrumental motivation, or the desire to integrate with another culture, among American Jews (Glinert, 2000). In short, Hebrew is becoming endangered in the U.S. (Spolsky, 2009). Moreover, Hebrew no longer holds the same importance for other groups of Jews outside of Israel. In its place, English has gained prominence as the

international lingua franca, or language of communication (Nevo & Olshtain, 2007; Shohamy, 1999). Subsequently, there are few pragmatic reasons to learn Hebrew.

These societal factors have an immense impact on how effectively educators promote Hebrew education, especially in Jewish day schools where many young students study Hebrew outside of other pursuits. A large number of students at these day schools become discouraged about Hebrew because they study it for years but lack proficiency (Feuer, 2009). Some schools carry on in spite of these difficulties, but others eventually discontinue their Hebrew programs. In due course, several students of Jewish day schools and similar programs continue onto post-high school institutions, thus becoming vital components of Hebrew university programs in the U.S. (Shohamy, 1999).

HERITAGE LEARNERS

Heritage learners are an established group of language learners, who often possess distinctive reasons for studying languages. A considerable amount of research has been dedicated to this group of learners. The term "heritage language learner" is controversial, and it has been used in several ways. Most researchers agree that heritage learners are those who have a cultural or ethnic connection to their L2, such as second generation Korean Americans who are studying Korean. Valdes (2001) defined heritage learners as those language learners who can speak or at least understand the L2, or are to some degree bilingual already. Noels (2005) used a broader definition in her study, and considered heritage learners to be those learning a language that was spoken by past family generations.

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Reynolds, et al. (2009) incorporated both of these definitions into a study that involved 401 students enrolled in 19 languages, which included a wide range of languages such as Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Amharic, and Hebrew. In this study, the researchers separated heritage language learners (HLLs) into two categories—broadly-defined HLLs and narrowly-defined HLLs—because they considered heritage to be an important variable that needed to be examined in both a broad and narrow sense. A third group consisted of non-heritage language learners, who were defined as those to whom the two HLL categories did not apply. Both types of HLLs amounted to 40% of the 401 students surveyed, and the non-HLLs made up the other 60%. Broadly-defined HLLs were considered to be those learners with family or heritage connections to their target language, the majority (85%) of whom had little or no exposure to the L2 growing up in the home. This group made up 66% of the total HLLs. Narrowly-defined HLLs—consisting of 34% of the total HLLs—were classified as those who were exposed to the language in the home during their formative years. Contrary to expectations, the broadly-defined HLLs were also more likely than both the narrowly-defined HLLs and non-HLLs to be born in the U.S.

HERITAGE LEARNERS AND HEBREW

In the aforementioned study by Reynolds, et al. (2009), 17 of the 401 students surveyed were learners of Hebrew. All of the Hebrew learners' responses came from The University of Pennsylvania. Of the 17 Hebrew learners, 16 were broadly-defined HLLs, one was a non-HLL, and none were narrowly-defined HLLs. This ratio of learners seems

common among Hebrew learning contexts in the U.S., which are considered to be composed primarily of broadly-defined HLLs, meaning these learners did not speak Hebrew in their formative years in the home.

The findings of Reynolds, et al. (2009) are similar to those of Yan (2003), who distributed questionnaires to heritage learners' parents. The languages surveyed included Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, and Spanish; for all languages but Hebrew, the majority of parents spoke the heritage language in the home. However, this was not the case for most (71%) of the 21 parents of Hebrew heritage learners, 52% of whom only used Hebrew for certain religious purposes, and not for communication. Furthermore, 81% of the 21 parents used Hebrew in the home to tell stories, to give family background, to promote moral values and discipline, or a combination of these.

There is a strong relationship in the U.S. between American Jews and the study of Hebrew; it is possible to see this relationship in Figure 3, which compares descriptive statistics for American Jews, Hebrew spoken in the home, and university enrollments in Hebrew courses by comparing figures[2] from *The American Jewish Year Book* (2006), The U.S. Census (2005), and The MLA Language Enrollment Database (2012).[3] The relationship between these three variables is particularly striking in New York, where the largest percentage of Jews, Hebrew speakers, and Hebrew learners reside. In contrast, the small population of Hebrew learners in California amounts to approximately half of the

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[2] The figures reported in every geographical area were converted into percentages to facilitate comparison between the three sources. Those geographical areas with less than one percent of the total amount in all three data sources were excluded in order to conserve space.

[3] *The American Jewish Year Book* and The U.S. Census employ representative sampling in collecting data, and The MLA Language Enrollment Database reports actual figures.
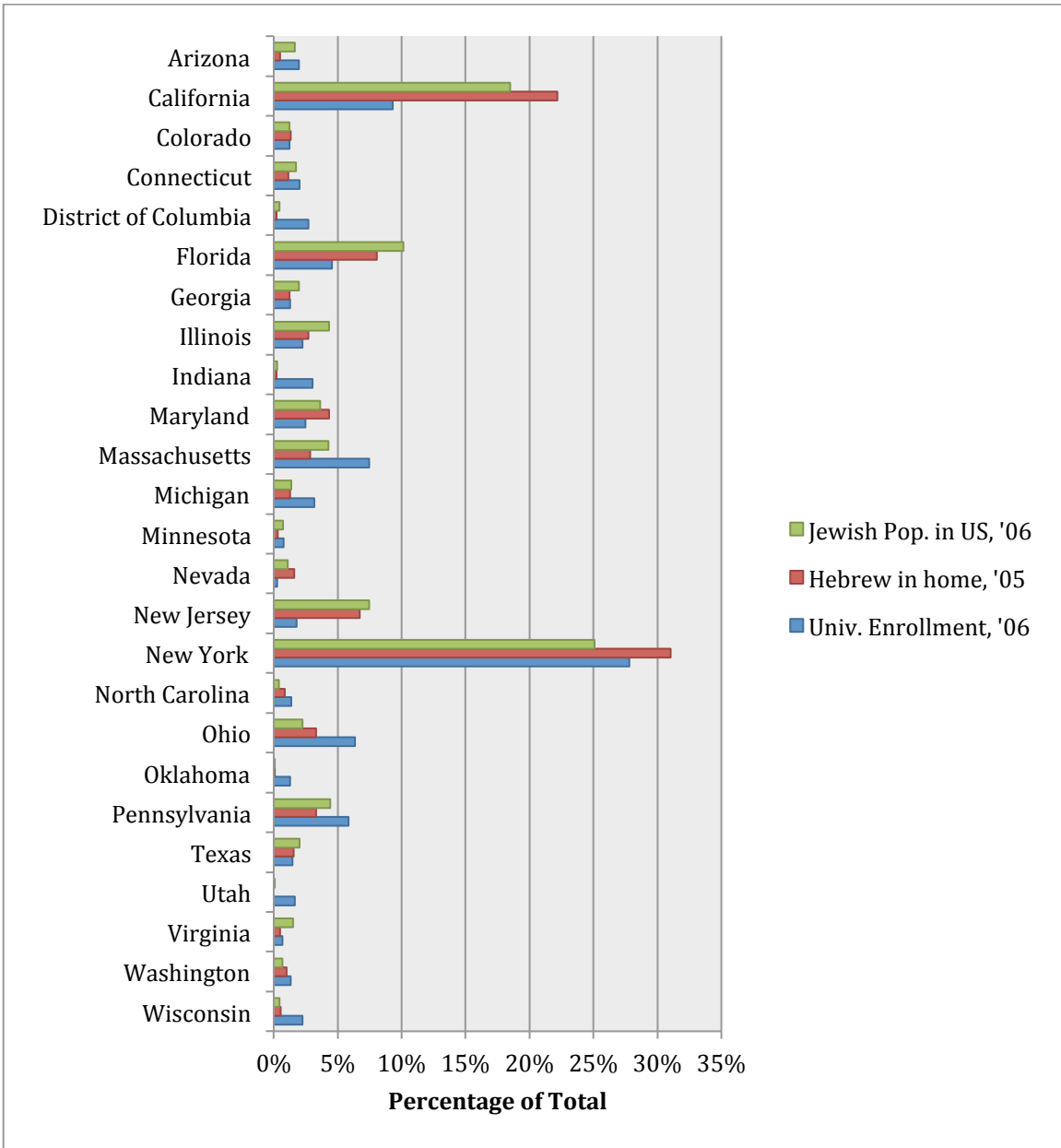
Figure 3: Comparison of U.S. Jewish population, Hebrew usage, and university enrollments in Hebrew courses

total percentage of Jews residing there. It is noteworthy that even though it is not clear in figure 3, the number of Hebrew speakers in the home is significantly fewer than the total number of American Jews, which suggests that many American Jews do not come from backgrounds in which Hebrew was spoken. This conclusion is also supported by data from the NMELRC surveys, in which 94–95% of the Hebrew students reported that English was their first language. In addition, 62% of the students on the 2009 survey and 72% of those on the 2011 survey agreed or strongly agreed that Hebrew was important to them because of their ethnic heritage.

HEBREW IN U.S. UNIVERSITIES

Institutional factors are also pertinent in Hebrew classroom enrollments, suggesting motivation as a corresponding factor of the current trends. Much of the literature on Hebrew education in the U.S. deals with areas of the field that require improvement or greater attention by educators and researchers, which are enduring themes in language instruction under continual evaluation (e.g. Glinert, 2000; Morahg, 2000; Nahir, 1979; Shohamy, 1999). Among the various themes, there are five that often recur in the literature: 1) the inaccessibility of native speakers; 2) the type of Hebrew to teach; 3) the development of curriculum; 4) the improvement of teaching methods; and 5) the need for teacher training. Each of these will be discussed in turn:

1) The Inaccessibility of Native Speakers

One distinction that has been posited in foreign language education is between foreign language and second language learners. Foreign language learners are presumed

to be learning a language that is largely not spoken natively in their current location (e.g. French in the U.S.), while second language learners are those that study a language that is spoken natively or widely in the area (e.g. Japanese in Japan) (Horwitz, 2008). This distinction is clear from the terms English as a Second Language (ESL), in contexts where English is widely spoken outside of the classroom, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where English is not.

Hebrew is considered a foreign language in the U.S., because there are very few native speakers of Hebrew. As a result, there is minimal contact with native speakers for Hebrew learners outside of the classroom (Feuer, 2009; Shohamy, 1999). In Yan's (2003) study that surveyed parents of Hebrew learners, 66.7% of the parents agreed that the lack of a proper language environment was the greatest obstacle to learning Hebrew in the U.S. Since language use outside of the classroom is considered crucial to both long-term success and motivation in language learning, this is a salient issue (Ellis, 2005).

2) The Type of Hebrew to Teach

Another prevalent issue in language teaching is determining which skills and linguistic knowledge of an L2 to teach, and how much of each of the four basic skills of language—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—should comprise class time. Setting realistic goals is also a challenge, which includes trying not to accomplish more than is reasonable in the limited amount of classroom time.

This issue is even more complicated in Hebrew and presents one of the greatest challenges to Hebrew educators (Ringvald, 2006), leading to increased frustration for

teachers (Morahg, 2000). This is in part due to the dual nature of Hebrew today: First, it is associated with Judaism and the long Jewish cultural and religious history that finds its roots in the Hebrew Bible. Second, it is the primary language spoken by Israelis. Thus, Hebrew teaching can either highlight Jewish culture and heritage or present the language of Israel and thereby prepare students to converse with Israelis. This two-sided issue, for example, was identified by Nevo & Olshtain (2007), and dissected into four instructional aims by Shohamy (1999): focusing on Jewish identity, promoting contact with Israel, developing a heritage language, and teaching reading merely for symbolic reasons.

3) The Development of Curriculum

Curriculum has a profound impact on the effectiveness of language teaching (Hadley, 1993). Even successful teachers are severely hampered without an adequate curriculum. This aspect of Hebrew education has long been problematic because Hebrew is a less commonly taught language, often administrators fail to give adequate focus to it, many Hebrew sections and departments lack sufficient resources and budgets, and there are insufficient educators in the field who are trained to develop curricula.

There are a number of specific concerns with Hebrew curricula that are currently in the process of improvement. Two examples are particularly salient: First, many past Hebrew programs have utilized a curriculum that assumes that "one size fits all" (Shohamy, 1999, p. 26), which fails to take individual learner differences or specific learning contexts into account. Second, the curricula have seldom been developed with the second language learner in mind—in this case, the student of Hebrew in the U.S.

context. Many textbooks developed in the past, some of which are still being used, were either originally intended for immigrants to Israel or lack adequate Israeli cultural items to instruct Hebrew learners that were born and raised in the U.S. (Nahir, 1979; Shohamy, 1999). Furthermore, few textbooks have been designed specifically for heritage learners of Hebrew (Glinert, 2000), thus resulting in textbooks that are less meaningful and interesting to these Hebrew learners. This stands in contrast to the view that it is important to tap into learners' past knowledge to make learning meaningful and motivate them (Ausubel, 1968).

As a consequence of inadequate Hebrew curricula in some Hebrew programs, students lose motivation because of the lack of structure, purpose, and progress in the language. There is a sense of disappointment with the quality of some Hebrew classes, and these students feel that they only have a basic command of the language after years of studying it (Feuer, 2009; Morahg, 2000). Although there have been several advances in this area, much work remains to be done.

4) The Improvement of Teaching Methods

As SLA theory evolves, there are innovations in the sphere of foreign language teaching as many teachers adopt or adjust their methodologies to better reflect current research. This trend is especially common for textbooks related to ESL, since there is a high demand for these books and many researchers specialize in this area. A criticism exists that many Hebrew instructors lag behind in adopting current trends in SLA (Nahir, 1979; Nevo & Olshtain, 2007; Shohamy, 1999).

This area has seen improvement in recent years, as more educators have become aware of the need to update their methods and conform to good teaching practice and SLA research. For example, growing numbers of Hebrew instructors employ technology as they teach. The forms of technology vary widely, and include virtual classrooms, online dictionaries, multimedia, and "smart" digital white boards (Garber, 2010; Shemtov, 2009). Although many teachers are including technology, this often remains to the discretion of Hebrew instructors, and curricula will always be limited in its effectiveness unless teachers evaluate and improve their methods (Nevo & Olshtain, 2007).

5) The Need for Teacher Training

The insufficient number of competent and qualified Hebrew instructors in the U.S takes its toll on students' motivation (Feuer, 2009; Morahg, 2000; Nevo & Olshtain, 2007). There exist at least two reasons for this: first, the majority of university teachers of Hebrew in the U.S. are Israelis (Glinert, 2009). These Israelis usually have some prior teaching experience, but often this experience is outside of language instruction. Moreover, even when these Israelis have language teaching experience, it is often in teaching a first language, or L1 (Ringvald, 2006; Shohamy, 1999). This is problematic, as illustrated by research that indicates there are specific L2 learner needs and differences between L1 and L2 teaching, including the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (Bley-Vroman, 1989; Schachter, 1988). Second, there have historically been inadequate efforts to train Israelis in teaching second languages, which seems to indicate a lack of interest or

knowledge about the differences between learning an L1 and an L2 (Nahir, 1979; Shohamy, 1999).

This trend appears to follow the assumption that native speakers of a language are equipped to teach their language, even though they are often removed from the second language learner's experiences and struggles and may be unable to explain the target language in a way that makes sense to an L2 learner (Medgyes, 1992). Recently, some programs and workshops have sought to improve this situation, such as the NMELRC teacher-training workshops.

Another related issue is that many Hebrew professors in the U.S. specialize in literature, which is common for several language teachers around the world (Spolsky, 2009). Consequently, for this group of teachers, the study of pedagogy or teaching second languages is often a secondary pursuit. There are only a few professors of Hebrew in the U.S. that make the improvement of Hebrew education their main focus, which reduces the amount of research dedicated to this area.

MOTIVATION IN SLA RESEARCH

There are many factors that influence student motivation in foreign language learning, including the societal and pedagogical factors previously discussed for Hebrew. Along with these two factors, individual learner differences play a profound role in language learning (Ellis, 2004; Oxford & Ehrman, 1993; Skehan, 1991). One of the most important of these differences pertains to the concept of student motivation. Before examining this concept, it is necessary to survey *motivation* in SLA research.

Motivation is a highly complex issue. Some of the matters on motivation concern how motivation differs depending on the context and language, whether individual differences such as age, gender, or aptitude influence motivation for better or worse, what the facets of motivation are, and which of these facets is more common or accounts for more variation in learner differences. In addition, there are also pragmatic considerations that relate to motivation. For example, research investigates the degree to which teachers can influence student motivation, and whether or not motivational strategies can improve motivation. There are many other questions that do not have satisfactory answers. Because of this complexity, there are many different approaches to researching motivation. This report will first introduce some important concepts with regard to motivation, then set forth those aspects of motivation that apply to the Hebrew learning context and which can provide background knowledge for later discussion.

Motivation can be seen as the underlying reason for choosing an action, exerting effort toward that action, and persisting in those efforts. Thus motivation is a strong indicator of what language students will choose to study, how hard they will work to learn that language, and how long they will continue to learn it (Dörnyei, 2001). As a teacher, it is possible to influence and raise your students' levels of motivation. Understanding motivation as a teacher is an important factor toward promoting learner success and interest, because student achievement is highly correlated with motivation and students demonstrate more interest if a class is personally applicable and interesting (Dörnyei, 1994; Ellis, 2005; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

Although the concept of motivation has been around a long time, it was not formally introduced into SLA research until Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that motivation was a vital issue in SLA that needed to be considered. Initially the emphasis was on both the relationship between motivation and achievement, and learner attitudes towards the target language group. Motivation at that time was also considered to be relatively stable. Gardner and Lambert also provided us with two important types of motivation: *integrative* motivation and *instrumental* motivation. Integrative motivation relates to how much learners desire to integrate with the people and culture of their target language. Instrumental motivation deals with those motivated to study their target language for pragmatic, real-world reasons, such as to pursue an occupation. These concepts by Gardner and Lambert set the basis for the next three decades of motivation research in SLA.

Graham (1984) added another important type of motivation to the picture: *assimilative* motivation, which has been defined as the desire to assimilate into a target language's culture and become a part of it. Based on this definition it can be perceived as a stronger form of integrative motivation. The difference between integrative and assimilative motivation, with regard to the Hebrew language, may be demonstrated by the following examples: integrative motivation pertains to those who travel to Israel in order to learn more about the culture, whereas assimilative motivation likely applies to those who *make aliyah* or immigrate to Israel.

Studies regarding motivation expanded in the 1990s to include cognitive factors, partly impacted by cognitive research in the field of psychology, the inclusion of

qualitative research to provide a fuller picture of motivation, and the view that motivation is dynamic and needs to be studied over time (Dörnyei, 2001). As motivation research in SLA incorporated theories from psychology, researchers added two common types of motivation to the existing body of second language research: *intrinsic* motivation and *extrinsic* motivation. Intrinsic motivation has been described as doing something merely for the sake of doing it, because one considers the activity pleasurable, interesting, or cultivating. Extrinsic motivation has been defined as doing something to attain an outcome, such as to obtain rewards, to acquire excellent grades, or to avoid punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation were further elaborated upon by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which is comprised of four different components: (1) external regulation, which is a form of extrinsic motivation that is largely imposed on the learner by external factors, (2) introjected regulation, which refers to rules that are impressed upon learners to pressure them to do well, (3) identified regulation, which arises when a learner acknowledges the usefulness of imposed rules, and (4) integrated regulation, which occurs when learners assimilate regulations into their own values and identities. Researchers find this construct to be useful and insightful when considering the composition of classrooms (Noels, 2005). An additional factor considered by Deci and Ryan (1985) is *amotivation*, which refers to a learner's lack of motivation. Amotivation, which is a particular challenge to instructors in the classroom setting, is caused by several factors including the lack of success, the lack of relevancy, or disinterest.

Another feature of SLA motivation that has been adopted from general motivation research is the distinction between *trait* and *state* motivation. Trait motivation refers to those aspects of motivation that are relatively stable, and state motivation relates to the immediate learning situation (Tremblay, Goldberg, & Gardner, 1995). This distinction has led to the research of task motivation, which shows the amount of motivation that learners experience while engaging in a task. Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) found three layers to task performance: generalized, course-specific, and task-specific. In recent years several new models for motivation have been proposed and motivation has been scrutinized at different stages of learning, or from a process-oriented perspective (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998).

HERITAGE LEARNERS AND MOTIVATION

SLA motivation research has often included heritage learners as a variable, largely because of their distinct characteristics and cultural or ethnic connections to their L2. This research is relevant to the consideration of motivation and Hebrew learners because heritage learners represent the majority group in Hebrew classrooms. The study by Reynolds, et al. (2009), which involved 17 Hebrew students, is relevant here. Several general trends that were reported in this study can largely be applied to Hebrew learners. In the study, integrative motivation was found to be highest among HLLs. Instrumental motivation was highest among non-HLLs, although about a third of all HLLs were also reported to be instrumentally motivated. Intrinsic motivation, or what researchers have described as a general love of language learning, was most common among broadly-

defined HLLs (48.6%) and non-HLLs (58.6%). All of the learners had similar desires with regard to attaining a high proficiency level in their language. More specifically, slightly more than half of the learners in each group desired to become fluent or literate in their target language. Of the narrowly-defined HLLs, 32.7% desired to become close to a native speaker. Less than five percent of all of the learners only desired to gain a basic knowledge of their language.

In this regard, there was a striking difference between the students' desires and their expectations. Of the narrowly-defined HLLs who desired to attain near-native fluency, only about a third of them expected to reach this level. Nearly half of the learners in all three groups also expected to terminate their study of the language with no more than the ability to carry out short conversations, which was a shift downward from their desires.

These three groups, broadly-defined HLLs, narrowly-defined HLLs, and non-HLLs, had varied goals. For example, 57.9% of broadly-defined HLLs and 51.3% of non-HLLs studied their target language for research purposes or in preparation for a study abroad experience. Both of these groups possessed twice the amount of interest in research and study abroad than narrowly-defined HLLs reported. Moreover, narrowly-defined and broadly-defined HLLs displayed a deeper interest in the context of language use than non-HLLs, particularly in the literature, culture, and art associated with the target language. In addition, both types of HLLs were more likely that non-HLLs to be taking their language as an elective.

On the survey there were also questions about student desires concerning language instruction. All three of these groups indicated a lower desire for increased instruction in reading and writing, in addition to academic and formal speech (only 9–12% of each group indicated that they would desire more). Half of all non-HLLs indicated a desire to learn more slang and informal speech, followed by 40.2% of broadly-defined HLLs and 36.4% of narrowly-defined HLLs. Broadly-defined and non-HLLs in general indicated more of a desire for explicit cultural instruction, while the narrowly-defined HLLs may have already gained this implicitly.

Other studies that involve heritage learners have yielded similar results. For example, in a study involving 341 university students of East Asian languages, Yang (2003) also found that non-HLLs had the highest levels of intrinsic motivation. Yang further observed that most of these learners were more interested in speaking and listening than reading and writing. Noels (2005), who studied 55 university students of German, found that both HLLs and non-HLLs were similar in their motivations, and only differed in two areas: First, HLLs had greater levels of integrative motivation. These learners viewed German as important to their self-concept and wanted to feel a part of this language and culture. Second, heritage learners were found to have a greater likelihood of persisting in language study.

HEBREW LEARNERS AND MOTIVATION

The greatest argument for studying motivation specifically for Hebrew learners is that every learning context is different (Rueda & Moll, 1994; Thomas, 2010). Although

there are many studies about learners of ESL, EFL, or Spanish, these studies are only applicable to the Hebrew learning context to an extent. Each language and learning situation presents its own unique challenges.

There is very little research on motivation in Hebrew language instruction, and even less for the specific context of Hebrew teaching at universities in North America. One study for this context comes from Morahg (1991), who surveyed 284 learners of Hebrew at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. This study includes a discussion of national enrollments in Hebrew, and reiterates the trend for students to progressively drop out of Hebrew programs from year to year. Many teachers interpret this decrease as the result of a lack of genuine interest in studying Hebrew, or because language requirements have been met. Morahg argued that the survey data suggest something else: Students appeared to discontinue their studies because of a discrepancy between their expectations and what was transpiring in Hebrew courses. This conjecture was without empirical backing, and arose as an observation from the field. In this study, the vast majority of learners at Wisconsin-Madison were Jewish, which supports the earlier discussion about Hebrew and heritage learners. Many of the students reported having visited Israel, and this number rose to 100% in the second semester of the third year.

Morahg gave students 22 options on the survey for why they studied Hebrew. The top responses included: travel plans to Israel (88%), interest in Israel (85%), ability to talk to Israelis (82%), interest in Jewish culture (77%), interest in Israeli culture (76%), interest in Judaism (75%), interest in Jewish religion (72%), enjoyment of Hebrew class atmosphere (71%), and interest in Jewish American life (69%). The above choices

indicate that Israel holds a prominent position among these students' reasons, and Judaism is close behind. Both of these suggest a high integrative motivation. The item that may be considered an indicator of intrinsic motivation, or the enjoyment of studying languages, was the thirteenth most common response at 53%. The assimilative motivation of desiring to live in Israel was reported to be fifteenth place at 42%. Instrumental motivations were also low in the students' choices. These students further indicated that learning speaking skills was a priority for them.

In spite of this, Morahg advocated a balance in instruction between reading and speaking skills, since most students find few chances, if any, to speak Hebrew after studies. By emphasizing reading, students will not forget Hebrew as easily and can continue to read in Hebrew after their studies. While this study provides useful data in an area where there is scant research, it is problematic and not always clear. Morahg's survey is presumably homegrown, and there is little description about how the study was carried out. The study also assumes the tone of a concerned educator rather than that of an SLA researcher, and is now outdated.

The NMELRC student surveys from 2009 and 2011 utilized a 5-point Likert scale to investigate a variety of learner areas including motivation. Overall, this survey found motivation for Hebrew learners to be very high: 89% of students in both the 2009 and 2011 surveys indicated that they greatly enjoy learning Hebrew[4]. In 2009, 90% of students reported that they would enroll in a Hebrew class even if it were not required. This percentage decreased to 73% in 2011.

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[4] These percentages combine the responses "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" in reporting.

A few items in these surveys addressed integrative motivation, which ranked highly among learners. For example, 84% of students in 2009 and 70% in 2011 studied Hebrew in order to travel to Israel. Likewise, 87% in 2009 and 81% in 2011 studied Hebrew as a means to interact with Hebrew speakers. In addition, these surveys investigated instrumental motivation. Only 22% of students in 2009 reported studying Hebrew for the sake of obtaining a job, and 20% in 2011. Job-related instrumental motivations were further divided into seven categories, including working for higher education, the military, and in K-12. Working for the government and non-governmental organizations tied as the most common instrumentally-motivated choices, with 23% in 2009 and 17% in 2011 for both items.

These two surveys also provided some qualitative data in the form of open-ended questions. In the 2009 survey, when students were asked whether their levels of motivation had changed in the course of Hebrew studies, 50 responded that it had increased, 20 felt that it remained unchanged, and 6 indicated a decrease. In 2011, this trend became less marked: 17 students expressed that it had increased, 12 indicated that it had stayed the same, and three of them reported a decrease.

Two other studies about attitudes and perceptions give some additional information concerning motivation for Hebrew learners. The first study, by Thomas (2010), involved 172 university students who were enrolled in the first-year language classes of 13 different languages. Eleven students of Hebrew were in the study, eight of whom had been to Israel previously. These students had a variety of motivations behind their Hebrew study. Five of them indicated that communicating in Israel was their

primary reason for studying Hebrew. Those students who had been to Israel in the past favored this reason more than those who had not. The second most common reason was to connect with Hebrew-speaking members of their community, and the third was due to Jewish ancestry.

The second study was mentioned previously, and used surveys and interviews to investigate the perceptions of heritage learners' parents (Yan, 2003). When asked whether or not Hebrew was important for academic success, 76% of the 21 parents indicated that it was not important, and only 19% reported that it was. Yan further stated that 71% of the parents did not speak Hebrew in the home with their children, and Hebrew was largely just used to maintain their Jewish religion and preserve cultural ties.

Because of the scarcity of research concerning the motivations of Hebrew learners in the U.S., it is instructive to consider other studies on the subject that have been carried out in the Jewish Diaspora. Although every context is different, there are many similarities shared by programs around the world that teach Hebrew as an L2. One study in the Diaspora investigated the motivations and attitudes of Hebrew learners in Poland (Okuniewska, Okuniewska, & Okuniewski, 2010), which involved 67 Hebrew students, 35 from two secondary schools in Warsaw, and 32 from the University of Warsaw. This context is unique because of a long history of complex Polish-Jewish relations. Each of these students was given a survey that was adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which was developed by Gardner (1985).

In general, the motivation of all of these students was found to be very high, especially among the university students. The university students were found to have a

significant amount of integrative motivation in comparison to the secondary school students, which the authors conjectured to be a result of cultural awareness. There was little difference between the two as far as instrumental motivation, although this type was far more common for secondary school students. The main finding in this study was the differences in motivations for the two age groups, which agreed with several other studies in motivation that found age to be a factor (e.g. Kormos & Csizér, 2008; MacIntyre et al., 2002).

Another qualitative study, carried out by Feuer (2007), took place in Canada and involved a university class of Hebrew there. Her ethnographic research dealt with the sociocultural complexity of these learners' identities, and how perceptions about identity manifested themselves in the classroom. The fifteen students included in the study came from a variety of places, including Israel, Russia, the U.S., and Canada. Feuer studied these students through a semester of observation, a focus group interview, and individual interviews with ten of the students and the professor. A schism was apparent in the class, primarily between those in the class who spoke informal Hebrew with near fluency and those who knew Hebrew grammar but still struggled to speak it. Oral fluency was found to be the most important aspect of class, which the Israelis sought to practice and the Canadians worked to develop.

There were several reasons why the students were enrolled in Hebrew: Those who spoke informal Hebrew saw it as an opportunity to speak in social groups, rather than to seriously study Hebrew. Others wanted to study Hebrew because they were Jewish and saw it as a cultural symbol. A few had religious reasons for studying Hebrew, such as

desiring the ability to read the Bible and its commentaries. Although there were several reasons, Hebrew was clearly a priority for the students, considering the amount of time that they studied and practiced it.

Chapter 3: Pedagogical Implications

IMPROVING MOTIVATION

For many teachers, it is not important what motivation is but how it can be increased (Dörnyei, 2001a). Accordingly, several researchers have drawn pedagogical implications from their research on motivation. Many of these implications can be applied to the Hebrew learning context. There have also been a number of suggestions posited specifically for Hebrew, although these suggestions are often informal or lacking in empirical evidence (Feuer, 2009). Implications from both general and Hebrew-specific research will be reviewed herein. These implications have been separated into categories, which include: 1) providing access to native speakers, 2) determining the type of Hebrew, 3) developing improved curriculum, 4) updating teaching methods, 5) promoting teacher training, and 6) additional insights, which discuss other items surrounding this issue.

1) Providing Access to Native Speakers

This issue is difficult to overcome, but it can be mitigated in a number of ways in order to give students crucial opportunities for both input and output. First, teachers can search for native speakers in their area to invite to their class as guest speakers, or they can arrange group meetings with Israelis outside of class time. Although the majority of Hebrew teachers are Israelis, students for the most part only interact with them during class time, and students would undoubtedly benefit from exposure to other native speakers.

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Another practical way to engage students in conversations with Israelis is through videoconferencing using free tools such as Skype. Videoconferencing can be complicated for classroom use (Shemtov, 2009); however, students are also able to improve their speaking and listening skills by connecting one-on-one with native speakers outside of class. This holds additional benefits as students are becoming more autonomous and developing the language outside of the classroom, meeting with Israelis, and learning about Israeli culture firsthand, which is potentially strengthening their motivation even more. It may take some effort to teach students about the technology involved and initiating the process, but once students have learned this skill they can continue to use it beyond that semester. There are several online programs to arrange language exchange partners over Skype; italki.com and mylanguageexchange.com are good examples. This same idea can also be applied to improving fluency in reading and writing through exposure to native speakers, since it is fairly simple to set up "pen pal" correspondence through e-mail, social media, or other online programs set up for language exchange.

In general, the internet can be used to demonstrate to students how much Hebrew material exists for any interest. There are many excellent online resources for teaching, including virtual tours, multimedia modules, news sites, and streaming programs, to name a few.

2) Determining the Type of Hebrew

The best way to decide which aspect of Hebrew to teach is to become acquainted with students and tailor the material to fit their needs, interests, and developmental stage.

Although teachers may have ideas about what their students should learn, it is more important for students to want to continue to learn (Morahg, 2000). If instructors are always selecting materials to teach to their students without considering student needs or input, many of these learners will lose interest and become demotivated.

A particularly effective way to determine students' needs and interests would be through distributing a survey at the beginning of the semester, asking these questions explicitly (Horwitz, 2008). Then, during the semester, teachers can follow up on responses and ask more questions as needed. This gives students a sense that their teacher cares about them and further motivates them to take the class seriously and perform well.

Lastly, it is important to use an eclectic approach, which includes a variety of teaching strategies and the implementation of a range of materials that will consider individual differences, goals, and proficiency levels. This serves to keep students actively engaged and provides them with a wide range of skills. In addition, it caters to the differences in students' interests (Israel, Judaism, literature, etc.) and background (birthplace, gender, time in Israel, etc.).

3) Developing Improved Curriculum

Research has shown that learning language can cause anxiety in many learners and challenge their self-identities (Horwitz, 2008). Learners are generally very effective expressing themselves in their L1, but find themselves compelled to start over with their L2 and undergo many humbling experiences in the process of learning. Because of this, it is important to provide learners with some familiar ground. Although using the L1 in the

classroom is seen by many as detrimental to the development of fluency in the second language, it is important to at least include elements of the learners' native culture (assuming that the learners are a homogeneous group, which they often are in this specific context). Many learners of Hebrew in the U.S. are American Jews, indicating two features: 1) they are familiar with Judaism, and 2) they identify with North American culture. Finding ways to take these two features into account can help students feel both comfortable and motivated. Where relevant, instructors of Hebrew could also include other aspects of culture that differ from place to place, including unique mentalities, attitudes, approaches, and educational structures (Nahir, 1979).

Another way to improve curriculum is to develop textbooks that are more varied and motivating. Because textbooks cannot fit every specific context, teachers should integrate outside materials as needed. Teachers should also include the target culture in instruction along with the learners' own culture, since this has been found to motivate students (e.g. Hadley, 1993; Morahg, 1991). Ideally, there should be a combination of Israeli, Jewish, and North American culture included in the curriculum, as this caters to the varied identities of Jews in the U.S. (Nahir, 1979; Shohamy, 1999).

It is also important to incorporate into the curriculum motivational strategies that will increase student motivation and help them become more autonomous. Several SLA researchers in a variety of contexts have argued that motivational strategies serve to increase levels of learner motivation (Gardner, et al., 2004; Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011). There are many effective motivational strategies. Madrid (2002) asked 319 students and 18 teachers by survey to rank the motivational strategies

that they viewed as most important. For them, the most important motivational strategies were the use of audiovisual resources and technology, group work, meeting students' needs and interests, participation in class, good grades, finding success being met, and praises and rewards. Similarly, another study found that giving students a sense of success has been found to be effective in Hebrew teaching as well (Tremblay, et al, 1995). Those strategies that Madrid (2002) found to be weaker included listening passively, individual work, and using the L2 in class.

4) Updating Teaching Methods

One way to update teaching methods is to look at current SLA research and review what implications have been made for the classroom; in other words, distinguish which methodologies have been developed based on current research. There are also certain practices in Hebrew teaching that have been employed for so long that they have been accepted as norms in Hebrew education, and these should be reevaluated for their effectiveness and relevance for students. For example, some Hebrew teachers continue to use the same methods and establish the same goals in their classrooms, although SLA theory is constantly evolving and teacher-learner dynamics are changing.

5) Promoting Teacher Training

Hebrew teachers should be made aware of the unique challenges and issues in teaching an L2 (Nahir, 1979; Shohamy, 1999). In addition, Israelis that decide to teach Hebrew in the U.S., who, as previously stated, are the vast majority of Hebrew teachers,

should be taught about the varied contexts for Hebrew learners outside of Israel (Feuer;

2009; Shohamy, 1999), including the culture that Hebrew learners in the U.S. can already

identify with. Finally, Hebrew teachers should be informed about motivation. Research

shows that when teachers are motivated, students tend to be motivated as well

(Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Teachers would also no doubt benefit from knowledge

concerning motivational strategies.

Since many teachers, Israelis or otherwise, receive little or no training in these

three areas prior to becoming Hebrew instructors, workshops can be organized to inform

them and provide additional tools to implement in the classroom.

6) Additional Insights

These five topics encompass a large part of the issues involved in Hebrew

teaching, but they do not include everything. Two other crucial issues deal with (1)

motivating students to begin studying Hebrew and (2) motivating them to persist in their

studies. The first issue is apparent in the MLA data that shows a decrease of more than a

thousand introductory-level Hebrew enrollments between 2006 and 2009. While there are

no doubt other reasons for this decrease, including university priorities and budgets, these

reasons are institutional or societal and largely out of the control of Hebrew instructors.

However, Hebrew teachers can have an impact on recruitment (Kaufman, 2008;

Reynolds, et al., 2009).

Instructors can implement a number of approaches to draw more students to take

Hebrew courses, including putting up posters around campus to inform students about the

program, giving program information to university advisors to pass on to prospective students, and visiting local high schools to promote Hebrew programs and raise student awareness of them. This last suggestion will also increase student enrollments in intermediate-level courses, since many American Jews study Hebrew during Jewish day schools but do not consider it an option in their university studies. Furthermore, HLLs can be identified from the outset of their Hebrew studies and informed about groups and organizations that will give them a venue to develop and express their Jewish identities (Reynolds, et al., 2009).

The second issue concerns retention, which is equally vital for Hebrew teachers (Kaufman, 2008; Reynolds, et al., 2009). Although 2009 MLA data shows a greater number of total enrollments in advanced Hebrew, the amount of graduate students in Hebrew dropped by nearly half. It can also be assumed that there will be fewer advanced students of Hebrew in the future, since there were fewer introductory students in 2009. Arguably, the most important way to increase student retention in Hebrew classes entails ensuring that learners of Hebrew are motivated, feel a sense of purpose, and learn to manage their own studies. All of this can be fostered through a balanced curriculum that emphasizes achievement, motivation, and learner autonomy.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

There are many things that can be learned from this body of research, but the largest limitation lies with the few relevant studies for this topic, particularly from the Hebrew context. While some of the studies are executed carefully and use both empirical data and widely accepted methodologies within the world of SLA research, others are informal or only mention Hebrew briefly. Because of this, some of the review comes from universal SLA research in an effort to make up for the scarcity of Hebrew-specific research; this research is, of course, beneficial, but may not always apply completely to the Hebrew context.

One of the most common arguments against motivation research in SLA is the heavy use of surveys, which are distributed to learners as a means of self-assessment (Mackey & Gass, 2005). This is problematic, since learners may assess themselves differently based on their understanding of the survey statements. Learners may also see themselves differently than an outside observer would. This has been unavoidable in motivation research, since it is very difficult to measure motivation in any other way. The research on this issue is also mixed: some find a strong correlation between observed and self-reported motivational behavior (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), while others do not (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011). Some researchers have used classroom observation or interviews to measure motivation (Feuer, 2007), each of which has its own advantages and limitations. The surveys used in the studies are also questionable. Some of them were

adapted versions of the AMTB or other common surveys for measuring motivation (Noels, 2005; Okuniewska, et al., 2010), while other surveys were presumably homegrown (Morahg, 1991; Reynolds, et al., 2009; Thomas, 2010; Yan, 2003). Many of these questionnaires are presented only in part or not at all in the articles, which makes it difficult for others to replicate these studies or truly understand their validity and reliability.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As SLA research continues to improve, it is expected that our perceptions and theories concerning motivation will become more accurate and we will find improved ways to measure it. Future research regarding motivation and Hebrew in the U.S. should add to our limited picture of motivation in this context, while considering the complexities that arise, such as Jewish culture and religion, Israel, and mixed backgrounds. Additional factors to include in future research are heritage language learning, types of motivation including integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, and extrinsic, student and teacher beliefs, and individual contexts. Although there is more to enrollments and improving Hebrew programs than student motivation, it is a vital factor that needs serious consideration. This report has attempted to provide a broad survey of this issue, while future empirical studies will likely consider only focused elements of it.

Since motivation is always changing, future studies may also report learner motivation at several points in their language study (Gardner et al., 2004). This would give clues as to when students tend to wane in their motivation or when it increases.

More research is also needed on amotivation and what causes this in the Hebrew classroom.

There are many other questions that this review has examined, but these remain largely unanswered. For example, how can one best integrate SLA research findings into Hebrew classroom curricula and teaching? What are the best ways to inform Hebrew teachers about second language teaching? How representative of Hebrew motivation are the MLA enrollment numbers?

Similarly, there are more aspects to improving Hebrew education and enrollments than investigating motivation, several of which fall at the policy level. These aspects include surveying the importance placed on Hebrew by institutions, examining course offerings and budgets across Hebrew departments, and reducing student anxiety. These other aspects fall outside the scope of this paper, but remain areas for future research.

CONCLUSION

All in all, examining SLA motivation research and Hebrew in the U.S. presents a complex issue, but it is evident that learner motivation in Hebrew can be improved through proper research and effective classroom implementation. Furthermore, a consideration of societal and pedagogical factors are vital to understanding Hebrew motivation in the U.S., including the five key issues that have been raised herein as concerns. These five issues point to a need for improvement in curriculum, teacher education, and awareness. It has also been illustrated by descriptive statistics that enrollments in Hebrew are wavering; it will become clearer whether or not this trend will

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continue with future investigations, such as when the next MLA survey is released. There is a close connection between these university enrollments and American Jews, suggesting that this group should be a primary topic of interest in improving motivation within Hebrew programs in the U.S.

Both descriptive statistics and past studies seem to indicate that the majority of Hebrew learners in the U.S. are American Jews who study Hebrew as a heritage language. Most of them do not speak Hebrew in the home in their youth, and thus would be considered broadly-defined HLLs. These learners' most common reasons for studying Hebrew are to connect with Israel or explore their own cultural heritage, so it can be inferred that integrative motivation is the most common type of motivation among them. Intrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation appear to be strongest among non-HLLs. Although there were some narrowly-defined HLLs in Feuer's (2007) study, it is unclear from past research whether there are such learners in the U.S. All of the aforementioned types of motivation should be considered before arriving at decisions towards improving and sustaining motivation. While efforts should be made to understand Hebrew learners by considering these types of motivation, it is also important to consider that degree of motivation is more important than type, as discussed by several researchers (Horwitz, 2008). Consequently, perhaps the greatest efforts should be exerted to promote and raise motivation levels towards Hebrew study in general.

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Vita

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