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**Language Reform as Language Ideology:  
An examination of Israeli feminist language practice**

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**Language reform as language ideology:  
An examination of Israeli feminist language practice**

**by**

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**Dissertation**

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

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Texas at Austin  
December, 2004**

**Dedicated to women of the Israeli feminist movement**

חזקי חזקי ונתחזק

## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to many individuals and institutions for their support and guidance. I would like to acknowledge the Social Science Research Council for the dissertation research grant that supported the first year of my field research in Israel. The conference organized by the SSRC for its Middle Eastern grantees in March 1996 gave me the opportunity to share my ideas at the crucial beginning stage of my research. The conversations I had with the other participants challenged some of my assumptions about how and where to conduct my research and ultimately improved the quality of this work. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the linguistics department at the University of Texas, both the staff and the faculty, for assisting me throughout my tenure as a student in the department.

My next thanks goes to the fifteen women who were willing to give their time to participate in this project and discuss with me their views on negotiating a feminist identity in contemporary Israel. Without the willingness of these and many others to participate in this project and answer my numerous questions, there would be no data and thus no dissertation. There were many other people in Israel who also contributed in some way to my research. I would like to thank Yael Meschler, Orit Kamir, and Mira Ariel, who provided me with advice about my project and helped me to focus my research on Israeli feminist language practices. I would also like to thank Yvonne Deustch, Karen Abrams, and Terry Greenblatt who helped me connect with women at different feminist

organizations; and Dr. Gabriel Birenbaum of the Hebrew Language Academy, who gave me space to conduct research at the HLA and access to the minutes of the sociology committee; and the librarians at the resource center of the Shdulat Hanashim who assisted me in collecting examples of sexist language use in the Israeli media and other public institutions.

For their help in conceiving and guiding this project, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Esther Raizen, Elizabeth Keating, Anthony Woodbury, Joel Sherzer and my supervisor, Keith Walters. Special thanks go to each for their unique contributions: to Esther for her confidence in my Hebrew, her willingness to listen my data tapes and review my transcripts for accuracy, and most importantly for reminding me that my perspective as a non-native speaker of Hebrew was an asset to my research; to Elizabeth for her attention to my own use of language in this text and for helping me to strengthen the feminist and ethnographic focus of my work; to Joel for reminding me that my work should contribute to the readers' picture of Israel as well as their picture of contemporary Israeli Hebrew; and to Tony for encouraging me to draw broader conclusions about the way speakers ideologize elements of their languages and the socio-cultural phenomena that result from these processes. Keith Walters has been my advisor and mentor throughout my graduate studies at the University of Texas. He has encouraged me at every step of this project and helped find opportunities for me to present my work to the broader community of scholars examining issues of language and gender. His confidence in my vision and my

work helped me stay the course and finish the writing of this text, for which I sincerely thank him.

Within the larger community of linguists, anthropologists, and Israel studies scholars there are several individuals who helped to advance my work. First, I must thank Bonnie McElhinny for organizing “Words, Worlds, and Material Girls: A workshop on language, gender and political economy.” The conversations sparked by work presented at this conference gave me the opportunity to exorcise the ghost of a particularly troubling article on gender and language ideology that had haunted my writing and my thinking. I would like to thank all the participants for their contributions, especially Charles Briggs, Mary Bucholtz, Penelope Eckert, Rudi Gaudio, Kira Hall, Noelle Mole, Bonnie McElhinny, Maureen Murney, Susan Phillips, Keith Walters, Jessica Weinberg, and Qing Zhang. I would also like to thank colleagues from the University of Texas and elsewhere with whom I discussed my ideas about gender identity, Hebrew, and contemporary Israel: Michal Brody, Ginger Pizer, Susan Smythe-Kung, Amy Peebles, Christina Willis, Augustine Agwele, Douglas Bigham, Sadia Rodriguez, Elaine Chun, Christine Labuski, Beth Bruinsma, Melissa Biggs-Coupal, Yaron Shemer, Avraham Zilkha, Megan Crowhurst, Adam Newton, Uri Horesh, Ouzi Rotem, Ron Kuzar, Yishai Tobin, Rusty Barret, Robin Queen, David Samuels, Peter Haney, Laura Levitt, Lori Lefkowitz, Susan Kahn, and Tamar Kamionkowski.

I also must acknowledge the network of friends who supported me during the three years I spent living in Israel, many of whom have become members my

extended family: Micha, Nitsan, Hezi, Yigal, Gil, Sufnat, Jessica, Aron, Wendy, Tamar, Susan, Ruti, Mara, Aliza, Nicky, Anat, Edit, Edi, Marla, Rona, Joel, Nehama, Jennifer, Barry, Allison, Allegra, Ilan, Yotam, Yuval, Jessie, Shari, Ruti, the Zituny family, and the Levi family. There is another group of individuals whose intellectual, emotional, and spiritual support in conceiving, writing, and completing this dissertation was immeasurable: Meredith Barber, Sheila and Alex Avelin, Elyse Wechterman, Marsha Freidman, Joel Miller, Josh Pfefer, Rachel Conway, Sarah Benor, Karen Abrams, Gila Silverman, Chantal Tetrault, and Caryn Aviv. Finally, I would like to thank my parents Barbara, Robert, and Mary, my sister Francine, my brother-in-law Andrew, and my step-sisters Ryan and Rachel. Their support and love throughout the entire process gave me the strength to overcome the many obstacles I encountered during the pursuit of my degree.



# **Language Reform as Language Ideology: An Examination of Israeli Feminist Language Practice**

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2004

Supervisor: Keith Walters

This dissertation, an ethnographic and sociolinguistic case study of Israeli feminist practices, investigates the relationship between language use, language ideology, and the socio-cultural construction of gender and gender identity. Taking the definition of language use presented by McConnell-Ginet (1988) as a guide, I analyze both the linguistic behavior and the metalinguistic discourse of fifteen self-identified Israeli feminists, to determine how ideologies related to language, gender, and philosophies of social change interact with the structural and sociolinguistic facts of Modern Israeli Hebrew (MIH) to shape these women's intentional and habitual practices of language use. I used the theoretical concepts of "indexicality" (Ochs 1992) and "community of practice" (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999) to examine how the participants in my study used the linguistic

resources in their socio-culture repertoire to negotiate a coherent social identity in both feminist and mainstream Jewish Israeli contexts.

To date, most of the literature on feminist language practice has examined these issues in English or other Indo-European language speaking contexts. This dissertation contributes to the discussion on the relationship between language and gender by examining these issues in a Hebrew-speaking context. Hebrew, a root-and-pattern language, has a binary system of gender based noun classification in which agreement is marked on predicates as well as pronouns and adjectives. Thus, avoiding gender pre-specification of animate referents in language use, particularly spoken language, is extremely difficult. Furthermore, the association of cultural gender characteristics with the grammatical categories of MASCULINE and FEMININE, through the processes of iconization and erasure (Gal and Irvine 2000), has more implications for meanings of gendered forms.

Feminist Hebrew is distinguished from the contemporary and the prescribed standard uses of Modern Israeli Hebrew in three specific ways: (1) the use of hyper-standardized FEMININE forms for referential and indexical marking of feminine gender in sex-specific contexts, (2) the use of FEMININE forms for ambiguous generic or definite inclusive reference, and (3) the overt double gendering of nominal or predicate forms (the Hebrew equivalent of *he/she*) in speaking or writing. The dissertation includes a detailed quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistic analysis of my informants' practices to explain how they used variables from feminist and conventional varieties of MIH to express

both referential and social-indexical meaning. I discuss the possible social meanings of inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation. I explore what these meanings can (or cannot) tell us about each woman's status in the community as well as the overall relationship between language use and the constitutive nature of the Israeli feminist community. Finally, I examine the sociolinguistic strategies employed by two women, an Israeli feminist politician and a Jewish feminist activist married to an Arab man, to explore how they use the full range of their linguistic repertoires to negotiate their identities in specific socio-cultural contexts.

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## **Guide to transliteration of Hebrew**

Hebrew utterances in this text are represented in transliterated form using the conventions set out in the tables below. Transliteration is appropriate because my analysis of the utterances focuses on morpho-semantic and lexical variation, rather than the “sounds” in my subjects’ speech. I chose to use transliteration for the representation of the Hebrew utterances, rather than phonetic transcription using IPA symbols, in an effort to make the text accessible to communities not familiar with the IPA symbols. I created a system based on a survey of existing practices for transliterating Hebrew consonants into Roman orthography. In creating this system, I prioritized the ability of a Hebrew-speaking reader to understand the use of Hebrew “words” and “morphemes” in representations of my subjects’ speech. Non-Hebrew speakers can rely on the literal translations and glosses provided.

It should be noted, however, that this is a representation of spoken language. Variation in the pronunciations of words, particularly loan words from non-Semitic languages, as well as allophonic variation in the pronunciation of certain vowels or morphemes is apparent in my subjects’ speech. For example, the English words “feminism” and “feminist,” which have been borrowed into MIH, figure significantly in the conversations with my subjects. While the Hebrew Language Academy may have issued a ruling regarding the pronunciation, spelling, and assignment of grammatical gender to these words,

there is clear variation in my subjects' use of them.<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to maintain this type of variation, where it does not interfere with the interpretation or intelligibility of the Hebrew, to facilitate the reader's recognition of these utterances as spontaneous speech rather than prepared remarks or written texts. I feel this recognition is important to the central issue in the dissertation, namely the relationship between language ideology and linguistic behavior.

Vowels in the Hebrew language are connected to the root and pattern system of morphology. In written Israeli Hebrew, the vowel markings are generally absent. Culturally, they are understood as guides for vocalization of the consonantal roots in the different morphological patterns and considered unnecessary for the recognition of Hebrew words. The majority of native Hebrew speakers would have considerable difficulty correctly using the diacritic markings that represent the vowels in Hebrew orthography. These diacritic vowel markings are based on historical representations of phonological variations that are no longer present in many cases. In classical Hebrew texts, there are several distinctions between vowel sounds that most native speakers of Modern Israeli Hebrew (MIH) do not realize. For example, the historical distinction between the *kamets* – [ ʊ ] and *patax* – [ a ], has not been maintained.<sup>2</sup> In MIH, both are realized as [ a ], and in this text, I represent both the *kamets* and *patah* with the

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<sup>1</sup> The assignment of grammatical gender to loanwords in Hebrew is often problematic, and despite rulings by the Hebrew Language Academy, many MIH speakers are inconsistent in their use of gender with non-Semitic borrowings.

<sup>2</sup> Note that *komets* and *kamets* refer to the same vowel. The name change is symbolic of the merging of [ ʊ ] and [ a ] for most MIH speakers. In guides to the pronunciation of classical texts, the vowel is still referred to as *komets*, but in MIH contexts, it is usually referred to as *kamets*.

single symbol ( a ). The vowel *sere* is realized sometimes as [ɛ] and sometimes as [ɛi]. For example, the initial vowel in the Hebrew word סֵפֶר ‘book’ is represented by the *sere* while the second vowel is represented by the *segol*. Some Hebrew speakers will pronounce the word as [sɛfɛr] and some will pronounce it as [sɛifɛr]. The variation does not appear to follow any particular rule and may be idiosyncratic for each speaker. In the table below, I have included both allophonic variations of the *sere* vowel in my transliteration practices. There is also variation in the realization of elided vowels that occur in pre and post-lexical clitic morphemes. For example the clitic preposition *bə* ‘in’ or ‘with’ is realized as [ba], [bɛ], or [bə] depending on whether it is used with the definite article (i.e. ‘in the’ as opposed to ‘in’ ) and/or the phonetic influence of surrounding vowels and consonants as well as idiosyncratic practices of particular speakers. Nor does there seem to be a unified standard for the representation of these vowels in the transliterations by Israeli sociolinguists. As with the variation in pronunciation of non-Semitic loan words, representing the variation of vowel pronunciation in the transliterated texts helps maintain the feel of spoken language without compromising the intelligibility or interpretation of the utterances. Note also, that in the table showing the conventions for representing Hebrew vowel sounds, the **⚡** is used to indicate the placement of any Hebrew consonant relative to the vowel in Hebrew orthography.

sound (IPA symbol)	transliteration symbol	Hebrew vocalic symbol	Hebrew vowel name
[ i ]	i	ִ	<i>hirek</i>
[ ε ]	e	ֵ ֶ	<i>segol &amp; sere</i>
[ a ]	a	ִ ֶ	<i>patah &amp; kamets</i>
[ o ]	o	ֹ ֺ	<i>holem</i>
[ u ]	u	ֻ ֽ	<i>kibbutz &amp; shuruk</i>
[ ə ]	ə	ְ	<i>shewa</i>
[ ai ]	ai	ִי	<i>patah + yud</i>
[ ei ]	ei	ֵי	<i>sere (+yud)</i>
[ oi ]	oi	ֹי	<i>holem + yud</i>
[ ui ]	ui	ֻי	<i>shuruk + yud</i>

Table 1: Representation of Modern Israeli Hebrew vowels:

It is important to note that, as with the vowels, several Hebrew consonantal sounds, represented by different orthographic symbols and names, have merged in standard MIH. Most contemporary speakers of MIH, particularly native-born speakers, do not consistently realize the historical phonetic distinctions between *xet* and *xaf*, *kaf* and *kuf*, *tet* and *taf*, or *alef* and *ayin*. Nor are these distinctions maintained in most transliteration practices. Within this text, each pair is represented by a single symbol, as noted in the table below. It should also be noted that the *alef* and the *ayin* are both represented by the symbol ( ' ), which should not be confused with an IPA symbol for glottal stop, stress mark, or any other consonantal sound. In syllable-final position, the Hebrew consonants *hey*, *aleph* and *ayin* are not articulated; word finally, they can result in the lengthening of the final vowel sound, but they are not articulated as separate

phonemes.<sup>3</sup> Thus, only intervocalic occurrences of these consonants are represented in the transliterations of my subjects' speech. When the *alef* or *ayin* occur word initially, for example in the Hebrew words אֶחָד 'one' and עֲקָרֹנוֹת 'principles,' they will appear in the transliterations as *exad* and *ekronot* respectively, without the initial consonantal symbol. The Hebrew consonants named *bet*, *kaf*, and *pey* vary phonologically according to their position within a linguistic unit. They are realized as stops, [b], [k], and [p] respectively, syllable initially, but as fricatives post-vocally or word finally. The fricative variants have distinct Hebrew names, *vet* - [v], *xaf* - [x], and *fey* - [f]. The existence of specific Hebrew names for each of these allophonic variants should not lead readers to think of them as separate phonemes in the Hebrew phonological inventory. Each pair is represented by a single "letter" in the Hebrew orthographic system. The allophonic variation can be marked in written Hebrew texts by the use of the *dagesh*; a dot that appears in the stop variant of the letter but not in the fricative.<sup>4</sup> One final note, in the transliteration tables above and below, I do not use the term "letter" because Hebrew vowels and the allophonic variants *vet* - [v], *xaf* - [x], and *fey* - [f] are not "letters" in the conventional sense of the word. Each of these "sounds" has a specific Hebrew name related to its

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<sup>3</sup> In classical Hebrew and some written representations of MIH, the word final אַי, called *hey mapik*, is distinguished from regular word final *hey*. As I stated, diacritics are not generally used in written texts and most speakers do not realize the distinction in speech. Even in cases of minimal pairs such as between אִשָּׁה *isha* 'woman' and אִשָּׁהּ *ishá* 'her man,' most native MIH speakers rely on semantic contextual clues rather than phonetic distinctions to convey the difference between the two words.

<sup>4</sup> As with vowel markings and the difference between *hey* and *hey mapik* noted above, the use of the *dagesh* to distinguish between the stop and fricative variants is derived from classical Hebrew and not used by most MIH speakers in written texts.

orthographic representation, but they are not “letters” of the Hebrew alphabet in the same way that /a/ or /s/ are letters in the English alphabet.

sounds (IPA symbol)	transliteration symbols	Hebrew graphemes	Hebrew consonant names
[ʔ]	ʾ	א ע	<i>aleph and ayin</i>
[b]	b	ב	<i>bet</i>
[g]	g	ג	<i>gimel</i>
[d]	d	ד	<i>daled</i>
[h]	h	ה	<i>hey</i>
[v]	v	ו ו׃	<i>vav and vet</i>
[z]	z	ז	<i>zayin</i>
[t]	t	ט ת	<i>tet and taf</i>
[j]	y	י	<i>yud</i>
[k]	k	כ ק	<i>kaf and kuf</i>
[x]	x	ח כּ	<i>xaf and xet</i>
[l]	l	ל	<i>lamed</i>
[m]	m	מ	<i>mem</i>
[n]	n	נ	<i>nun</i>
[s]	s	ס שׂ	<i>samex and sin</i>
[p]	p	פּ	<i>pey</i>
[f]	f	פּ׃	<i>fey</i>
[ts]	ts	צ	<i>tsadi</i>
[ʀ]	r	ר	<i>reysh</i>
[ʃ]	sh	שׁ	<i>shin</i>

Table 2: Representation of Contemporary Hebrew Consonants:

There are some additional notes regarding the use of symbols in the glossing of the Hebrew. In the literal translation of the Hebrew texts, I use the



following symbols for reference to the relevant grammatical function or meaning of the Hebrew words and morphemes.

symbol for grammatical function/marker	meaning of symbol
(S)	Singular Morpheme
(P)	Plural Morpheme
(M)	Masculine Morpheme
(F)	Feminine Morpheme
NEG	Negation morpheme
(D.O.)	Direct Object Marker

The symbols are employed to provide the reader with the necessary grammatical information to understand the difference between FEMININE and MASCULINE variants of different predicate or nominal forms. For example the literal translation of the Hebrew *amart* would appear as: ‘you said(F, S).’ The meaning of (F,S) following the English gloss of the word is that this form is the FEMININE, singular form of the predicate *lomar* ‘to say.’

The transliterated text is presented in *SILDoulos* IPA font. Italicized portions of the transliterated texts represent reported speech of others. Instances of code-switching to English are presented within the text using American English spelling. The exceptions to this practice are loan words that have been incorporated into the MIH lexicon. Square brackets, [ ], around text in the transliterations indicates an overlap in speakers turns. The use of ... in the transliterations indicates that text has been omitted; generally the omitted portions of the original speech are hesitation markers or discursive “asides” within an utterance that are not relevant to the analysis of the variables being examine in a particular example.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE AND GENDER IDEOLOGY AMONG ISRAELI FEMINISTS

## Chapter I: *ze nora ma'aliv lihiyot nekeiva*, ‘it is very insulting to be FEMININE’

The statement in the title of this chapter, uttered by my informant Neta, contains an implicit question: Why is it “very insulting to be FEMININE” in Israel?<sup>5</sup> In essence, my dissertation is an attempt to answer this question through an examination of the way Israeli feminists’ use language to negotiate their feminist identities in the complex socio-cultural context of mainstream Israeli Jewish society.<sup>6</sup> I analyze both the linguistic behavior and the metalinguistic discourse of fifteen self-identified Israeli feminists to determine how ideologies

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms. Furthermore, I have provided limited demographic and ethnographic details about individual informants to protect their identities.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I refer to the dominant socio-cultural context within which my informants acted as “mainstream Jewish Israeli society” or Hebrew-speaking Israeli society. I use these terms interchangeably because the focus of this work is the relationship between language, ideology, gender, and identity among native speakers of the Modern Israeli Hebrew language in the Israeli socio-cultural context. My use of these terms is meant to highlight the fact that mainstream Israeli society is dominated by native Hebrew-speakers who are also Jews, according to the Israeli definition of Jewish identity as both national and religious. My study is limited to the language-use practices of native Jewish Israeli Hebrew speakers, which serve as the norms for language-use conventions and prescriptive standards for all of Israeli society. I recognize that non-Jewish residents and citizens of Israel speak Hebrew as a second language, but they, as well as Jewish immigrants, are rarely native speakers. Obviously the issues raised in this work affect both the non-Jewish residents and citizens of Israel and the Jewish immigrants, but these groups are not explicitly represented in it because their members are not native speakers of Hebrew. Clearly they are participants in Hebrew-speaking Israeli society and their language practices no doubt influence how Hebrew is spoken in Israel. However, the Israeli national ideology views the non-Jews as foreign, and Jewish immigrants must learn to speak Hebrew to become fully vested members of mainstream Israeli society. Even then, issues of authenticity related to linguistic competence arise. The complex relationship between language, Israeli national identity, and ethno-religious centrism in Israeli society will be addressed in chapter two of the dissertation.

related to language, gender, and philosophies of social change interact with the structural and sociolinguistic facts of Modern Israeli Hebrew (MIH) to shape these women's intentional and habitual practices of language use. The primary theoretical question of my research concerns the relationship between language, gender, and ideology. What can an examination of linguistic innovation by Israeli feminists, which is characterized by variations in the use of the Hebrew system of grammatical gender for reference to male and female social agents in the socio-cultural context of male-dominated Israeli society, tell us about the nature of this relationship? To answer this question, we must look at the practices themselves and the "conditions of discourse."

Let us return to Neta's comment and the implicit question I believe it posed. To address the question meaningfully, we must first understand what Neta was saying when she declared, "*ze nora ma'aliv lihiyot nekeiva*," "it is very insulting to be *nekeiva*. What is the meaning of the term "*nekeiva*" in her statement? In my gloss, I translated the word as 'FEMININE,' but *nekeiva* can also mean 'female' or 'feminine.' Furthermore, the term "feminine" can refer to either a socio-cultural category or a grammatical category. Throughout my dissertation, I use orthographic conventions to distinguish between the various meanings of the words "masculine," "feminine," "male" and "female." 'MASCULINE' and 'FEMININE,' in uppercase, refer to the formal grammatical categories in the noun classification system of Hebrew. 'Masculine' and 'feminine,' written in lowercase, refer to the culturally defined categories of gender and the characteristics that these categories are ascribed. 'Male' and

'female' are used interchangeably with 'man' and 'woman,' and their respective plurals, to refer to humans as they fit into the cultural and grammatical categories. Thus, my gloss of Neta's statement reveals that she was speaking about the grammatical category. We could rephrase her statement as follows: it is very insulting to be grammatically FEMININE or in the FEMININE grammatical category.

The rephrasing of Neta's statement raises a slightly different questions: How is it insulting to be FEMININE? The question of how is bound up with questions such as, to whom is it insulting to be FEMININE and in what contexts. To answer these questions, we must look at the situation within which Neta made this comment. The first level of context was the meta-topic of discourse within which she uttered the statement itself. The topic of discourse was Neta's response to a question about the relationship between conventional practices of language use and women's status in Israel. Her statement occurred in the context of a larger utterance, which began with her description of an interaction with a male instructor who consistently used MASCULINE language to give examples in a management-styles course that had mostly female students. Neta confronted her instructor and requested that he use FEMININE language to address her. She reported that he did not understand her request; then she proceeded to connect this incident to the issue of language and gender. (I have highlighted the statement, which occurs at the end of the longer utterance, with bold text and underlining.)

vehu lo hivin bixlal ma ani rotsa memenu. zot omeret eh ze kol kax mushrash she'ani ke'isha nimtset keilu betox ish. velo, ein, ani lo nifredet mimenu beshum texum. vehaxi matsxik ze sheze, ze lefi ha, eh hayom, kvar sheyesh rov shel nashim, hu tsarix ledeber banekeiva. vehaxi matsxika, shegam nashim lo osot et ze., ki hen poxodot shehem ye'alvu. ma kol kax ma'aliv shemedabrim benekeiva? zot omeret, keshegvarim medebriim el nashim bezaxar az anaxnu beseder. aval keshenashim medabrot eleihem kenekeiva ze nora ma'aliv lihiyot nekeiva. bixlal hamila nekeiva. hashoresh shela ze nekev ze xor! nora!

And he did not understand at all what I want from him. That is to say, this is so clear that I, as a woman, reside seemingly within a man, and do not, there is not, I cannot separate from him in any context. And the really amusing (thing) is that this, according to, today, already, when there is a majority of women, he must speak in the FEMININE. And the most amusing is that even women don't do this, because they(F) are afraid that they(M) will be annoyed. What is so insulting that (they) speak(M,P) in the FEMININE? That is to say, when men speak to women in the MASCULINE, so we are okay. But when women speak to them(M) like feminine, **it is very insulting to be FEMININE**. At all, the word *nekeiva*, the root of it is *nekev*. This is "hole!" Terrible!

Reading the whole of her utterance, it is clear that, in general, Neta used the word *nekeiva* to refer to the FEMININE category. Thus the answer to the question to whom and in what contexts "it is insulting to be FEMININE" is that it is insulting to men. The immediate meaning of her statement referred to the reaction of Israeli men when they were addressed (or rather not addressed) by speakers who used FEMININE forms. At this point in my analysis, it is important to clarify that Neta was not speaking about the direct address of a single speaker to a specific addressee. She was speaking about the use of FEMININE plural terms of address or FEMININE generics. Her statement reflects the fact that

males in Israeli society are not socialized to find themselves included in FEMININE collective or generic forms. Thus, it is insulting for them to be forced to do so by speakers who use language in unconventional ways.

However, Neta's comment includes some very important clues that the meaning of the term *nekeiva* in this context was associated with both the grammatical and social gender categories. At the beginning of her utterance, she stated that the experience of being address by MASCULINE language made her feel, "that I, as a woman, reside seemingly within a man, and (...) I cannot separate from him in any context." It seems likely that this statement refers to the contrast between Neta's sense of self as a woman and the way in which conventional uses of MIH socialize her to see her SELF (as an Israeli, a person, etc...) as masculine.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in response to her own question "ma kol kax ma'aliv shemedabrim benekeiva?" 'what is so insulting that they speak in the FEMININE?', Neta points to the gendered difference in Israeli language socialization. Women are used to being addressed in the MASCULINE, but men are not used to being addressed in the FEMININE. Men have the privilege of being associated with the normative SELF in Israeli culture by virtue of the metaphorical relationship between the socio-cultural masculine category and the grammatical MASCULINE category, which is, in turn, associated with the unmarked category of human in prescribed and conventional uses of MIH.

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I contrast "SELF" and "OTHER" with "self" and "other" to differentiate these concepts in the mainstream context with these concepts in context of the marginalized sub-communities.

According to Neta's comment, this feminist attempt to address the gendered asymmetry of "symbolic privilege" (e.g. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) through innovative language use is rejected by both men and women. The problem is the perceived slight that using the FEMININE forms could be taken as signaling to men. However, the source of the perceived slight is somewhat hidden. It could be understood as an artifact of the reality that men are not socialized to see themselves in the FEMININE language forms. It could also be interpreted as men's discomfort in being expected to find themselves in the feminine social category, which is represented in language by the FEMININE. Herein, lies the essence of the question raised by Neta's statement. How do practices of language use interact with ideological processes and cultural concepts of gender such that, in the Israeli context, using FEMININE forms for impersonal or inclusive reference to males and females becomes *kol kax ma'aliv* "so insulting" to men? In this dissertation, I will address the issues raised by this question from a feminist perspective.

## **1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation, a detailed ethnographic and sociolinguistic case study of Israeli feminist practices, is divided into three major sections. The first section of the dissertation, "An introduction to language and gender ideology among Israeli feminists," includes this introductory chapter and chapters two and three. In chapter two, I present the theoretical frames within which I locate my analysis of the data and the socio-cultural contexts within which the data was produced by my informants. Chapter three describes the sociolinguistic methods I used to

collect and analyzed that data. Included in chapter three are also (1) a description of the Israeli organizations and institutions where I collected the data and (2) an introduction to the fifteen women whose sociolinguistic practices are analyzed.

The second major section of the dissertation, entitled “Grammatical gender in use: Feminist Israeli Hebrew” includes chapters four, five, and six, which present a detailed quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistic analysis of my informants’ use of grammatical gender as elements of a feminist variety of Modern Hebrew. In these chapters, I examine the use of linguistic forms in five morpho-semantic contexts to define the grammatical variables that differentiate feminist Hebrew from prescribed standard and mainstream conventional varieties of MIH.<sup>8</sup> The analysis of the data focuses on my informants’ observed and reported linguistic behavior to explain how they used variables from feminist and conventional varieties of MIH to express both referential and social-indexical meaning.

The third section of the dissertation “Negotiating identity and the use of feminist Hebrew,” is comprised of chapters seven, eight, and nine. In chapter seven, I discuss the possible social meanings of inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation. I explore what these meanings can (or cannot) tell us about each woman’s status in the community as well as the overall relationship between language use and the constitutive nature of the Israeli feminist community.

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<sup>8</sup> I refer to the variables as “grammatical” to differentiate between lexical variables of feminist Hebrew and the innovative use of grammatical gender for semantic referential and indexical reference to males and females. Thus, the term “morpho-semantic” refers to the semantic contexts within which my informants vary their use of morphological gender markers. See chapter two, section 2.4.2 for a description of the Hebrew system of grammatical gender classification of nouns.



Chapter eight presents my analysis of the sociolinguistic strategies of two of my informants, an Israeli feminist politician and a Jewish feminist activist married to an Arab man. I analyze the content and form of their metalinguistic discourse to explore how they use new linguistic “meanings” produced within the feminist context to negotiate their identities in specific socio-cultural contexts. Chapter nine, the final chapter of the dissertation, presents the theoretical conclusions that can be drawn from my examination of Israeli feminist practices. In this concluding chapter, I also discuss remaining questions and avenues for further investigation.

## Chapter II: Between “this house” and the “outside”: Contextualizing research on Israeli feminist language practice

*po she'ani betox habayit haze, az hakol nora me'urgan venexmad.  
ve'at yotset haxutsa ve'at pit'om nitkelet bashovenizm hasamui haze.  
hahityaxsut elayix kemashehu katan. ... kemo ehm shalom banot. ...  
lo yagidu shalom nashim, shalom banot (Neta)*

here, when I am in this house, so everything is very ordered and nice and [then] you go out and you suddenly encounter this latent (or concealed) chauvinism. The treatment of you like something small ... like eh “hello girls.” ... they(M) won't say hello women, hello girls. (Neta)

### 2.1 THE THEORETICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF THE RESEARCH

In the quote above, one of the women in my study, Neta, was responding to a question about why she located herself within the feminist community. Her response included a reference to the way practices of language use in mainstream Israeli society contributed to the latent or concealed chauvinism she encountered “outside” her feminist home.<sup>9</sup> Feminist language reform or linguistic innovation is at least the use of language as a tool of feminist social change work. However, in this dissertation, I will argue that feminist linguistic innovations must also be understood as the social acts of women negotiating their identities between “this house,” that is, the feminist community, and “the outside,” that is, mainstream (Israeli) society. I take the theoretical position that a meaningful analysis of language must address both the linguistic elements themselves and how they are used to accomplish tasks in specific contexts. To accomplish the task of this

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<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew word *samu'i* can be translated as either ‘concealed’ or ‘latent.’ In Neta’s comment, I believe both English glosses are relevant.

dissertation, I make use of several current theoretical concepts about the role of language in the construction and negotiation of social identity. This chapter includes a review of the relevant literature on the following topics: the sociolinguistic construction of gender and identity; communities of practice as the locus for investing language use with social meanings; the indexical nature of linguistic behavior; and language ideology, gender and generics.

I also present a description of the socio-cultural and linguistic facts relevant to understanding my analysis of the specific case of Israeli feminist language practice.<sup>10</sup> Section 2.4.1 presents the socio-cultural issues that shape gender ideologies and communal practices in the mainstream Israeli context. This section includes a brief description the Israeli feminist movement, both its historical and contemporary make-up as well as its position within the larger Israeli political landscape. Section 2.4.2 is presents a description of rules for the use of grammatical gender in standard (prescribed) Modern Israeli Hebrew (MIH) and conventional practices of use in by contemporary Israeli speakers of Hebrew. Section 2.4.3 includes an examination of the relevant sociolinguistic facts of contemporary Israeli society. It also includes a discussion of the ideological factors that influence the language socialization of members of the Jewish Israeli community of practice and a review of the literature regarding variation and grammatical gender marking in contemporary uses of MIH.

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<sup>10</sup> Significant portions of section 2.4 are taken from Jacobs, 1997.

## 2.2 LANGUAGE, GENDER AND THE MAKING OF WOMEN AND MEN

Simon de Beauvoir (1983) stated, “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.” In her critical examination of the socio-cultural “othering” of women *The Second Sex*, she differentiated between biological sex and the socio-cultural construction of woman and the feminine. “It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity” (p. 1). The orthographic practices that I devised to differentiate between the grammatical and socio-cultural categories of gender were intended to make salient the feminist theoretical perspective that gender is a socio-cultural construction to which practices of language use contribute. Speakers make use of language and linguistic elements to classify human males and females into gender categories with culturally associated characteristics. Neta’s statement at the beginning of this chapter illustrates that in the Israeli context, the characteristic of “small” or “child-like” is associated with the cultural category of WOMAN.

Many linguistic conventions index the fact that concepts of masculinity and femininity are linked to social characteristics that may or may not be aspects of individual men’s and women’s identities. The English lexical construct ‘tom-boy,’ which one of the women in my study used to describe her child-self, is a linguistic convention used to label girls whose behavior is too ‘masculine’ to fit within the norms of communally defined “girlish” or “feminine” behavior.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> The woman borrowed the English lexical item, but the concept of “boyish” girls is salient for Israelis. The Hebrew word often associated with this behavior is *shovav* ‘rascal(M)’ or *shoveva* ‘rascal(F).’ When applied to boys, it means rambunctious or mischievous in a “boys will be boys”

way language is used to refer to individuals as social beings can be understood to contribute to the making of biological sex into gender and thus females into women (and males into men). An examination of these linguistic conventions explains the way individual females and males are included or excluded from the culturally defined social categories of WOMAN and MAN.

The question posed in my research is how does the use of language, as a system of symbolic reference to “reality,” contribute to the process of creating and recreating the unequal relationships between MAN and WOMAN in different cultural contexts. Of particular relevance to my research is the way that grammatical systems of noun classification that make use of gender as the organizing principle figure in the social process of gender differentiation. McConnell-Ginet (1988) offers a comprehensive discussion of the differences between grammatical gender or gender as an organizing principle in language (linguistic systems) and the way that social gender is encoded (and produced) through the use of language

Language (use) involves the *production* by linguistic agents (speakers or writers) of linguistic forms; in using these forms, agents are *meaning* to express content and to present themselves as social beings and actors in the world. (p. 78)

Taking the definition of language use presented by McConnell-Ginet as a guide, I developed a two-part approach to analyze both the linguistic behavior and the metalinguistic discourse of fifteen self-identified Israeli feminists. The goal of my analysis is to determine how ideologies related to language, gender, and

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sort of way, but when applied to girls it has the added connotation of “ungirl-like” behavior similar to the concept conveyed by ‘tom-boy.’

philosophies of social change interact with the structural and sociolinguistic facts of Modern Israeli Hebrew (MIH) to shape these women's intentional and habitual practices of language use. I devote chapters four, five and six to examining the "production" of specific linguistic elements – grammatical gender in five morpho-semantic contexts – in the discourse of Israeli feminists and explaining what these women "mean" by their use of these linguistic forms in particular examples of their usage.

In a later article, "The sexual (re)production of meaning: A discourse based approach," McConnell-Ginet (1989) explained that "endowing linguistic forms with meaning is a socially situated process" (p. 41). She argued that we should not be surprised to find sexist meanings attached to linguistic forms used in sexist societies. The linguistic analysis of the relationship between language and gender, or gendered practices of language use, must consider the "contexts" in which particular practices occur. I use the principle of socio-culturally contextualized methodology to further explore the social meaning of both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation with regard to the use of grammatical gender in the Israeli context. The analysis presented in chapters seven and eight builds on the description of Israeli feminist practices or "language production" to explore the "meaning" of my informants' practices in a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

McConnell-Ginet (1989) also discussed the way language can be used to produce new meanings. "It is possible to produce new meanings in the context of a community or culture of supportive and like-thinking people" (p. 47). My

examination of Israeli feminist language use also explores how my informants' practices of language produce new meanings within the feminist context and the relevance of these new feminist meanings for the negotiation of identity in different socio-cultural contexts. Other work on the relationship between language and the (re)production of social inequalities that influenced my investigation of Israeli feminist practices of language use including that of Ehrlich and King (1994), Gal (1989, 1991) and Woolard (1985).

### **2.3 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

The exploration of language in use necessitates the development of a theoretical framework for talking about the way individuals organize themselves as social beings. Several concepts have been used to examine the language use of groups of individuals and the social meaning of their behavior. Meyerhoff and Holmes (1999) review the major conceptual frameworks used in sociolinguistic research. In their discussion of the different models used, they argue that Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) adaptation of the concept of "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is particularly useful for examining the social meaning of language use in context. The Eckert and McConnell-Ginet definition emphasizes the way in which individuals engaged in a particular socio-cultural endeavor develop a shared set of "practices" that are related to the accomplishment of that specific endeavor. Thus, these individuals constitute a "community of practice" which is both defined by and defines the social identity of these individuals as members of their community.

I found this dynamic model of “community” to be the most useful of the conceptual models of social relationships between groups of speakers for investigating the relationship between language use, ideology and identity in Israeli context. I used the model of “community of practice” to define the different socio-cultural contexts within which my informants used language to enact their social identities and feminist ideological stances. The women in my study are members of the Israeli feminist community, which is engaged in the social endeavor of working for gender equality. The work of feminist social change involves numerous shared practices and ideologies oriented toward affecting change in the Israeli socio-cultural institutions and practices that perpetuate gender discrimination and the oppression of individual Israelis based on their sex and/or sexuality. Thus, the Israeli feminist community can be considered a community of practice. The Israeli feminist community of practice is defined, in part, by its opposition to the social practices and ideologies that support the male-dominated social hierarchy of mainstream Israeli society. The community of Israelis engaged in the business of continuously defining and creating the dominant Israeli socio-cultural norms and the conceptualization of Israel as the national homeland of the Jews must also be viewed as a community of practice, within which members of the Israeli feminist community live and act as social beings.

I use the concept of a “speech community” to refer to the macro-sociolinguistic context of all speakers of MIH within which the specific communities of practice relevant to my informants’ social behavior are located.



On the following pages are graphic representations of the schema I developed to represent the complexity of the context(s) within which the women in my study acted as sociolinguistic agents.<sup>12</sup> Figure 2.1 locates the Israeli feminist community of practice as one of many sub-communities that exist within the larger community of practice identified as the Jewish Israeli community of MIH speakers. (Referred to throughout the dissertation as ‘mainstream Israeli society,’ ‘mainstream Jewish Israeli society,’ and ‘larger community of Israeli Hebrew-speaking society’). I also included some of the other sub-communities of practice that were specifically relevant to my research. The macro-community of Jewish Israeli society is located within the speech community of all speakers of MIH, which includes non-Jewish speakers in and outside of Israel as well as non-Israeli Jewish speakers of MIH.

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<sup>12</sup> The relative size of each circle in figures 2.1 and 2.2 is not intended as a representation of the relative size or social power of the “communities” represented by those circles.

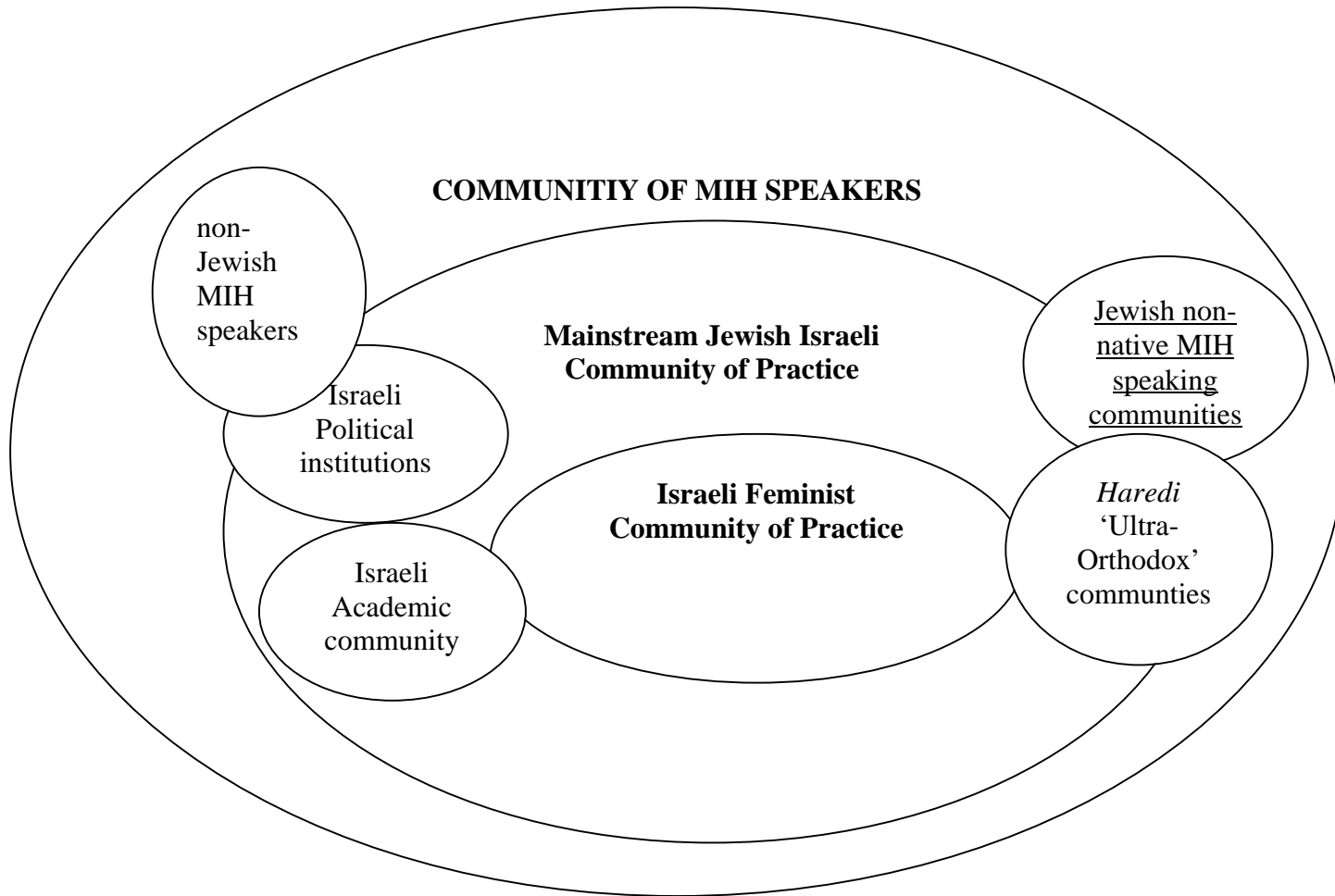


Figure 2.1 Locations of Israeli feminist community of practice and other relevant sub-communities within the Mainstream Israeli Jewish community of practice and the Modern Israeli Hebrew speech community.

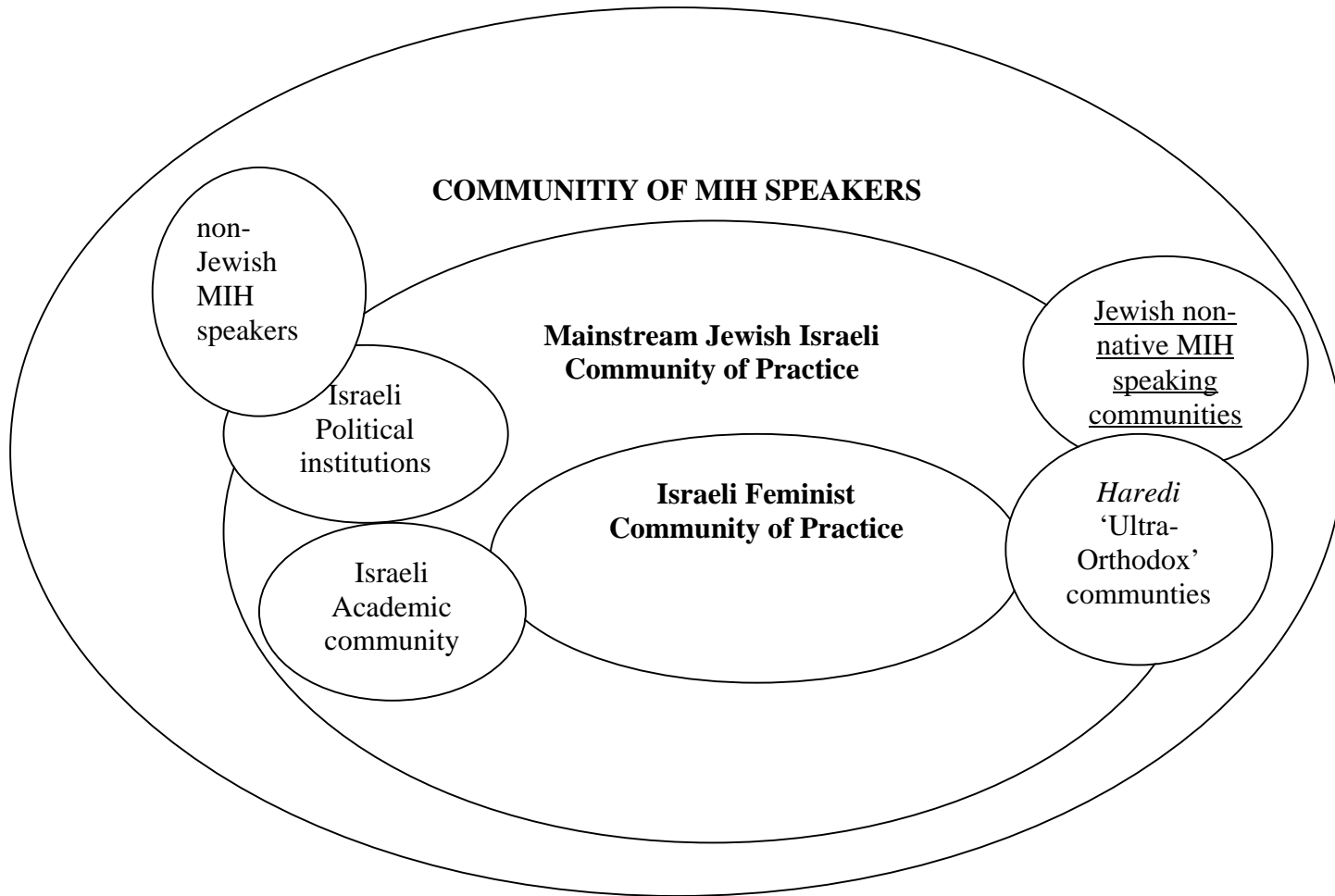


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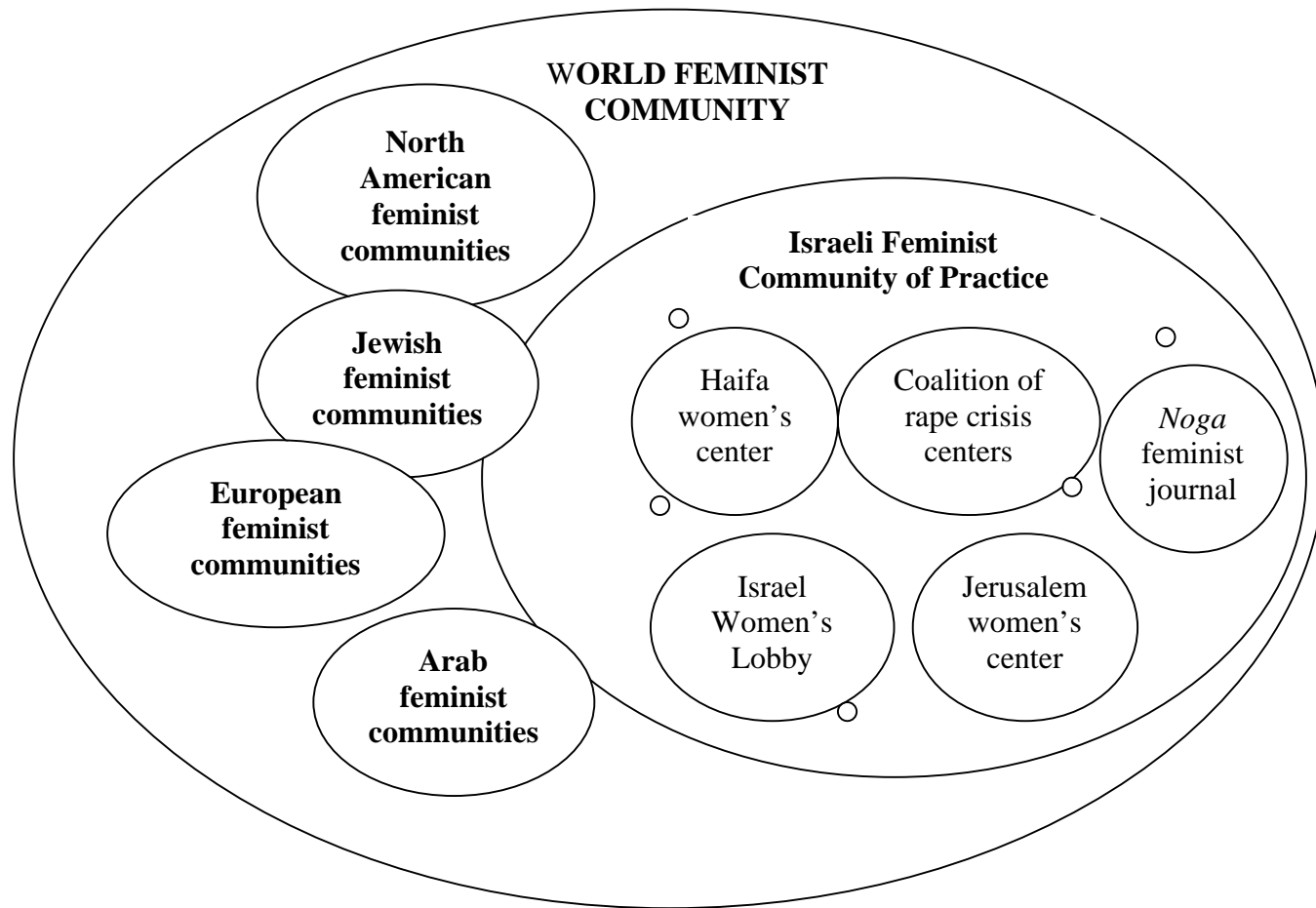


Figure 2.2 Location of selected Israeli feminist community(ies) of practice within the world feminist community

The Israeli feminist community of practice is also a macro-community that includes several feminist organizations that constitute local communities of practice in and of themselves. In figure 2.2, I have included the organizations where I conducted research. Most of the data in my study represent the language practices of women who were full-time staff members at one of these organizations; I refer to these women as “professional feminists.” The five smaller circles in figure 2.2 represent the women in my study who were not full-time staff members of any of the feminist organizations where I conducted my research; I refer to these women as “feminists at large.” Smaller circles that overlap with specific organizations represent women who either volunteered or otherwise interacted with these organizations. I also included the Israeli feminist magazine *Noga* as a social institution that contributes to the development of Israeli feminist culture.

## **2.4 THE CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI SOCIAL CONTEXT**

The socio-cultural context of language use must be examined to make sense of the both the referential and social meanings of linguistic elements used in discursive interactions. In this section of the chapter, I present aspects of the gendered landscape of contemporary Israeli society relevant to understanding the social meanings of my informants’ linguistic practices.

### **2.4.1 Gender in the socio-political landscape of contemporary Israel**

Zionism, the mainstream Israeli Jewish national ideology, has shaped Israeli culture and social institutions, including the construction of “normative” Israeli identity, since the late nineteenth century pre-state periods of Jewish

settlement in the region (Kimmerling, 2001; Segev, 2000). With respect to issues of cultural gender ideology, Zionism is heavily colored by gendered imagery of the distinction between the “old Jew” of the Diaspora and “new Jew” of the emerging Jewish Israeli nation (Boyarin, 1999; Boyarin, 2000). In his review of literature from the pre-state period of Zionist settlement of Palestine, Segev (2000) quotes several descriptions of these new Israeli Jews that are heavily invested with gendered imagery. “He is erect, brave, handsome, physically well-developed, loves work, sports, and games; he is free in his movements, devoted to his people and its patrimony” (p. 258). Even allowing for the use of the MASCULINE as the generic, this description of the young Jewish people who came to settle Palestine is clearly laden with images of a strong male figure. Segev titled the chapter in which this quote appears, A New Man, in it he discusses the influence of socialist and even fascist images of the ideal worker/farmer/citizen on the development of the Zionist image of the Israeli Jew.

The gendered imagery of this early period of Zionist activity is not accidental. It is related to the conceptual association of agency with masculinity and passivity with femininity.<sup>13</sup> The “old Jew” of the Diaspora was not capable of autonomous agency because “he” was subjected to the laws and customs of the nation-states of other “peoples.” The Jew of the Diaspora is the feminized Jew without control over even the most basic aspects of life. The imagery of a feminized Jew in exile from the land of Israel can be traced back to the latter

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<sup>13</sup> The categories of active/agent and passive/object also correspond to the origins of the proto-Semitic noun-classification system.

books of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>14</sup> For example, in *Gender reversal and cosmic chaos: A study on the Book of Ezekiel*, Kamionkowski discusses the representation of Jewish exiles and the relationship between gendered images of men, women, and the divine. She argues that the use of images of rape and sexual violence are metaphorical images of the desolation of the Jewish people (men) in exile. Their separation from divine favor and the promised land of Israel places them in the position of the female vis-à-vis agency and power. In contrast, the “new Israeli Jew” as a member of a Jewish nation with *his* own land (and language) is the agent of *his* destiny. *He* is the SUBJECT of the Israeli national story, and the work of *his* life is in the service of *his* own nation. The historical dichotomy between the feminized Jew of the Diaspora and the redeemed and “(re)masculinized” Jew of Zionist ideology is still evident in construction of the normative Israeli citizen-self.

This historical dichotomy also interacts with ideologies regarding the roles of men and women in the ongoing creation and support of the Israeli national project. Several feminist scholars have discussed the way that national ideologies and research on the construction of nationality reproduce essentialized notions of male and female citizenship roles. In these constructions, women’s contributions are conceived of as supportive, service roles, i.e. mothers and wives. They are at

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<sup>14</sup> One might argue that the association of person = male in the Israeli context, (or all of Western culture for that matter), is ultimately derived from the representation of the individual Jew as masculine in the Hebrew biblical and rabbinic texts. I believe there is some validity to this argument particularly when we consider that these texts were written in Hebrew and thus subject to the problem of associating the unmarked MASCULINE grammatical category with the social category masculine. However, I caution readers from moving too far down this road, which can lead to blaming all of patriarchy in Western societies on the Hebrew Bible. See Frymer-Kensky (1992) for a discussion of what I will call the Hebrew Bible patriarchy fallacy.

once the care-takers of those who do the “real work” of nation building and the ones who actually produce the nation through procreation (Yuval-Davis, 1997). The gendered construction of Israeli citizenship and identity is also shaped by the militarized nature of mainstream Israeli society. On the ideological level, Jewish Israeli women are “mothers,” and Jewish Israeli men are “soldier-citizens” (Bernstein, 1992; Weiss, 2003). There are several Israeli scholars who argue that military service is a means of enacting Israeli citizenship for Jewish men, but Jewish women enact Israeli citizenship primarily as wives and mothers (Bernstein, 1987 and 1992; Kimmerling, 2001; Yishai, 1997). Furthermore, many feminist scholars view the pro-natalist and family-first policies as evidence that women’s ability to birth new Israeli Jews is their most valuable contribution to the ongoing reproduction of Israel as the Jewish national homeland (Kahn, 2000; Safir, 1993; Solomon, 1993).

The ideological conception of Israel as the Jewish national homeland also has significant practical implications regarding the legal, political and civil status of women in mainstream Israeli society. Several of the social and legal institutions that shape mainstream Israeli Jewish society are committed to honoring the authority of Orthodox Jewish religious law, *halakha*. The patriarchal values of *halakha* are evident in cultural and legal concepts of normative masculine and feminine roles in society (Kadish, 2002; Swirski & Safir, 1993b). *Halakha* directly and indirectly shapes legal decisions by the civil law making bodies regarding issues such as equal employment, reproductive rights, family law, domestic violence, and women’s participation in public bodies



(Eilam, 1993; Izraeli, 1993a; Kahn, 2000; Kamir, 2003 and 2004; Raday, 1983 and 1993a; Swirski, 1993b). In spite of civil laws guaranteeing equal employment, Israeli women are still expected to adhere to modes of behavior that compromise their access to economic and political power (Agassi, 1993; Izraeli, 1993b; Pope, 1993; Raday, 1993b).

The state also grants religious law and legal institutions explicit authority over issues of personal status; in the case of Jews, this means Orthodox Jewish institutions.<sup>15</sup> Orthodox Jewish laws, which do not construct women as full adult members of Jewish communal society, constrain women's agency with regard to marriage and divorce, reproductive rights, legal status, and personal freedom (Swirski & Safir, 1993b; Safir, 1993). In the religious court system, women cannot serve as primary witnesses or as judges because they are not included in the definition of Jewish legal adult (Biale, 1984). There are several significant consequences of the laws that grant sole authority over marriage and divorce to religious courts. For example: (1) Jewish women are at the mercy of the religious court system when they seek a divorce, even from abusive partners and (2) Jews and non-Jews cannot marry legally in Israel.<sup>16</sup>

The Israeli feminist movement has developed in response to and in negotiation with multiple aspects of the whole Israeli context including: language

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<sup>15</sup> The decisions of civil bodies regarding gender equality affect all citizens and residents of the state regardless of religious affiliation. With regard to issues of personal status such as marriage, the state recognizes the authority of the specific religious institutions to which a citizen belongs, by birth or through accepted conversion. For more information regarding the relationship between civil and religious authority in Israel, see Samet, 1979.

<sup>16</sup> Civil marriages performed in another national state, between men and women only, are recognized as legally valid in Israel. In chapter eight, I discuss how Israeli marriage laws influenced one of my informant's linguistic practices for reference to her non-Jewish husband.

and gender ideologies in mainstream Hebrew-speaking culture, social structures and institutions, legal and political policies, and identity politics. The history of the feminist movement in Israeli can be divided into at least two eras. The pre-state women's movement for equal rights, which began in the early twentieth century with the second aliyah, was influenced by Zionist and socialist ideologies (Azariyahu, 1980; Bernstein, 1987; Izraeli, 1981) and struggled against the way women's roles in the building of the state were limited to traditional feminine endeavours (Berstein 1992). The modern women's movement, which was initially led by American and European immigrants, came into existence as an organized socio-political movement in the late 1970's and focused on fighting for women's rights in the modern era of gender equality (Ben Zvi, 1989; Freeman, 1990; Swirski, 1993a, Yishai, 1997).

In *Between the flag and the banner*, Yishai (1997) wrote:

The political lives of women in Israel have been shaped by an acute dilemma, a choice between their desire to foster national progress and their quest for feminist self-fulfilment. Women who wanted to play an equal part in building the new homeland rejected sex as a basis for political mobilization and interest aggregation; but those subject to sex discrimination found themselves shut out of the national effort. (p. 1)<sup>17</sup>

The above statement addresses one of the primary forces in shaping the Israeli feminist movement, the tension between participating in the Zionist project and advancing women's rights. The early women's movement began with the

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<sup>17</sup> In this passage and throughout Yishai's book, the author often uses the term "Israeli women" to refer to Jewish Israeli women. Although she does occasionally address issues of ethnicity or national identity, the use of the terms "women" or "Israeli women" to represent the dominant cultural and political group is evidence of the way that Israeli mainstream ideologies of identity are often limited to the Jewish citizens of the state.

founding of agriculture and urban women workers' collectives. Their goal was to create institutions that would support equality between male and female contributions to the national project of creating the new Jewish State. These early feminist efforts had to combat essentialist concepts of male and female forms of citizenship as well as the commitment of the early male political leaders to honoring the status of Orthodox religious authority over personal status issues. Although early Israeli feminists succeeded in guaranteeing women the vote in Israel, they did not succeed in preventing several policies that constrained the women's legal status in other contexts. In *Between the flag and the banner*, Yishai discusses how these early feminist initiatives were subsumed into the larger national project and how Israel's status as a "visionary democracy" contributes to the ongoing struggle of Israeli women to negotiate between Zionism and feminism as ideological frameworks for social change.

Israeli feminist ideologies and practices, particularly in the contemporary women's movement of the later twentieth century, also are shaped by the global feminist agenda, which has been influenced significantly by North American and European feminist communities. In the early 1970's there was a resurgence of the Israeli women's movement with a highly politicized vision of gender politics in the Jewish State. The contemporary Israeli feminist movement prioritizes a feminist agenda, but it was, and continues to be, marginalized by the ideological stance that until issues of national security are fully resolved, other social issues must remain on the political back burner. In addition, there is a pervasive ideology within mainstream Israeli society, that the contemporary Israeli feminist

movement is an imported social movement rather than a “homegrown” movement addressing local issues. Indeed, the Israel Women’s Network, the primary independent feminist political policy and advocacy organization, was founded in 1984 by immigrant British feminist Alice Shalvi. The first and only woman to be elected as the representative of a women’s political party was also an English speaking immigrant from the United States (Freeman, 1990). These facts reify the dominant ideological stance vis-à-vis feminism; however, most of the grassroots organizations that engage in feminist consciousness raising have always been informed by the agendas and ideologies of both immigrant and native Israeli feminist women. Over the last two decades, the leadership and staff of many Israeli feminist organizations have slowly shifted towards native Israelis and away from immigrant women. Nonetheless, the impression of feminism as an irrelevant and inauthentic ideological movement continues to shape attitudes towards Israeli feminist practices to this day (Swirski & Safir, 1993a, Yishai, 1997). This national ideological stance on the authenticity of Israeli feminism has particular relevance to the issue of language reform.

#### **2.4.2 Relevant facts of MIH grammar and contemporary practices of use**

Modern Israeli Hebrew has a morphologically based system of gender agreement with a semantic core.<sup>18</sup> All nouns in Hebrew are assigned to either the MASCULINE or FEMININE category; there is no neuter category. The gender categorization of nouns is reflected phonologically and morphologically in the vowel and final consonant patterns. Nouns assigned FEMININE gender usually

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<sup>18</sup> See Corbett (1991) for a discussion of the different types of noun classification systems based on grammatical gender.

end with either a stressed /a/, /it/, /ut/, or /et/ and take the plural markers /ot/ or /iyot/, e.g. *dira* – *dirot*, ‘apartment – apartments’ and *parshanit* – *parshaniyot* ‘commentator(F) – commentators(F).’ All other nouns in Hebrew are MASCULINE and take the plural marker /im/, e.g. *bakbuk* – *bakbukim* ‘bottle – bottles,’ *sefer* – *sfarim* ‘book – books,’ and *parshan* – *parshanim* ‘commentator(M) – commentators(M).’

The semantic assignment rules of Hebrew dictate that the apparent sex of the referents of animate nouns determines their grammatical gender (Coffin & Bolozky 2004, pp. 132-133). Gender is assigned to the nouns in the semantic residue, i.e. all nouns that have non-animate referents, according to the phonological shape of the word and the morphological rules stated above. Nouns with male referents are always MASCULINE, and nouns with female referents are always FEMININE, regardless of their morphological and phonological forms, e.g. *nashim* "women" is FEMININE despite its MASCULINE plural ending. The MASCULINE is the unmarked grammatical category, thus referents whose assigned gender is unknown or intentionally unspecified condition MASCULINE gender agreement. Gender agreement on plural nominal and pronominal forms used to refer to a group of animate or inanimate referents that include members from both MASCULINE and FEMININE categories is MASCULINE.

In reference to humans as social actors, speakers’ use of the rules for grammatical gender assignment is complicated by associations between cultural concepts of femininity and masculinity, on the one hand, and gender marking of

nouns used to refer to types of social actors, on the other. Exceptions to the rule of MASCULINE = unmarked = generic demonstrate the manner in which social meanings are embedded in the relationship between gender categories and markedness in the use of the MIH system of grammatical gender. In contemporary (and earlier) uses of Hebrew, generic reference to many “types” of social actors is FEMININE, for example, *axot* ‘nurse’ and *zona* ‘prostitute.’ The generic use of the FEMININE for these nouns is conditioned by the social experiences of Hebrew speakers and the cultural association between the work of these social actors and “women’s work.” These associations have consequences for the use of many derived Hebrew nouns when referring to male social actors engaged in the same work, because MIH is based on a root and pattern morphological system.<sup>19</sup> (See table 2.1 for an example of grammatical patterns used to derive nouns from consonantal semantic roots.)

Assigning gender to animate nouns based on consonantal roots follows a set pattern. In discourse, the apparent sex of the referent(s) determines the appropriate form according to the rules stated in the previous section.<sup>20</sup> Table 2.1 shows examples of the derivation patterns for agentive nouns derived from verbal roots. The C in the pattern takes the place of a root consonant.

semantic root	/rʔ/ רפא	‘healing’	semantic root	/nhl/ נהל	‘manage’
singular patterns	CoCéC (M,S)	CoCCáh (F,S)	singular patterns	MeCaCeC (M,S)	MeCaCeCet (F,S.)

<sup>19</sup> See Jacobs (1997) for an examination of discussions within the Hebrew Language Academy regarding the appropriate lexical term for reference to men engaged in sex-work.

<sup>20</sup> See Coffin & Bolozky (2004), chapters five and six, for a more detailed explanation of how different types of nouns in MIH interact with the grammatical system of gender agreement.

singular nouns and gloss	rofe 'doctor (M,S)'	rof'ah 'doctor (F,S)'	singular nouns and gloss	menahel 'manager (M,S)'	menahelet 'manager (F,S)'
plural patterns	CoCCim (M,P)	CoCCot (F,P)	plural patterns	MeCaCəCim (M,P)	MeCaCəCot (F,P)
plural nouns and gloss	rofi'im 'doctors (M,P)'	rof 'ot 'doctors (F,P)'	plural nouns and gloss	menahalim 'managers (M,P)'	menahalot 'managers (F,P)'

Table 2.1 Derivation patterns for Hebrew nouns

The system of grammatical gender in Hebrew is not limited to assignment of nouns to gender categories; it includes a set of rules that govern gender agreement. All verbs and adjectives must agree with their subject in gender. The exceptions to this rule are the plural form of the imperative, the second and third person plurals in future, and the third person plural past forms of the verb. The third person past tense plural paradigm was reduced to one form prior to the Biblical period of Hebrew. In modern Israeli Hebrew, the imperative and future plural FEMININE forms have all but dropped out of use, and the MASCULINE forms are generally accepted as gender neutral.<sup>21</sup> Finally, with respect to pronouns, the second and third person pronouns must agree in gender with their antecedents, and verbs and adjectives used with first person pronouns must agree with the intended referent. The agreement rules of gender marking in Hebrew determine that the system serves a referential/predictive function as well as an indexical function in discourse (Silverstein, 1985, p. 224).

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<sup>21</sup> In chapter five, I discuss the use of the historical FEMININE forms by Israeli feminists.

### 2.4.3 Contemporary practices and ideologies of language use in Israel

The “rules” governing the system of grammatical gender in MIH go a long way to describing practices of language use observed in Israel, but certain gender-based language reforms are slowly challenging the status quo.<sup>22</sup> In my research, I observed or had reported to me numerous instances when a mixed group of males and females were addressed in the FEMININE, although this practice was primarily limited to progressive institutions of learning and/or consciously feminist settings. Some speakers are beginning to take the relative number of males and females into account when choosing how to address an audience. The fact that some speakers even perceive a choice is relatively new. Nonetheless, the majority of Israelis follow the rule that one male in a group of hundreds of females dictates that the audience should be addressed or referred to in the MASCULINE.<sup>23</sup>

Another difference between the rules for gender agreement in MIH and their use by contemporary speakers of MIH occurs in conversational definite reference to males and females. In standard MIH, reference to females should always be with FEMININE grammatical forms; however, I have noted the use of

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<sup>22</sup> I use “rules” rather than rules without quotations in reference to the principles governing the system of grammatical gender in MIH to highlight the relationship between the most descriptive grammars of MIH and the prescriptive rules for the STANDARD use of MIH. Given that my dissertation is an examination of variation from the standard use of grammatical gender in MIH, this issue is particularly salient to this work. The Coffin & Bolozky (2004) grammar, cited in the previous section, does include commentary regarding variations from the STANDARD. If I were to write a grammar of MIH based solely on data collected from the feminist community, it would look very different, but it would nonetheless be a descriptive grammar of MIH. I will return to the ideology inherent in this issue vis-à-vis the social meaning of innovative uses of grammatical gender in section 2.6 of this chapter.

<sup>23</sup> The use of grammatical gender for reference to mixed gender groups is discussed in detail in chapters five and six.



MASCULINE forms, particularly plurals, in several contexts. Most job titles are in the MASCULINE regardless of the gender of the individual e.g. *orex din* ‘lawyer’ is used for both male and female lawyers in many contexts. With regard to plural reference, groups of females are often addressed or referred to with MASCULINE forms, unless the fact of their gender is relevant to the task in which they are engaged. Thus, a classroom instructor is just as likely to use MASCULINE forms as FEMININE forms to address an all-female group of students, unless it is, for example, a course for new brides being taught in a religious institution. In chapter five, I will discuss feminist language practices regarding definite reference to females.

Tobin (2002) discusses a less widespread variation regarding gendered terms of address in MIH. The article presents examples of grammatical gender indexing emotional solidarity or distance between speakers, of either gender, and female addressees. Tobin’s examples come from recorded conversations between family members and language use in popular literary texts. In all of his examples, the MASCULINE grammatical terms were used to index emotional closeness and the FEMININE terms were used to index emotional distance.<sup>24</sup> In chapters five and six, I demonstrate how Israeli feminist engage in a similar practice, but as the reader might expect, the indexical meanings associated with the grammatical

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<sup>24</sup> In the Israeli context, it is not surprising to find the metaphorical associations of MASCULINE = unmarked = SUBJECT and FEMININE = marked = OTHER extended to include MASCULINE = solidarity/inclusion and FEMININE = distance/exclusion. These preexisting associations also limit the use of the FEMININE to address males to a derogatory social meaning, except within the Israeli gay community. In section 2.6, I will return to Tobin’s sociocultural analysis of this phenomenon in the context of research on language, gender, and ideology. In chapter seven, I discuss the my own analysis of indexical meanings of FEMININE and MASCULINE in the mainstream and feminist Israeli social contexts.

categories are reversed. There are many other examples of variations between the rules of MIH described in the previous section and contemporary uses of Hebrew grammar, but these were the most relevant to my research.

In addition to the variations discussed above, I noted several changes in public uses of language regarding gender agreement and a general trend in advertising and service messages to use the "least gender specific" or "least gender-biased" construction possible. The motivation for these changes seems to be a consciousness that as social roles shift and change, both male and female consumers must feel that they are being addressed by the relevant literature. Another factor in the push for using "non-gender specific" language came from a section of the *xok shivyon hizdamnuyot ba'avoda* 'Equal Employment Opportunities Law' passed in 1988, which stated that advertisements for jobs had to explicitly include masculine and feminine terms of address. Both the legislated and market driven changes in language use can be seen as responses to feminist activism around the issue of gender equality. Below are four examples of grammatical strategies employed to avoid gender pre-specification and the contexts in which they are used.

1. Existential construction with the infinitive. Used mostly on product labeling in instructions for use.

yesh lehosif avkat marak lemayim rotxim  
it is to add powder soup to water boiling  
'one should add the soup mix to boiling water'

2. MASCULINE plural forms to address to singular referent of unknown gender. Used mostly for public service announcements, answering machine messages, and written instructions for completing forms.

shalom hīgatem labayit shel andrea  
hello (you)reached(M,P) the house of Andrea  
'Hi, you have reached Andrea's house'

na lehash'ir hoda'atxem  
please to leave message your (M,P)  
'please leave your message'

3. MASCULINE and FEMININE forms together with a slash much like the *he/she* strategy in English. Used in "help wanted" advertisements and some official documents.<sup>25</sup>

darush/ah meltsar/it la'avod bish'ot ha'erev  
wanted(M/F) waiter/ress to work in hours the evening  
'Wanted. Waiter/ress to work evening hours.'

4. Using the construction "please" + infinitive, mostly found in written texts or public service announcements.

na lo lizrok niyarot basherutim  
please NEG to throw paper in the toilet  
'Please do not throw paper in the toilet'

As is evident, each of the above examples has fairly limited applications except strategy two, using the MASCULINE plural. Avoiding gender pre-specification or the use of the MASCULINE as the generic is still difficult in most uses of MIH, especially spoken discourse.

Prescriptivism and language ideology play significant roles in the language socialization of Israelis. Ideologies about grammatical correctness and authentic Israeliness place a high premium on *ivrit yafa* 'beautiful Hebrew.' Articles lamenting the degradation of the Hebrew language by contemporary

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<sup>25</sup> Note that in many cases the use of the SLASH form can result in the incorrect pronunciation of the FEMININE form, as in "darusha" rather than "drusha."

speakers are found regularly in the Israeli popular press. For many years, those who worked as broadcast journalists were subject to training courses on the proper use of Hebrew grammar and censored for “mistakes.” Gold (1989) provides an historical overview of the sociolinguistic issues regarding language policy and planning and linguistic rights of non-Hebrew-speaking minorities in Israel, (though some information about programs for new immigrants was dated vis-à-vis the sociolinguistic context within which I conducted my research). Kuzar (2001) discusses in detail the ideological relationship between Jewish Israeli nationalism and the revival of Hebrew as the modern language of Israel.

There have been a few important studies that examined the relationship between language use and identity construction from a sociolinguistic perspective. The works of Tamar Katriel (1986, 1991) and Daniel Lefkowitz (1995) present detailed sociolinguistic analyses of the relationship between language use and identity construction in the Israeli context. These works create vivid pictures of the ways that language use, language ideologies, and inter-ethnic linguistic variation contribute to the creation of marked and unmarked Israeli identities. Although neither researcher, examined the interplay of gender with other aspects of social identity, their work helps to describe the primacy of language and practices of language use in Zionist ideology and the construction of individual, communal, and national identities in the Israeli context.

The rulings of the Hebrew Language Academy regarding “proper use of Hebrew” as well as history of the institution itself also illustrate the power of ethno-nationalist and prescriptivist ideologies in contemporary Israel (Jacobs

1997).<sup>26</sup> *Ha'akademiya Lalashon Ha'ivrit* 'The Hebrew Language Academy' (hereafter HLA or the Academy) was founded by the Israeli Government in 1953. The Academy consists of a number of committees, whose members include prominent Hebrew scholars, sociologists, and linguists. The HLA is the official, publicly funded, and government mandated institution charged with making grammatical rulings on usage, coining new terms, and clarifying other linguistic and sociolinguistic issues. Regarding the issue of grammatical gender agreement and innovative practices for reference to animate (human referents), the Academy takes the position that agreement paradigms should be consistent regardless of whether the referents are animate or inanimate.

One cannot give power to issues of grammar over the manner in which the community thinks. Looking at Finnish, Swedish and Turkish with respect to gender in the language tells us nothing about the status of women in those cultures. There can be changes in language and changes in society, but one has nothing to do with the other. (HLA letter quoted in Jacobs 1997, p. 67)

The rulings of the HLA do not necessarily affect speakers' daily use of language, but they are reflected in the pedagogical texts, such as *lamed leshonxa* 'teach(M) your (M) language' a text used in elementary schools, and other social contexts in which the proper use of language is expected or encouraged.<sup>27</sup>

To date there has been some sociolinguistic examination of issues of language and gender in the Israeli context from a feminist sociolinguistic

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<sup>26</sup> The HLA website, <http://hebrew-academy.huji.ac.il/>, contains information on the various committees of the Academy, its rulings, the journal *Leshonaynu* 'Our language,' and a history of the institution.

<sup>27</sup> Note the use of the singular MASCULINE forms in the title of the text. The use of language in this book and other education texts was the topic of debate within the Education ministry during the tenure of the former Member of Knesset Shulamit Aloni, in the mid-1990's.

perspective. A “Lakoffesque” early article by Shalva Weil (1983) detailed impressionistic data on male and female differences in language use. More theoretical examinations of language and gender issues, particularly the use of grammatical gender and masculine generics have primarily, though not exclusively, focused on written uses of language (Ariel 1986, 1988; Ariel & Giora 1998; Muchnik 1992). Some of these studies used psycholinguistic experiments to test the affect of MASCULINE generic reference on male and female learning (Avrahami-Einat, 1989; Meir, 1979). The results of these studies do not differ significantly from research done with English speakers regarding the failure of speakers to interpret consistently generic uses of HE as inclusive (Ervin, 1962; McConnell-Ginet, 1979; MacKay & Fulkerson 1979; Martyna, 1978 and 1980; Mathiot, 1979).

The issue of gender, generics and language use in Israeli textbooks was also the subject of discussion and research by the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Israel Women’s Network. These two institutions, influenced by feminist academics, issued reports on the male-bias of many educational materials used in the Israeli public school system (Malchiel & Pradkin 1980; Shachar & Avrahami-Einat 1993). Language, gender and gender-bias in the use of Modern Israeli Hebrew has also slowly been raised as a topic of debate in the Israeli press. At first, the issue was mostly addressed in popular feminist periodicals (Ariel, 1989), but more recently it has gained attention in mainstream magazines and newspapers (Harel, 1996; Mor, 2004; Na’or, 1996; Oryan, 1997).

## **2.5 INDEXICALITY AND CONTEXTS OF USE**

As demonstrated in the previous section, the social meaning of gender and contemporary Israeli practices of language use has been the topic of discussion in both the feminist and mainstream Israeli communities of practice. However changes in practices of language use, such as those described in 2.4.2, index different social meanings in the Israeli communities of practice outlined in figures 2.1 and 2.2. Thus, the concept of indexicality (Ochs 1992) was central to my analysis of the quantitative data. To understand the pragmatic and social relevance of my informants' linguistic practices, it was necessary to investigate the indexical meaning of their behavior in the socio-cultural contexts described in the previous sections. Cameron's (1990) theoretical critique of the quantitative analytical paradigms of early sociolinguistic research, such as those presented in Labov (1972), Trudgill (1978), and Milroy (1980), pushed me to look beyond demographic correlation in my investigation of the social meanings of language variation within the feminist community. Thus my research is theoretically closer to more recent work on gender-based sociolinguistic variation (Bucholtz & Hall (Eds.), 1995; Bucholtz, Liang, & Sutton (Eds.), 1999; Eckert, 1999). This more recent work has come problematize the assumption that speakers' identification with a community of practice can be "read" in a direct fashion from their consistent or inconsistent use of the ideologized linguistic elements or practices associated with that community.

In her article "Indexing Gender," Ochs (1992) presents a model of how speakers make use of their repertoire of linguistic and social practices to enact

gendered stances or social identities. She explores how particular practices become linked to cultural concepts of femininity or masculinity within a community and become part of a shared repertoire of gender associated practices. Speakers enact their gender identities in the context of social interactions, in part, through the use of these shared linguistic and communal practices linked to specific stances and/or social identities. A speaker makes use of her full linguistic and cultural repertoire to perform a particular identity or stance. Her interlocutors use the shared set of associations to “read” her performance of the particular stance or identity it indexes. Ochs’ model is an important theoretical advance in the context of language and gender studies. It is one of the theoretical models that moved sociolinguistic research beyond essentialist views of female and male language use by actualizing the theoretical claim that gender and gender identities are socially constructed and can be continuously negotiated.

Ochs addresses the importance of the shared nature of the sociolinguistic repertoire in terms of speakers and hearers ability to interpret “correctly” the social meaning of linguistic and social practices. In my research, I use Ochs’ model to explore the complexity of indexicality in a multi-level society where there are intersecting but not always mutually meaningful associations between specific linguistic practices and socio-cultural stances or identities. My approach considers that the women in the Israeli feminist community are members who must negotiate their social identities in the multiplicity of contexts active in any given sociolinguistic act or interaction. I developed a set of socially meaningful criteria that I used to evaluate the relative indexical “value” of each morpho-



semantic variable as a marker of feminist identity or ideology in the different communities of practice in which Israeli feminists participate. These criteria consider the sociolinguistic meanings and relative salience of the linguistic practices associated with feminist Hebrew and gendered socio-political stances for both feminist and mainstream Contemporary Israeli Hebrew (CIH) speakers.<sup>28</sup> I use this expanded model of indexicality to address the fact that the women in my study are members of multiple communities of practice and they use language to skillfully negotiate issues of identity as they move in and between these communities. I stress the importance of examining the multiplicity of the possible associations available to both speakers and hearers when we attempt to define the relationship between the collective social identity of a community of speakers and the language use practices of its members.

This approach allows me to explain the social meaning of the observable variation between conventional and feminist practices of language use rather than simply describe the social identities of those who are identified as feminists by their use of a particular set of linguistic practices. My approach also provides a vehicle for examining the socio-communal meaning of observable intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation within a particular community of practice that does not

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<sup>28</sup> Following the practice used by Hebrew scholars to distinguish between different historical and socio-cultural periods of language use, I use the term “Contemporary Israeli Hebrew” to distinguish between the grammar of Modern Israeli Hebrew as it was developed in the late nineteenth century and the Hebrew language as it has developed over the one hundred plus years of use as the primary language of the State of Israel. The grammar of Contemporary Israeli Hebrew (CIH) includes several changes to the syntax and lexicon as well as the simplification of many grammatical agreement paradigms such as those described in this chapter and elsewhere in the dissertation. Throughout the dissertation, I use both MIH and CIH. MIH refers to the prescriptive grammar taught in schools, which adheres to the rules as they were developed by Ben Yehuda and those who reinvented Hebrew as a modern spoken language.

assume that those who use specific features more than others are more feminist than those who do not.

In chapter eight, I combine these theoretical perspectives on language use and identity construction with W.E.B. DuBois' (1903) concept of double consciousness to analyze the sociolinguistic strategies and ideological claims of two of my informants. The goal of this analysis is to develop a theoretical framework for examining the relationship between linguistic innovation and ideologically motivated movements of social change. As such, I questioned the practice of labeling certain types of language change or linguistic variation as “natural” and others as “ideological.”

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) synthesis of power and difference based approaches to issues of language and gender, in “Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as community based practice,” also informed my understanding of Israeli feminist Hebrew as both a form of socio-political protest and a means of creating and supporting Israeli feminist culture and community. I used the concept of “symbolic privilege,” as they defined it, to discuss the relationship between MIH conventional practices of language use and Israeli concepts of normative masculinity and femininity (pp. 483-487). My analysis of this data was also heavily influenced by the concept of language use as social act. In particular, Cameron's (1990) discussion of American feminists language practices helped me to move from the discussion of language as a symbolic tool of social change to a recognition of my informants' strategic uses of language as acts of feminist resistance in and of themselves.

## 2.6 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY, GENDER AND FEMINIST PRACTICE

My analysis of this metalinguistic data was also influenced by research on the processes of language ideology and theories regarding the relationship between linguistic categories and cultural concepts. The manner in which Israeli feminists use language to negotiate their identity and talk about the relationship between language use and women's status revealed a great deal about the processes by which grammatical categories are linked to socio-cultural concepts. In his foundational work on language and thought, Whorf (1956) spoke of the relationship between two types of grammatical categories: covert and overt. He went on to develop a set of terms to explain the relationship between these two types of grammatical categories and how they convey grammatical meaning.<sup>29</sup> Whorf called overt categories *phenotypes* because their grammatical meaning (function) is available to analysis by speakers of a language. The covert categories are *cryptotypes* because the grammatical meaning of these types is hidden, distinguished only in contrast with other forms. Regarding our ability to understand the meanings of linguistic forms related to overt and covert categories, he made the following observation:

The meaning of a PHENOTYPE, though ostensibly plain, can really not be understood in all its subtlety until the cryptotypes that go with it have been dredged up from their submerged state and their effective meanings to an extent brought into consciousness. Thereupon the same phenotype with different cryptotypes, and vice versa, result in a more pronounced consciousness and clearer understanding of the phenotype itself. (Whorf in Carroll, 1956, p. 109)

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<sup>29</sup> See Jacobs 1993 (especially pp. 9-67) for an indepth discussion of Whorf's foundational work and its relationship to research on grammatical gender, generics, and language ideology.

The question inherent in Whorf's description of the relationship between *phenotypes* and *cryptotypes* is how might these associated meanings be "dredged up from their submerged state ...[and] brought into consciousness." Certainly Whorf's focus was on the function meaning of forms in a grammatical sense of the word "functional." However, I use his discussion of *phenotypes* and *cryptotypes* to discuss the social indexical and referential function of linguistic forms in different contexts. I ask what types of socio-cultural phenomena might create the right conditions for this consciousness raising about the full "meanings" of grammatical forms.

Irvine and Gal (2000), in the article "Language ideologies and linguistic differentiation," argue that "linguistic differentiation crucially involves ideologically embedded and socially constructed processes," (p. 74). They identify three semiotic processes, *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*, by which speakers ideologize relationships between practices of language use and communities of speakers. Their empirical examples focused on the manner in which language change occurred as a result of contact between colonial and indigenous peoples. I found that the semiotic process of iconization and erasure were very useful for discussing how Israeli feminists and other CIH speakers related to feminist and standard varieties of MIH. The manner in which different concepts of masculinity and femininity become linked to MASCULINE and FEMININE forms in the prescribed standard variety of MIH supports the iconic relationship between the *phenotypes* and *cryptotypes* associated with gendered linguistic forms and the socio-culturally defined categories of masculine and

feminine. This process of iconization then serves to erase (1) the conditions in which these associations were formed, (i.e. sexist societies) and (2) other possible indexical meanings of gendered forms (e.g. the Hebrew word *'ozeret'* 'aide/helper(F)' through the iconic relationship between the FEMININE and the feminine categories and the differentiation between men's and women's ways of helping, leads most Israeli Hebrew speakers to understand the term as "domestic helper/maid"; thus, the possibility of using it as the parallel title for a woman working as a political aide is erased).

With respect to the social meanings encoded in the use of grammatical gender, I want to briefly return to Tobin's examination of "gender switch" in contemporary Israeli Hebrew. In his analysis, Tobin used Hofstadter's (1997) concept of "freeness envy" (which was developed to explain the use of MASCULINE terms associated with camaraderie for reference to women, e.g. guys), and Morris's (2000) concept of the greater spatial/physical power associated with the MASCULINE category, (based on an examination of the inanimate nouns associated with MASCULINE pronouns in English), to explain why the MASCULINE category in the Hebrew system was more likely than the FEMININE category to be used to index solidarity. However, in his discussion of these theories and his own synthesis of them to explain the phenomena in Hebrew, he does not overtly discuss the sexist context of Israeli society within which these gender reversals take place. When I asked whether Tobin thought the gender switch I found in feminist uses of Hebrew might be related to the phenomena he studies, his response was that he did not see a direct parallel.

The gender switch that I discuss is fundamentally individual and unconscious: people are not always aware that they are doing it and they may even be surprised when you point it out to them. And, oftentimes, if they are aware that they are doing it, they think it is totally idiosyncratic: i.e. they are the only ones who are doing it. Furthermore, it is done naturally by children and adults alike for emotional reasons without any conscious ideological motivations or implications. On the other hand, the phenomena you are discussing are much more conscious and ideologically motivated in their origin, function and purpose for society in general as perceived by a specific socio-political group. (Y. Tobin personal communication, August 2004.)

What is of interest to me is this distinction between “unconscious” linguistic behavior and “ideologically motivated” linguistic behavior. Certainly, Israeli feminist practices of language use are ideologically motivated in so far as the women who engage in these practices are connected by a common ideological stance regarding the reproduction of sexism in Israeli society. However, in this dissertation, I will argue that this ideological motivation conditions my informants habitual uses of language in the same ways that cultural ideological associations between the masculine (socio-cultural) and the normative Israeli SELF condition phenomena such as the one that Tobin (2001) investigated. The primary difference between the two phenomena is the symbolic privilege that conventional and standard practices enjoy which erases their connection to the ideological stance of male=SELF and female = OTHER.

Many discussions about innovative uses of language differentiate between the “natural” or “unconscious” variation in language use and “conscious” or “ideologically motivated” language variation, such as the practices I found in the Israeli feminist community. The latter are often dismissed as imposed changes not related directly to the linguistic systems themselves but to ideology and its

misplaced blame of social inequality on the referential systems of language. Silverstein (1985) discusses the manner in which native speaker ideologies about the relationship between language and the “real world” resulted American feminists wrongly locating the linguistic index of social gender stratification in the pronominal system of English rather than in what he called the “indexical statistical tendency of language use” (p. 252). The statistical tendency of language use is not, as the reader might guess, the statistically higher use of MASCULINE forms for generic reference; rather, it refers to the sociolinguistic variation between male and female uses of language as reported in the work of sociolinguists such as Labov(1972) and Trudgill (1978).

Silverstein’s analysis accounts for the feminist “mistake” by discussing the way speakers misanalyze the asymmetrical use of the gendered pronominal forms as a representation of the power differential between men and women. He explains that it is actually the interaction between the *phenotypes* and *cryptotypes* (to use Whorf’s language) of gender and their interaction with the *cryptotype* of animacy markedness as a related grammatical system of classification that leads to the asymmetrical use of MASCULINE forms and the metaphorical association of the social status of males with the unmarked status of the MASCULINE grammatical category. He goes on to state that “the ideological location of the cause of this metaphorical relationship demonstrates perhaps the most characteristic ‘distorting’ effects in the mode of operation of ideologies of social forms like language” (pp. 240-241). Silverstein’s analysis certainly applies to much of the early feminist writing on the issue of language and gender (Spender

1980; Penelope 1990) that blamed aspects of sexism on the inherent male-bias of language. However, I would argue that Silverstein's analysis of feminist practices is flawed because he too fell victim to the process of erasure when he failed to compare the ideological implications of standard practices with those used by the American feminists. He focused too much on form and not enough on the function of feminist innovative practices.<sup>30</sup>

In my analysis, I considered the metalinguistic discourse of the women in my study to examine the ideological "rationalizations" they have for language use but also to reevaluate theoretical concepts regarding the limits of awareness that govern a speaker's understanding and use of her language. As many linguistic theorists have remarked, it is not surprising to find that within communities that are dominated by male-biased concepts of gendered social relationships, the MASCULINE forms are prescribed for generic or inclusive reference. Therefore, I will argue that it should not be surprising to find that within feminist communities speakers use language to enact an ideology that values gender equality and/or attempts to address the second-class status of women in the dominant socio-cultural milieu. Furthermore, I will argue that linguistic innovation is likely to be an inherent aspect of social change movements because language use is a social act in and of itself. Feminist language practices are not simply "reflections" of feminist ideology and consciously guided uses of language to enact that ideology, but rather the use of language to negotiate the

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<sup>30</sup> See Jacobs 1993, pp. 39-67 for a detailed discussion of Silverstein's (1985) analysis of American feminist language practices.



representation of a coherent feminist social self within sexist socio-cultural contexts.

## **Chapter III: Defining Israeli feminist language practice: Methods of investigation and analysis**

### **3.1 DEVELOPING A RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

At the earliest stages of developing my research agenda, I was guided by a desire to test the conclusions of those who had examined the generic uses of MASCULINE forms in American English. In particular, I was influenced by the psycholinguistic research of Crawford and English (1984), MacKay and Fulkerson (1979), MacKay and Konishi (1980), and Martyna (1980) on the failure of generic HE to function as a true generic in American English. Their findings shaped my initial thoughts about how to investigate the relationship between the use of grammatical gender in MIH and sociolinguistic practices related to issues of gender equality. I was interested in the ways that the structural differences between English and Hebrew might affect speakers' use and interpretation of MASCULINE generics. I also wanted to investigate how the grammatical parameters of MIH and conventional practices of language use might shape a speaker's understanding of his/her language and strategies for expressing her/his individual experience of lived reality. Thus, I chose to use sociolinguistic and ethnographic methods to collect data on language use practices and attitudes among CIH speakers, with a particular focus on feminist attempts at language reform.

I used models of quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistic research on language variation to develop the initial methods for research and data collection.

As noted in chapter two, feminist critiques of language and linguistic research methods, which have guided empirical and theoretical investigations of language and gender over the past twenty years, also informed my methodology. I designed a research program that would locate Israeli feminist practices in the larger sociolinguistic context of mainstream Israeli society. As described in chapter two, I identified several interconnected sociolinguistic contexts that were relevant to my research. Of these communities, three were immediately relevant to the collection of sociolinguistic data in the Israeli context. These were the macro-community of Israeli Hebrew-speaking society, the larger community of the Israeli feminist movement, and the micro-communities of local feminist organizations or centers. (See section 2.3 for representation of how these communities were defined.)

As I describe in sections 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4, defining these three levels of sociolinguistic contexts as communities of practice helped to determine the methods and stages I used for data collection. At each stage of data collection, I was interested in both linguistic behavior and metalinguistic discourse on language and gender. At the macro-level of mainstream Hebrew-speaking Israeli society, I was concerned with developing a realistic picture of conventional practices of language use and commonly held Israeli language ideologies. The second stage of my research took place in the micro-context of a local feminist organization. I used participant observation to develop a preliminary description of the differences between conventional practices of language use and the linguistic behavior that marked feminist language practices. The final stage of my

research was an in-depth study of feminist language use practices and the role of language within the large Israeli feminist community. In this stage, I recorded conversations with members of several different micro-communities of local feminist communities as well as women engaged in feminist work with national reach. (The analysis of this recorded data, which includes linguistic behavior and metalinguistic discourse, is the primary focus of the analytical chapters of this dissertation.)

The remainder of this chapter is divided into six sections. Sections 3.2 through 3.4 contain descriptions of the methods I used to collect data at each stage of my research. In section 3.5, I introduce the reader to the fifteen women who were interviewed during the final stage of research and data collection. The introduction to my informants is followed by a description of the protocols used to interview the study participants. The final section presents the methods I used to analyze the behavioral and ideological data collected from these sixteen women.

### **3.2 DATA COLLECTION AT THE MACRO-LEVEL OF HEBREW-SPEAKING ISRAELI SOCIETY**

The Hebrew Language Academy, an institution designed to promote the continued development of Israeli Hebrew, was the perfect place to begin my research on conventional language practices and discourse regarding language and gender in the meta-context of Israel society.<sup>31</sup> In the spring of 1996, I began my field research by examining how the Hebrew Language Academy (HLA) dealt

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<sup>31</sup> See chapter two, section 2.4, for a description of the HLA's history and its role in language prescription in contemporary Israel.

with the issue of grammatical gender, language use, and perceived gender discrimination. As discussed in 2.4.3, the HLA consists of a number of committees, whose members include prominent Hebrew scholars, sociologists, and linguists. The Academy also serves as a resource for individuals or institutions researching the development of Modern Israeli Hebrew or looking for the best way to express a concept or name a new object, such as the answering machine. Its archives are open to the public and accessible to anyone interested in researching the role of the Academy and its rulings on language use in Israel. The HLA publishes a journal *Leshoneinu*, 'Our Language,' that includes selected responses to particularly interesting inquiries and new rulings of the Academy.

My initial motivation for meeting with members of the HLA was to investigate a rumor that the Academy had issued a ruling allowing the FEMININE plural to be used in reference to groups in which females outnumbered males. Though I had not observed this practice in actual speech, I was interested in speaking with members of the HLA about the motivation for this change. I discovered that the HLA had not made any such ruling and had in fact issued a retraction in response to the rumor. (I subsequently learned that this rumor had been circulating in one form or another since the mid-1980's and that despite a printed retraction by the HLA, the rumor continued to circulate.) Dr. Gabriel Birenbaum of the HLA spoke with me and offered to allow me to search the Academy's archives for examples of queries from the public regarding issues of grammatical gender and sexist practices of language use. I also had several

conversations with Dr. Birenbaum's staff, those responsible for responding to questions about language use.

I collected samples of the correspondence between the HLA and the public regarding the use of grammatical gender. Several of the letters addressed the "inherent sexism" (the letter writers' wording) of using MASCULINE plural forms for inclusive reference, particularly when there were more women than men in the referent group. There were also requests, from both men and women, about the best way to avoid the implication of sexism in texts. Some of the letters advocated that the HLA officially support the explicit use of both MASCULINE and FEMININE forms for generic reference in educational texts and other institutional state settings. Letters requesting clarification about the "correct" use of gender terms for specific nouns included an impassioned plea from one woman for the HLA to issue an official ruling that would replace the word *ba'al* with the word *ish* for reference to male marital partners.<sup>32</sup> I also examined the minutes from some meetings of the committee on language and sociology during which queries related to language and gender had been discussed. My research at the HLA gave me a clear sense of the types of issues that were being raised regarding language and gender as well as the attitude of the establishment.<sup>33</sup> The response of the HLA to questions from the public provided me with valuable insight into

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<sup>32</sup> The literal meaning of the Hebrew word *ba'al*, which is used conventionally for 'husband,' is 'owner' and both meanings are productive in contemporary Israeli Hebrew usage. As the reader might imagine the connotations of the word are problematic for many women. (See section 3.3 for a discussion of the way this term was ideologized by members of the feminist community.) The term *ish* literally 'man' is the parallel to the word *isha* used to mean both 'woman' and 'wife.' In Hebrew Biblical texts *ish* is the primary word used to mean 'husband.'

<sup>33</sup> See Jacobs (1997) for an examination the HLA's response to questions regarding sexist practices of language use.

the way Modern Israeli Hebrew speakers must depend on cultural knowledge to interpret the use of MASCULINE forms as inclusive or exclusive. The data I gathered indicated that the use of MASCULINE generics and inclusive plurals was a publicly debated issue in Israeli society, or at least segments of the population.

After researching the issue of language and gender at the Hebrew Language Academy, I turned to examining how the Israel Women's Network (IWN), a national feminist advocacy and watchdog organization, dealt with issues related to language use and sexism.<sup>34</sup> The archives and library of the IWN served as a resource to the public for research on feminist issues. I collected samples of correspondence between the IWN and other agencies regarding issues of language use, as well as campaign and promotional literature produced by feminist organizations. The IWN had a program of monitoring feminist issues in the media. Among the various examples of sexism within the media were articles and editorials that discussed language use and the treatment of women. These articles helped me to gain a picture of how the issue of language use and women's status was treated by the popular press.<sup>35</sup> All of these materials contributed to my developing sense of how the Israeli feminist community viewed the issue and gave me a starting point for my investigation of feminist language use practices.

In addition to data collected from the archives of the HLA and the IWN, I also examined natural language use in the macro-community of Israeli Hebrew

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<sup>34</sup> The Israel Women's Network website [www.iwn.org.il/iwn.asp](http://www.iwn.org.il/iwn.asp) provides a comprehensive survey of the various research and policy programs that the organization undertakes.

<sup>35</sup> Chapter two cites some of these articles.

speakers.<sup>36</sup> As a fluent Hebrew speaker, I conducted most of my daily life in Hebrew. My everyday interactions in Israel provided me with many opportunities to observe language use in mixed-gender and all female contexts. The data collected at this stage of the research consisted of field notes on both men's and women's use of MASCULINE generics and the construction of gender-neutral expressions by speakers of CIH. I looked for evidence of variations from the prescriptive standard in the use of grammatical gender by observing language use in conversations at supermarkets, bus stations, shopping malls, museums, university campuses, and other public places of interaction. I also observed language use in more formal contexts, such as primary and elementary school classrooms, university lectures, public lectures, and radio and television broadcasts. I did not conduct a systematic sociolinguistic study of language use in any of these contexts; rather, I noted overall practices related to the use of grammatical gender.

My notes and observations focused on those practices that clearly differed from the prescribed rules for gender agreement as I had learned them. For example, I noted that both male and female speakers used MASCULINE plural forms to address all female audiences in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. I also observed that some male and female speakers tried to mitigate the apparent male-bias of conventional language practices through innovative uses of

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<sup>36</sup> The observations of language use in the larger community of Jewish Israeli Hebrew speakers took place over the course of four years and two trips to Israel. The first trip was between 10/93 and 8/94. I volunteered in two separate educational settings during that period of time. I returned to Israel in January of 1996 and continued my research on language use during the three years that I lived and worked in Jerusalem until December of 1998.



grammatical gender.<sup>37</sup> Several of the innovative practices I encountered in the mainstream context were ideologically linked to the Israeli feminist socio-political agenda. I discussed many of my findings with Israeli linguists, particularly those practices that seemed to overtly violate the rules for gender agreement in MIH. In chapter two, section 2.4, I discuss my findings and describe the primary differences between prescriptive rules for the use of grammatical gender and the conventional practices of language use that I observed.

During this initial period of research, I discussed some of my findings regarding gender and language use with Dr. Yael Meschler, a native Israeli sociolinguist.<sup>38</sup> She contributed the following story. Her kindergarten-aged daughter came home from school one day and began telling her about the day. In the context of an impersonal expression, her daughter used *ata* ‘you (M)’ rather than *at* ‘you (F).’ Yael asked her daughter why she had used *ata*. She then corrected her daughter’s usage, instructing her to use *at*, the FEMININE form of the second person. She said that she later realized her daughter had used “correct Hebrew” and that by instructing her daughter to use *at*, she had taught her “feminist Hebrew.” Yael identified this particular linguistic practice – using the FEMININE form of the singular impersonal – as part of a larger set of language use practices that appeared to be associated with the Israeli feminist movement.

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<sup>37</sup> Jacobs (2003) “Between *meshivon* and *mazkira elektronit*: Mapping the gendered landscape of contemporary Jewish Israeli society through language use” was a paper on this topic presented at the 2003 Annual meetings of the Association of Jewish Studies.

<sup>38</sup> At the time of my research, in 1996, Dr. Meschler was at Hebrew University. She is now at the University of Haifa in the department of communications. Dr. Meschler gave me permission to use this story and the content of our conversations in my dissertation.

Her use of the label “feminist Hebrew” in reference to this practice resonated with my own observations of a link between certain language practices and women who identified as feminists. Women in the feminist community seemed to share a set of innovative language practices and attitudes that were distinct from conventional uses of CIH. At this point, I narrowed the focus of my research to defining the parameters of these innovative linguistic practices and their relationship to enacting a feminist social and political identity.

### **3.3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN THE FEMINIST COMMUNITY**

In July of 1996, after my conversation with Dr. Meschler, I was hired as a part-time grant writer and overseas development coordinator for a grassroots Israeli feminist organization.<sup>39</sup> This organization ran a women’s resource center, educational outreach programs, and an art gallery with rotating exhibits that addressed feminist issues. It also coordinated local feminist activist efforts such as vigils against domestic violence at which they publicized the number of women in Israel who were murdered each week by domestic partners or family members. The Jerusalem center also provided space and organizational overhead for several other feminist organizations, including a rape crisis center, a lesbian activist collective, a women’s empowerment project, and an independently organized support group for women from local *Haredi* communities.<sup>40</sup> The staff was ethnically diverse and included women from both working class and middle-class

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<sup>39</sup> In Israel, a significant portion of the funding for non-profit social change organizations comes from abroad. Thus, they often hire native English speakers with grant-writing experience to fill development positions. My position as the grant-writer at this feminist center allowed me to make a contribution to the community while observing language use in a feminist context.

<sup>40</sup> The term *Haredi* refers to the ultra-Orthodox Jewish religious communities.

backgrounds.<sup>41</sup> Most of the staff at the center were native Hebrew speakers; thus, staff meetings and daily interactions took place in Hebrew. All of the employees at the center were women between the ages of eighteen and sixty.

As a staff member of this mid-sized women's organization, I had the opportunity to observe linguistic behavior as well as metalinguistic discourse about the role of language in Israeli gender politics. The executive director was aware of my interest in language and gender, and we often discussed her perspectives on the issues. Most of the other staff members knew that I was an American graduate student interested in the Israeli feminist movement, but they did not know the specific topic of my research. I used field notes as a means of tracking innovative linguistic practices and recording metalinguistic commentary about aspects of language use that occurred naturally in the context of conducting the organization's business. Occasionally, my coworkers overtly discussed the relationship between women's status and "sexist" practices of language use in Israel. In one staff meeting, the issue of language use in the outgoing message on the organization's answering machine was raised. The discussion led to a longer conversation about voice-mail messages, terms of address, and the specific or implied inclusion of women in MASCULINE terms of address. While discussing the organization's project on domestic violence issues, a coworker raised the issue

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<sup>41</sup> In the Israeli context, the concept of ethnicity is distinguished from "nationality" such that "ethnicity" is constructed as variation within defined national/religious communities and "nationality" is used to differentiate between Arabs and Jews or Jews and Christians. Thus, when I state that the staff of an organization was ethnically diverse, I am referring to the fact that although all the women were Jewish, they came from *Ashkenazi*, European *Sephardi*, and *Mizrachi* backgrounds. (See Lefkowitz (1995) for a discussion of these terms and the construction of nationality and ethnicity in the Israeli context.)

of the language used to refer to women's domestic partners. The question was whether to use the conventional word *ba'al* 'husband/owner,' the term readily understood by mainstream Israelis, or the alternative *ben zug* 'male partner,' the term preferred in feminist contexts. When these conversations took place during staff meetings, I sometimes offered my opinion, but I primarily observed the stances taken by the other women on the staff. These conversations contributed to my developing sense of the relationship between feminist ideological issues, issues of intelligibility, and language use choices.

Several aspects of my coworkers' linguistic behavior appeared as obvious attempts to avoid using the MASCULINE generic. I began to collect examples of the specific practices that marked my coworkers' use of language as distinct from that of other CIH speakers I encountered. The collection quickly became a catalog of different innovative practices. They primarily centered on challenging the practice of using the MASCULINE as the unmarked and/or avoiding ideologically loaded lexical or grammatical expressions. I also observed that women at the organization policed their own language use and that of other women at the center through overt correction or metalinguistic comments. For example, in a conversation about whether to use the term *ba'al* or its alternatives, one staff member stated, "*isha she mishtameshet bamila ba'ali az hu be'emet haba'al shela.*" 'A woman who uses the word *ba'ali* (my husband), so he is truly her owner.'" (See footnote in section 3.2 regarding the dual meaning of the word *ba'al*.) I also observed women at the center making ideological statements of this type about the use of FEMININE or MASCULINE forms for job titles and terms

of address. In addition, I noted several occasions that other members of the staff used more feminist alternative forms when the executive director was a participant in the conversation or was simply present in the room where the conversation took place. The executive director used feminist forms fairly consistently, and it seemed clear that her linguistic practices and ideology implicitly encourage others to use feminist alternative forms. These interactions provided evidence of communal language socialization.

The observable variation in the language use of my coworkers also demonstrated the extent to which their behavior was influenced by the language use norms of at least two communities of practice, the macro-community of Israeli society and the community of the Israeli feminist movement. For example, the linguistic choices of the administrative coordinator varied considerably depending on the person with whom she was interacting and the “work” her talk needed to accomplish. In telephone conversations with vendors, bank clerks and postal workers, she tended to use more conventional forms. During staff meetings or in conversations with the organizational director, she tended to use the feminist alternatives. Yael’s remark about feminist Hebrew as a collection of innovative or alternative practices was clearly substantiated by my coworkers’ use of language. I decided to expand my research to include a larger sample of women in the feminist community and to collect recorded samples of their linguistic behavior. I used my notes on the behavior of the women at feminist center and our conversations about language and gender to develop a protocol for the next stage of my research.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION IN THE LARGER FEMINIST COMMUNITY**

The third and final stage of my research involved conducting interviews with women from different local and supra-local feminist communities in Israel. I conducted most of these interviews between March and November of 1998.<sup>42</sup> To build on my findings at the women's center, I began the final stage of my research by examining language use in two other feminist organizations. I arranged to spend several days at a feminist center in Haifa and at the office of the Israel Women's Network (IWN), a feminist policy center and monitoring organization. I chose these organizations because they were central institutions in the Israeli feminist movement that represented two different approaches to social change work. They were also located in different regions of the country, which gave me the opportunity to explore the possibility of regional differences between the feminist practices of different local communities.<sup>43</sup> The Haifa women's center focused on providing support and services to local women at the grassroots level. The IWN had a national agenda focused on changing political and civil culture at the level of government policy and legislation. I suspected that the differences in the agendas of these organizations might effect the types of women I would meet at each center. I wanted the opportunity to interact with a diverse sample of women involved in the Israeli feminist community. At both organizations, I observed staff and volunteers in their daily activities. I also conducted one-on-one interviews with women from each institution.

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<sup>42</sup> However, my interview with the informant Na'ama occurred in the spring of 1997.

<sup>43</sup> There are few regional dialect differences in CIH relative to phonological or syntactic usage but the differences in local communal priorities and experiences do influence lexical and pragmatic uses. Nonetheless, I did not find evidence of regional variation in the use of feminist Hebrew.

The center in Haifa was the first grassroots women's center in Israel that offered a variety of programs, support services, and outreach projects connected to gender equality, women's health, and other women's issues. The organization had served as the model for other grassroots feminist centers including the Jerusalem feminist center where I had conducted my preliminary observational research. It was founded by a collective of feminist activists who were looking for ways raise feminist consciousness nationally while also working to improve the lives of women in local communities. The organization had an ethnically and economically diverse population of paid and volunteer staff members. At the time of my research, the organization's board of directors included some of the leaders in the Israeli feminist movement. The Haifa organization was also a pioneer in bridging the gap between Israeli Jewish and Arab women. It is relevant to note that this feminist organization defined its community as all women living in Haifa and the surround Northern Israeli towns and villages. The inclusion of Arab and Druze women in the organization's staff, board, and service populations was a significant statement that placed the organization on the "left" end of the Israeli political spectrum.

The IWN is the Israeli equivalent of the National Women's Organization in the United States. The organization was founded to promote women's equality and challenge sexist practices in Israeli social and legal institutions. When I conducted my research, most of the staff were native-born Israelis, but the director of the organization and the chair of the board directors were both European immigrants. The staff of the IWN tended to be college graduates from

the Israeli middle class, with educational backgrounds in women's studies, sociology, education, and law. The organization had several departments that addressed issues such as women's participation in politics, legislation supporting gender equality in governmental and social institutions, the representation of women in the media, and the treatment of women in Israeli military and educational institutions. The IWN also provided legal aid to women in cases of discrimination, petitioned the Israeli courts regarding gender discrimination in governmental institutions, and collected statistical data on women's economic and civil status.

While these two organizations provided me with access to a broad sample of women engaged in feminist work, most feminist-identified Israeli women do not work for explicitly feminist organizations or institutions. As such, it was important to balance my research at the IWN and the Haifa women's center with interviews of women engaged in other forms of feminist activism, feminists-at-large, so to speak. Using my network of friends and coworkers from the feminist community, I contacted a group of native Hebrew-speaking women who were active in the women's movement outside the context of a specific feminist organization. The group of feminists-at-large included academics, politicians, legal scholars, journalists, activists in the feminist peace movement, a former editor of the Israeli feminist magazine *Noga*, and women engaged in national organizing around domestic and sexual violence. My conversations with these women allowed me to explore whether and how the language practices I had



identified as feminist Hebrew were used by feminist-identified women outside the culturally marked and closed contexts of feminist organizations.

I use the term “closed context” to highlight the fact that feminist organizations are workplaces in which the daily interactions of most staff members occur with other members of the feminist community. The closed nature an organizational workplace supports the development of feminist socialization practices such as those I had observed at the women’s center in Jerusalem. The women in my study who worked outside the context of a specific feminist organization were not necessarily subject to this type of norm reinforcement. In addition, they interacted with a variety of men and women from all sectors of the Israeli population in their daily activities. As such, I expected that they would discuss their experiences of using (or not using) innovative language in these contexts. The interviews with these women contributed to my understanding of how Israeli women incorporated feminist principles into a variety of social endeavors.

### **3.5 FIFTEEN ISRAELI FEMINISTS**

The fifteen women who participated in this study were all members of the ideologically based Israeli feminist community and actively engaged in promoting social change and gender equality.<sup>44</sup> The subject population consisted of native Hebrew-speaking Israeli women between the ages of twenty and fifty, who self-identified as feminists. The term “native speaker of Hebrew” refers to individuals who were raised in Hebrew-speaking environments and whose first and primary

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<sup>44</sup> There was a sixteenth participant, but the quality of the recording from her interview was very poor, and I was unable to use the data in my analysis.

language was Modern Israeli Hebrew. This qualification excluded from the study recent or first-generation immigrants to Israel as well as Israeli Arabs and other non-Jewish minority groups. The study population included married women, single women, lesbians and heterosexual women, and women with and without children. Several of the women had university degrees, and some had spent time studying at universities abroad.

Ora, Ofra, Nitsan, Merav, Neta, Iris, Edit, Einat, Eti, and Meital were all what I am referring to as professional feminists, meaning that they were or had been employed by feminist organizations.<sup>45</sup> Within this group were trained lawyers, educators, librarians, and journalists. Most of the women had worked in their trained professions for a period before joining the staff of a feminist organization. They used their professional training and experience to fulfill their duties within the scope of each organization's mandate. Other women in this group began as volunteers with feminist organization while there were students. They became full-time staff once they completed their university degrees. The professional feminists used their education and training in the service of the feminist organizations that employed them. As professional feminists, their daily interactions at work were primarily with women and other feminists. Many of these women spoke of a period of socialization as they learned the appropriate communal practices for their feminist place of employment. Each of these women expressed a complex and unique relationship to the feminist movement,

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<sup>45</sup> The pseudonyms of all the informants are Israeli Hebrew names pronounced according to the key provided in the transliteration guide at the beginning of the dissertation. Stress in most Hebrew words is on the ultimate or penultimate syllable.

feminist gender ideology, and feminist language practices. Although all of these women worked for feminist organizations, the issues that brought them into feminism and their reasons for continuing to work within the feminist context varied significantly.

As stated, the women who I identified as feminists-at-large included individuals engaged in a variety of professions. Michal and Osnat were both academics who brought their feminist identities and perspectives into their academic work. Their status as academics and educators afforded them the opportunity to use language as a pedagogic tool for educating their students and colleagues about women's issues and the status of women in Israeli society. Dafna was a graduate student in psychology at the time of this study and volunteered at a rape crisis center that was part of a larger feminist organization. She was the only participant in the study who did not self-identify as a feminist, though she did advocate for feminist principles and activism.<sup>46</sup> Nurit was engaged in developing educational materials and lecturing on issues of domestic and sexual violence at a variety of institutions across Israel.

Na'ama was a former city council woman in a major Israeli city and a recognized, though somewhat controversial, leader in Israeli feminist movement. She was also the only participant in my study with strong ties to the American and

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<sup>46</sup> I chose to include Dafna in the study despite her reluctance to self-identify as a feminist, because her socio-political stances were clearly in keeping with feminist principles and she was an active volunteer at a feminist organization. Freedman (2002), in her book *No turning back: The history of feminism and the future of women*, noted that many women who "came of age influenced by feminism to expect equal opportunities" may not identify with the label but embrace the principles and even the political agenda of feminist movements (p. 5).

Israeli Jewish feminist movements.<sup>47</sup> Na'ama was one of my first contacts in the feminist community. We had discussed my research on Jewish American women's attitudes towards language and gender in religious contexts on several occasions.<sup>48</sup> My interview/discussion with Na'ama took place at the beginning of my field research, immediately following my work at the HLA. I had only begun to identify the variables that I later associated with Israeli feminist language practices and I discussed my preliminary findings with her more explicitly than I did with the other participants. As I will present in chapter eight, this clearly influenced Na'ama's discourse style during the interview. It is not clear in what way her knowledge of my research topic may have affected her actual use of specific variables, but she clearly interpreted the interview as an opportunity to give "testimony" about her personal and professional battles with practices of language use she identified as sexist.

Each of the women who participated in my study reported that the issue of language use and women's status had become salient to her through life experiences both within and outside the feminist community. Some learned to use feminist alternative lexical and grammatical constructions when they began working at feminist organizations. Others had earlier experiences in school or the

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<sup>47</sup> The label "American and Israeli Jewish feminist movements" refers to Jewish women in Israel and the United States who support feminist reforms within the context of religious Jewish life. Jewish feminists advocate for changes in ritual and communal religious practices, for example, allowing women to be counted in the quorum necessary for public prayer services. In Israel, the lack of separation between religious and state authority grants control over, personal religious status, marriages, burials, access to public religious sites and other areas of public and private life for both Jews and non-Jews to the recognized religious authorities. The Jewish religious authority is dominated by those who adhere to Orthodox interpretations of Jewish law.

<sup>48</sup> See Jacobs (1993) for a discussion of American Jewish feminists' linguistic strategies and attitudes regarding language use in liturgical texts. See Misra and Rich (2003) for a discussion of Jewish feminism in Israel.

army that had highlighted the connection between language use and gender discrimination in Israeli society. Their stories of discriminatory treatment by teachers, army officers, government officials, and peers contained common themes of alienation and struggles against a rigid set of gender stereotypes. Their experiences of marginalization were common to most of the feminist women I met in Israel. Although the women in my study are unique individuals, their experiences, linguistic practices, and language attitudes can also be understood as representative of the range encountered within the Israeli feminist community.<sup>49</sup>

### **3.6 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH INTERVIEWS**

I adopted a modified version of the sociolinguistic interview as the method for collecting data from the women who served as my principle informants. My goal was to examine how my subjects spoke, their actual linguistic behavior during the interview, as well as what they said about issues of language use, identity, and feminism. I conducted all the interviews in Hebrew, though some bilingual speakers code-switched between Hebrew and English during the interview. (The informants initiated all instances of code-switching and most were limited to individual phrases or borrowed American idioms. I continued to speak in Hebrew regardless of the language the informant used.) My intention with these interviews was to engage the participants in an open-ended discussion

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<sup>49</sup> I feel the need to restate that my research was limited to native Hebrew-speakers, which in essence limited the subject population to Israeli Jews. My informants' experiences are not therefore representative of the experiences of other women in the feminist community. In particular, I do not claim that my findings apply to the Palestinian, Druze, Bedouin or other non-Jewish women active in Israeli feminist communities.

on the issues of feminism, sexism and the Hebrew language, and the status of women within Hebrew-speaking Israeli society.

In an effort to elicit natural speech as well as relevant ideological data, I began each interview with questions about the participant's relationship to the feminist movement, her attitudes towards the feminist agenda, and how she came to identify as a feminist.<sup>50</sup> If an individual participant did not raise the subject of language use on her own, I prompted her with questions about her attitudes towards mainstream practices regarding the use of grammatical gender and specific gender-linked lexical items. I did not use written material or ask participants to read or respond to any visual or physical stimuli. Each interview lasted between thirty and ninety minutes, depending on the schedule of the individual participant and the flow of the conversation during the interview. The interviews took place at locations convenient to the participants. As I noted earlier, I spent several days at the women's centers in Haifa and Jerusalem, where I conducted interviews with different staff members and volunteers. I also conducted interviews with women in cafes, on university campuses, and at the homes of the participants. The individual women, according to what was most convenient for them, determined the locations. The interviews were recorded on analog audiotape using a hand-held cassette recorder with an external microphone.

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<sup>50</sup> I use the term "natural speech" in this context to refer to language produced in the context of conversational discourse, as opposed to speech produced in response to a set of specific linguistic cues or prompts designed to elicit the use of the variables under investigation. I am aware that my own social identity acts as a contextual or social cue. I am also aware that an interview, no matter how loosely structured, creates its own set of contextual cues that may influence language use.

To ensure that I would gather comparable information from each participant, I developed a set of general interview questions. I began by asking each woman about her marital status, level of education, and age. I then began asking a series of questions designed to lead my participants into a discussion about language and gender, which I hoped, might contain examples of feminist Hebrew variables. Below is the list of interview questions:

- (1) How do you define feminism?
- (2) What is your personal understanding of what it means to be a feminist?
- (3) Do you identify yourself as a feminist? Is it part of your personal identity?
- (4) How did you become a feminist or what brought you into the feminist movement?
- (5) Do you see a relationship between language use – in particular grammatical gender – and the status of women in Israeli society?
- (6) Can you identify any aspects of the Hebrew language or the way it is used today that are problematic for women and the promotion of women's rights?
- (7) What role, if any, do language and language use play in the feminist social change movement?
- (8) Do you intentionally use language in a way that you think is less sexist than conventional practices? If so how.
- (9) Are there specific lexical items that you find particularly offensive and if so why? What do you use instead of these words?
- (10) How would you compare your own use of language to that of other women you know? To men you know?

(11) If you use language in unconventional ways or substitute other terms for perceived sexist lexical items – do you encounter resistance? If yes, in what social or cultural contexts?

(12) Do you feel that you are included in a statement or address that is in the masculine singular? The masculine plural?

(13) How do you feel about the word *ba'al*?

(14) Do you use the historical FEMININE plural forms for imperative or future tense predicates? Why or why not?

(15) Do you use the feminine singular second person pronoun for the impersonal? In what contexts? Do you notice when other women do or do not use it?

(16) Do you think that the way you use language makes a difference in how others use language or think about women's issues?

(17) Do you agree with the theory by an Israeli feminist that the problem with Israeli society and women's rights stems from the collective Israeli identity being particularly masculine in nature?

(18) What do you think are the most important changes to be made in how language is used in Israel? Where are the most important places to make those changes – educational institutions, the media, government and political institutions?

The first six questions from the above list were standard in each interview. They were intended to elicit data on a participant's personal language use practices as well as her attitudes towards the issue of language use and women's status in Israel. The questions about identification with feminist movement and the label "feminist" usually sparked a long conversation about language use issues or the discussion of a particular feature of innovative feminist language practices. I used the other questions only when the conversation stalled or a participant did not address the relevant issues on her own. Most of the interviews quickly moved



from a question and answer style to a more conversational style of interaction. Several of the participants related long narratives about their efforts to promote language reform and the reactions of others to their use of innovative linguistic practices. As I stated, I let each woman lead the conversation in the directions that were most meaningful to her. This looser interview style allowed me to collect data on some language use practices and ideological stances that I had not previously encountered. It also allowed me to connect the personal experiences of each woman to the collective feminist narrative of women's experiences in the Israeli sociolinguistic context.

### **3.7 ANALYTICAL METHODS**

The analytical tasks of this research project, like the collection of the data, occurred in three different stages. I analyzed the data collected during the first two stages of my research while in the field. At the end of the initial stage of research in mainstream Israeli society, I reviewed my field notes on observed language practices as well as the documents collected at the HLA and IWN. I identified several sociolinguistic contexts in which speakers' use of grammatical gender varied from prescriptive standards. When possible, I also evaluated a speaker's relationship to the Israeli feminist community. As noted in chapter two, the evaluation of this data revealed that in some contexts CIH speakers used the plural MASCULINE grammatical forms for both generic and definite reference regardless of the gender of intended referents. I also noted that conventions for the use of grammatical gender reflected cultural stereotypes regarding the

gendered division of social roles as well as the association of culturally MASCULINE or FEMININE characteristics with social institutions or actions.

The analysis of the data from the first stage of research also included examining the ideological discourse on language and gender apparent in written texts collected from the HLA, the IWN and the print media. I relied on feminist linguistic theories regarding the social and sociolinguistic reproduction of sexism and existing models of the relationship between language ideologies and practices of language use to evaluate the connection between conventional practices of language use and ideological claims regarding the use of grammatical gender in MIH. This analysis enabled me to develop a picture of the language ideologies prevalent within Israeli society. I also identified specific language practices that were ideologized within mainstream Israeli culture and appeared to reflect changes to the gendered landscape of social reality. (Findings from this stage of the research are discussed in sections, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 of chapter two.)

The analysis of the data from the first stage of research laid the framework for the collection and analysis of the data collected during the participant observation stage of my field research at the Jerusalem women's center. The description of conventional practices for reference to males and females in a variety of sociolinguistic contexts together with the prescriptive rules of MIH served as the standards against which I evaluated my coworkers' linguistic behavior. I examined linguistic behavior from conversational interactions for evidence of innovative linguistic practices. The analysis of the data provided a preliminary sketch of the linguistic elements of feminist Hebrew, which I divided

into two categories of innovation: lexical and morpho-semantic. (A list of the lexical elements can be found in Appendix A. The morpho-semantic elements are presented and analyzed in chapters five and six.) I identified five major morpho-semantic contexts within linguistic variation occurred. In each context, I discovered the use of both conventional variants and one or two possible feminist variants.

The lexical component of feminist Hebrew included specific lexical forms, such as the use of *meshivon* ‘answering machine’ in place of the problematic *mazkira elektronit* ‘electric secretary (F)’ and feminized titles and labels, such as *mankalit* a feminized version of the acronym *mankal* which stands for *menahel haklal* ‘director (M) general.’<sup>51</sup> I considered these forms lexical elements rather than morpho-semantic because they focused on the titles used for specific social roles. It was clear, nonetheless, that these forms were related to the morpho-semantic practice of using FEMININE grammatical forms for reference to females.

I also analyzed my field notes for evidence of language ideology and social practices that connected the use of feminist Hebrew with the development of feminist culture and communal identity. Using theories regarding language socialization and the role of language in creating and sustaining communities of practice, I examined the metalinguistic discourse and practices of language socialization I observed at the Jerusalem center. As noted in section 3.3, the

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<sup>51</sup> The form *mankalit* is an interesting example of the process of grammaticalization. A FEMININE ending is added to the acronym to comply with rules of gender agreement. Also of note is the fact that the term *meshivon* has moved into the mainstream lexicon.

analysis of the discourse revealed a clear pattern of socialization, in which veteran members of the community overtly corrected the language use of newer members. The observed metalinguistic discourse and socialization practices constituted the data on Israeli feminist language and gender ideologies. The analysis of the data from the Jerusalem women's center enabled me to develop a preliminary description of the elements of feminist language practice and the role of linguistic innovation in the development of Israeli feminist culture.

As I stated previously, the findings from the second stage of research guided my investigation of the linguistic behavior and ideological claims of the fifteen women who participated in the final interview stage of the research. Two types of data were extracted from the audio-tapes of the interviews: quantitative behavioral data on my informants' use of the linguistic elements and ideological data from the metalinguistic discourse regarding issues of language and gender. The data from the interviews were analyzed in a manner consistent with the type of data and the aims of the investigation. Quantitative and qualitative methods of variationist sociolinguistic research were used to analyze the behavioral data. The ideological data was examined using methods of narrative discourse analysis, feminist social theory, and an analytical model combining the theoretical concepts of double consciousness, communities of practice, and linguistic indexicality.

### **3.7.2 Quantitative and qualitative analysis of feminist linguistic behavior**

The goal of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of my informants' linguistic behavior was to develop a description of the parameters of feminist Hebrew and evaluate its use by members of the relevant community of practice.

Using quantitative sociolinguistic methods, I began by counting my informants' use of each variable under investigation and comparing reported usage with actual behavior. I coded the audiotapes for every use of the relevant linguistic elements, and I created a "map" of each informant's interview data that marked the location of every use of grammatical gender for personal reference to humans – generic, definite, or impersonal – as well as the relevant lexical items. This initial analysis revealed five morpho-semantic variables related to the use of grammatical gender: 1) definite plural reference to females, 2) inclusive definite plural reference to mixed groups of men and women, 3) gender-agreement on plural future tense predicates with female agents,<sup>52</sup> 4) singular and plural ambiguous third-person generic reference, and 5) second-person impersonal generic reference.<sup>53</sup> After identifying these five variable contexts, I re-coded the tapes to indicate which of the morpho-semantic contexts a particular use of grammatical gender exemplified. I transcribed relevant portions of the verbal data that contained the use of either feminist or conventional variants of each morpho-semantic or lexical variable. Using the transcribed utterances and the coded maps of the tapes, I counted every occurrence of either conventional or feminist variants for each of the five morpho-semantic contexts.

I defined the quantitative tokens as the use of a nominal or pronominal form and coordinated predicates within a single syntactic phrase. For example, if

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<sup>52</sup> There is an historical FEMININE form for this grammatical paradigm that fell out of use in spoken MIH sometime in the 1950's. See chapter five, section 5.4 for the description of this grammatical paradigm and the feminist "revival" of the historical form.

<sup>53</sup> More detailed descriptions of the methods used to identify the tokens for each morpho-semantic context are presented in the relevant sections of chapters five and six.

an informant used the FEMININE pronominal form *at* ‘you (F, S)’ followed by the predicate *xayevet* ‘must (F, S)’ for impersonal generic reference, that constituted a single token. Within an utterance, speakers might switch between conventional and feminist variants for the same referent. I also counted each use of alternative lexical items or their conventional counterparts. In so doing, I discovered that *ba'ali* ‘husband, owner’ and its feminist alternatives, *ishi* ‘my man’ and *ben zugi* ‘my partner,’ were the only lexical forms used or discussed by the majority of my informants. Hence, I chose to focus the analysis of the linguistic behavioral data on the use of conventional or feminist variants in the five morpho-semantic contexts.

The initial counting quantified the behavioral data for each individual speaker. I used the quantitative data from each informant to assess the overall usage of conventional and feminist variants in each morpho-semantic context. I compared the use of feminist variants to the total number of tokens used in a given context. The percentage of feminist variants used was taken as an indicator of the productive value of a particular form. For each morpho-semantic variable, I also noted whether or not an informant reported using it. These totals enabled me to compare the innovations that had been successfully incorporated into the natural speech of my informants with those that seemed to have a strong ideological value but were not used frequently. I also compared each informant’s behavior to that of the other women in the study and my preliminary sketch of feminist communal norms. The results of the quantitative analysis for the use of each variable are presented in chapters five and six. In chapter five, I present the

data on the use of gender in the plural definite and sex-specific contexts. The data on the use of gender in generic third-person and second-person contexts is presented in chapter six.

After completing the quantitative analysis, I examine the utterances within which the tokens of each variable occurred to determine the “conditions of discourse” (McConnell-Ginet, 1989). This qualitative analysis focused on accounting for the way the syntactic, morpho-phonological, and semantic environments in which a speaker used a specific variable may have contributed to her use of grammatical gender in a given utterance or set of utterances. I compared the utterances in which my informants used a conventional, usually MASCULINE, form with those in which they used a feminist variant. I also evaluated the grammatical and the pragmatic factors that might predispose a speaker to use one form or the other. The findings from the qualitative analysis of the variables are presented in chapters five and six along with the quantitative data.

The qualitative analysis of my informants’ behavior provided answers to some of the questions raised by the degree of intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation revealed by the quantitative analysis. Taken together, the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis provided a more accurate picture of the elements of feminist Hebrew and the practices associated with their use. Nonetheless, the observable gap between my informants’ actual behavior and their ideological claims presented a challenge to explaining the relationship

between feminist Hebrew, as an ideologically motivated variety of CIH, and the enacting of a feminist identity or stance.

### **3.7.3 Indexicality as an analytical concept**

The apparent gap between the actual behavior of my informants and their reported behavior and attitudes provided an opportunity to investigate theoretical assumptions about the social meaning of language variation and consciously motivated linguistic innovation. As discussed in chapter two, I chose to problematize the sociolinguistic assumption that speakers' identification with a community of practice can be "read" directly from their consistent or inconsistent use of the ideologized linguistic elements or practices associated with that community. I used the concepts of indexicality and communities of practice, as discussed in chapter two, to evaluate how my informants' behavior related to their ideological claims and the enacting of a feminist identity. My approach considered the multiplicity of linguistic contexts active in any given sociolinguistic act or interaction. In "Measuring the relative indexical value of the variables," section 7.2, I present a set of socially meaningful criteria by which I evaluated the indexical "value" of each morpho-semantic variable as a marker of feminist identity or ideology. These criteria consider the relative salience of the linguistic practices related to feminist Hebrew for both feminist and mainstream CIH speakers. I address the need to evaluate all of the possible associations available to both speakers and hearers when we attempt to define the social meaning of a particular linguistic practice.



The third section of chapter seven examines the linguistic behavior of four informants in relationship to their ideological stances regarding the use of grammatical gender to address callers on the outgoing message of a feminist organization's voicemail system. In this analysis, I am concerned with the nature of the relationship between a speaker's ideological stances, her linguistic behavior, and her position within the feminist community of practice. Following the theoretical "advice" of Cameron (1990), I use both the linguistic and metalinguistic data to offer an account of the social meaning of the degree of inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation revealed by the quantitative analysis of the data.

In chapter eight, I combine the theoretical perspectives on language use and identity construction presented in chapter two, with W.E.B. DuBois's (1903) concept of double consciousness to examine the sociolinguistic strategies of two of my informants. The data analyzed in this chapter were the metalinguistic stories told by Na'ama and Merav about their conscious and intentional use of conventional and feminist practices. My examination focuses on the way these women claimed to use language in a specific context and their assessments of the consequences of their linguistic actions. I illustrate the way each woman used the sociolinguistic resources at her disposal to negotiate her performance of a feminist self in those contexts. The analysis of the discourse reveals how they represented their ideological stance and social position vis-à-vis the other social actors in their stories. I also look the discourse of my informants' metalinguistic narratives to demonstrate how they constructed their identities in context of the interview. I

conclude with a discussion of how these narratives illuminate my speakers' awareness of conventional linguistic practices as social practices that contribute to the reproduction of sexism within Israeli society. Furthermore, I show how this awareness shapes their innovative uses of language as acts of feminist resistance.

# **GRAMMATICAL GENDER IN USE: FEMINIST ISRAELI HEBREW**

## **Chapter IV: Morpho-semantic variation in the feminist community**

tir'i, klalei hasafa ha'ivrit, merosh hem bayatiyim. ma she'ani osa ze  
yaxol lihyot mexuts laklalam. ani be'etsem yotseret klalim xadashim.  
(Ora)

Look, the norms of the Hebrew language are from the start problematic.  
What I do, its possible is outside the norms. Essentially, I am creating  
new norms. (Ora)

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapters in section two of the dissertation present the analysis of my informants' linguistic behavior from quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistic approaches. The analytical goals of this section include: (1) defining the parameters of feminist Israeli Hebrew through an analysis of variables that distinguish feminist language practices from prescribed or conventional practices of language use, (2) evaluating the relative value of these variables as indexical markers of feminist identity or ideology, and (3) investigating how speakers negotiate the meaning of linguistic elements in various contexts. The variables that mark feminist practice can be divided into two categories, morpho-semantic variables and lexical variables. In chapters four through six, I examine the linguistic behavior and metalinguistic discourse related to the morpho-semantic variables. I have limited my analysis to the morpho-semantic variables because

they were more productive in the context of the interviews.<sup>54</sup> The morpho-semantic variables also present the more interesting context for examining how speakers use grammatical elements to construct and deconstruct socio-cultural gender ideologies.

The morpho-semantic class consists of those variables for which the morphological expression of gender agreement for definite or generic animate referents varies in different syntactic/semantic contexts. My examination of this class of variables is designed to investigate how Israeli feminists deploy grammatical gender and how their use of the morphology differs from standard MIH and conventional mainstream practices of use. Inherent in this investigation of feminist language practices is a general examination of the various indexical meanings embedded in the MIH system of grammatical gender. How do Israeli feminists and other speakers of Israeli Hebrew employ the grammatical system of gender, with its set of binary distinctions, to convey socio-cultural meaning and create new social distinctions within Israeli society? I use the term “morpho-semantic” to highlight that referential and indexical semantic considerations seem to motivate the innovative feminist uses of the morphological markers associated with the gender based system of noun classification. The syntactic environments within which these variables appear also exert some constraints on use; however, the strategic use of the morphology is more connected to semantics than syntax.

Multiple factors influenced my informants’ use the morpho-semantic variables. The conditioning factors included socio-cultural associations between

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<sup>54</sup> Appendix A contains a list of the lexical variables that occurred in my informants’ discourse.

contexts and gender roles, structural parameters of the Hebrew system of gender agreement, language socialization in both mainstream and feminist communities, ideological and identity issues, and issues of speech production. Through a contextualized examination of my informants' linguistic behavior, I intend to demonstrate that our existing assumptions about the manner in which speakers understand and use the system of grammatical gender to express social meaning is incomplete.

Previous discussions of grammatical gender and ideology, particularly those critical of feminist language use, have relied heavily on abstracted relationships between gender categories, referential meaning, and the theory of markedness. (See especially Silverstein, 1985.) Many of these studies have ignored the ways that standard or prescribed practices of language use are naturalized through communal practices. These analyses also tend to ignore the way in which socio-cultural gender norms are embedded in these naturalized communal practices and effect the referential and indexical meanings of grammatically gendered forms. The structural models of gender based systems of noun classification are usually presented as simple reflections of these prescribed or standardized practices, as though they were void of social meanings. Instead, these writers have focused on an explanation of feminist language reforms as “misguided” misanalyses of the asymmetrical relationship between the grammatical forms and their referential and/or indexical meanings. My analysis of the data from the Israeli feminist community will show that although feminist linguistic innovation is motivated by ideological principles, actual usage also is

governed by numerous other factors, some of them below the level of conscious awareness. I will demonstrate that linguistic, sociolinguistic, and ideological factors all contribute to the ways that Israeli feminists use grammatical gender to convey referential and indexical meaning. Studies critical of feminist language practice have also made much of inconsistency in women's use of feminist alternatives to the generic MASCULINE as "proof" of the status of generic HE as the accepted, and often structurally underlying, unmarked form. In response to these analyses, I also will discuss the possible social meaning of "inconsistent" behavior vis-a-vis the use of linguistic variables.

The examination of the informants' behavior also addresses the concept of indexicality and how indexical meanings are negotiated by speakers who must "travel" between communities with different and often conflicting language practices. Hebrew-speaking feminists must make use of the linguistic resources at hand to convey their innovative and, at times, radically different concept of social reality. It is my assertion that language reform and linguistic innovation are social acts intended to extend or subvert the metaphorical relationships between linguistic signs and the aspects of socio-cultural reality that they signify in order to enact social change. The specific manifestation of linguistic innovation within the Israeli feminist movement gives us a lens through which to examine how linguistic elements, specifically binary systems of grammatical gender, are exploited by speakers to convey a multitude of related but distinct social relationships and concepts.

## 4.2 MORPHO-SEMANTIC MARKERS OF FEMINIST LANGUAGE PRACTICE

As I explained in chapter two, the use of gender as an organizing principle for noun classification in MIH is based on the grammatical system of earlier periods of Hebrew and those used in other Semitic languages. During the one hundred plus years since Hebrew was revived (or reinvented) as the modern language of Israeli Jewish society, the language has undergone significant changes. The area of change with which I am concerned is the simplification of grammatical gender paradigms and innovations or changes in the use of gender agreement between nouns and predicates for reference to animate, primarily human, referents. One “change in progress” between standard MIH and the CIH is related to the simplification of many of the paradigms for gender agreement and a reduction in the use of many FEMININE plural predicate and pronominal forms.

The simplification of grammatical paradigms is not surprising given the parameters for the use of gender agreement in standard MIH, which identifies the MASCULINE grammatical category as the unmarked. As noted earlier, MIH speakers are taught to use the MASCULINE forms for ambiguous generic reference to any referent that falls in the personal category (e.g. humans and deities). For example, a form letter addressed to the customers of a bank will make use of the MASCULINE singular phrase *lako'ax yakar shelanu* ‘customer (M, S) valued (M, S) ours’ even if the letter is being sent to a female customer. On the one hand, this is a generic use of the second-person, since it occurs in the context of a form letter. On the other hand, each individual recipient must read it

as a term of personal address; thus, a female recipient might understand it as an instances of being individually addressed with a MASCULINE form.<sup>55</sup> Speakers also learn to use MASCULINE forms for inclusive definite reference to mixed gender groups. A lecturer addressing an audience of university students, in most contexts, is likely to use MASCULINE forms of address because the assumption is that the audience is likely to include both males and females. These prescriptive rules and related discursive practices result in limiting the contexts within which the average MIH speaker uses FEMININE plural forms, particularly second-person and third-person forms of address and agreement on predicates coordinated with first, second and third-person forms.<sup>56</sup> A consequence of this pragmatic limitation seems to be the loss of some FEMININE plural forms in informal speech contexts. In the plural, some of the agreement paradigms are being simplified to the MASCULINE form alone.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the ongoing loss of FEMININE plural forms in the speech of most MIH speakers, women within the Israeli feminist movement have adopted language practices that entail, among other things, an effort to maintain the use of FEMININE plural forms in those contexts that the prescriptive grammar identifies as appropriate. In the case of one variable, the feminist commitment to maintaining FEMININE grammatical forms has encouraged the reinsertion into

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<sup>55</sup> In chapter eight, I discuss how Na'ama's experience of being addressed in the MASCULINE led to one of her campaigns for institutional language use reform.

<sup>56</sup> In the first person context, gender agreement is only marked on present tense verbal forms and predicate adjectives.

<sup>57</sup> Shifts in the gender agreement paradigms have been noted by several Israeli linguists and language teachers; however, to date there is no empirically documented description of this change. Private correspondence with MIH linguists engaged in the collection and analysis of a corpus of spoken CIH support my assertion that these changes are taking place.



informal speech of historical FEMININE plural forms. Related to the underlying ideological objective of these maintenance efforts are several other innovative uses of grammatical gender that mark the speech of Israeli feminists as different from mainstream and standard practices of language use. A basic description of the difference between conventional and feminist practice is that the feminist variant reflects an apparent rejection of the MASCULINE as the unmarked and thus inclusive category on ideological grounds. This rejection generally manifests in three specific ways: (1) The hyper-standardized use of FEMININE forms for referential and indexical marking of gender in sex-specific contexts, (2) the use of FEMININE forms for ambiguous generic or definite inclusive reference, and (3) the overt double gendering of nominal or predicate forms through the use of the SLASH convention, the Hebrew equivalent of *he/she*, in speaking or writing. In spoken language the SLASH variable often takes the form of using MASCULINE plural or singular predicates, with overt reference to the inclusion of males and females on the nominal or pronominal forms, e.g. *hem, gevarim venashim, osim kaxa* 'they (M, P), men and women, do (M, P) as such.' Overall, the speakers of feminist Hebrew pay attention to and use grammatical gender in ways that either extend or subvert the prescribed parameters of the standard MIH noun classification system.

The three general ways in which Israeli feminist practice differs from standard language use can be further divided into the specific syntactic and pragmatic contexts within which feminist linguistic innovations most often occur. In each context, I am concerned with whether the women in my study, as

representatives of the Israeli feminist community, use MASCULINE, FEMININE, or when appropriate, double-gendered forms and the factors that contribute to their choices. The term “variable,” therefore, refers to the use of gendered forms in specific contexts rather than to the forms themselves. For example, the manifestation of gender agreement in definite 3<sup>rd</sup> person reference for feminine subjects/referents is one variable. In the context of defining each variable, I present examples of the standard and feminist variants. For some variables, such as 3<sup>rd</sup> person ambiguous generic reference, there are two feminist variants, the FEMININE and the SLASH or double gendered forms. In cases where there are two competing feminist variants, each variant is defined as an innovative option within the specific context and in relation to the other feminist choice. In chapters five and six, I present definitions of each individual variable and the quantitative data regarding its use by my research subjects, a sample of women in the feminist community.

#### **4.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS**

The remainder of this section of the dissertation is divided into two chapters. The chapters present detailed descriptions of the five morpho-semantic variables under investigation, and the findings of quantitative and qualitative analyses of their use by fifteen Israeli feminists. Each variable or set of variables is defined by both the semantic and syntactic environments within which feminist linguistic innovation occurs. Included in the definition of the variables are examples of both conventional and feminist variations and a description of the general characteristics that mark the feminist variants as distinct from

conventional practices of use for Contemporary Israeli Hebrew. I present the quantitative data on my informants' use of the different variants in the form of tables followed by an explanation of the significance of the data with regard to both conventional and feminist practices of language use. Within these chapters, I will discuss the significance of inter-speaker variation with respect to my claims that there is a distinct set of sociolinguistic behaviors that can be described and labeled as feminist Hebrew. I also will discuss the various factors that may account for speakers' variation between feminist and standard Israeli varieties Hebrew.

## **Chapter V: Feminist practice and the rules of plural gender agreement**

Israeli feminist language practices, with respect to definite or sex-specific reference, are marked by three sites of morpho-semantic variation: (1) the hyper-standardized use of FEMININE plural forms for gender-specific definite reference to females, (2) the use of FEMININE or SLASH (doubly gendered) forms for inclusive definite reference to mixed gender groups and (3) the use of historical FEMININE plural agreement markers on future tense and imperative predicates with second and third-person female agents. The term “hyper-standard” refers to the practice of adhering to the standard MIH rules for gender agreement in a manner that exceeds the norms of the mainstream Hebrew-speaking population. In section 5.2, I discuss the use of the hyper-standard FEMININE forms. The innovative use of gender agreement for reference to mixed gender groups is discussed in section 5.3. The “revival” of the historical FEMININE agreement markers is discussed in section 5.4.

### **5.2 “*OVDOT ANAXNU!*” ‘FEMALE WORKERS ARE WE’: THE HYPER-STANDARD USE OF FEMININE PLURALS FOR DEFINITE REFERENCE**

My observation of language use within the Israeli feminist community revealed a practice of language use that included hyper-standardization to FEMININE plural forms for both deictic pronouns and nominal forms of reference to women and girls. This practice contrasted with my experience of observing other speakers, both male and female, use MASCULINE plural forms to address or describe groups of females. I found that within the feminist

community, there was a clear effort to use language to mark the social reality of work places or encounters where all the participants were women. Often members of the community would correct others when MASCULINE plurals were used to address a female audience. These practices led me to identify gender marking for “plural definite reference to females” as a site of variation between conventional and feminist practices of language use.

For the purposes of data collection and analysis, I defined “plural definite reference to females” as the use of grammatical forms to mark agreement on nominal, pronominal and predicate forms with female referents, agents, or subjects. As is evident from the label “hyper-standardized,” this feminist innovation conforms to the prescriptive grammar of standard MIH, but diverges from the observable practices of language use in CIH. Below are examples of both the feminist and conventional variants for definite plural reference to females.

1. **kulan** amru haben zug sheli,  
everyone (F,P) said (P) the male pair mine  
everyone said my partner(rather than husband)

ani amarti ma ze hashtuyot ha'eile?  
I said what this stupidity these  
I said, to myself, what is this stupidity?

ma **aten** **mitaskot** beke'ilu zman lekol haterminologia?  
what you(F,P) engage(F,P) in like time to all the terminology  
what you all use time to engage with all the terminology?

In example (1), the speaker, Ora, was referring to the women who worked with her at a feminist organization. She was describing her experience of learning to

use new terminology to refer to male marital partners. The referential pronouns and predicates with gender agreement are highlighted in bold text. Of particular interest is Ora's use of the FEMININE construction of 'everyone' – *kulan*. According to my observations of language use, most speakers of CIH, even those that use FEMININE plural forms, are more likely to use the MASCULINE construction of everyone – *kulam*. The reduction in the grammatical paradigms of gendered plural forms, discussed in previous chapters, is primarily centered on the loss of the phonologically based morphological distinction between the [n] final FEMININE forms and the [m] final MASCULINE forms. Ora's use of both *kulan* in the first line, and *aten* in the second line are typical examples of the feminist variant for gender agreement marking in this morpho-semantic context.

Example (2), taken from the transcript of my interview with Iris, shows the more conventional variant.

2. mehayom **medabrim** belashon nekeiva  
 from today speak (M,P) in language feminine  
 from today (we) use the feminine
- mikeivan sheyesh po rak nashim  
 because that there here only women  
 because, there are only women here

In the quote above, Iris was reporting the instructions she gave to her female students about the use of grammatical gender to address a group of women. Iris and the women in her class are the implied agents of the bolded predicate with the MASCULINE plural agreement marker. The irony inherent in this example, that Iris has used the MASCULINE form in exactly the way she is instructing her students to avoid, can be understood as evidence of the extent to which the use of

MASCULINE plurals to address a group of females is a naturalized linguistic practice.

The use of gender for definite gender-specific plural reference is ideologized within the feminist community as a means of making visible the unique social reality of consciously defined all female space. Several of the women in my study discuss experiencing or participating in language socialization to the hyper-standard forms when they first became active in feminist organizations.

yesh lanu mankalit, hi kvar shana mankalit shelanu. vekeshehigi'a hi dibra eleinu belashon rabim zaxar. zot omeret, ani rotsa, eix hi omeret hi mamash dibra eleinu bezaxar. veme'od me'od tsaram lanu. kol pa'am tikanu ota, ovdot anaxnu. hi doveret ivrit, sfat em shela. ... aval besof az gam hi kvar medaberet eleinu belashon nekeiva.

We have an executive director she is with us now a year. When she first came, she spoke to us using masculine plural language. That is to say, how she said, she really spoke to us in the masculine. And it really, really irritated us. Every time we corrected her, we are *female* workers. She is a Hebrew speaker,[it is] her mother tongue. But in the end, so she also now speaks to us in the feminine language.

The above quote from one of my informants exemplifies the type of language socialization that occurs within the community regarding this variable. Thus, we might expect Israeli feminists to demonstrate a preference for the use of FEMININE forms, at least within an overtly feminist context. In Table 5.1, I present data on the use of gender marking for definite plural reference to females.

Speaker	Total tokens	FEMININE tokens	% of FEMININE
Dafna	5	5	100%
Edit	11	8	73%
Einat	27	20	74%
Eti	23	22	96%
Iris	25	17	68%
Meital	9	8	88%
Merav	11	11	100%
Michal	3	3	100%
Na'ama	16	16	100%
Neta	13	13	100%
Nitsan	9	9	100%
Nurit	22	22	100%
Ofra	21	20	95%
Ora	8	8	100%
Osnat	33	33	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>91%</b>

Table 5.1 Use of gender for plural definite reference to females

The data presented in the table 5.1 include occurrences of both first and third-person morphological forms as well as plural forms of nouns and their coordinated predicates.<sup>58</sup> Second-person morphological forms only occurred as instances of reported speech during the interviews, and as such are not included in the tokens counted. The numbers in the final column indicate that nine of the fifteen participants used the FEMININE forms exclusively and eleven of the participants use the FEMININE forms in at least ninety percent of their utterances. Across all the speakers, 91% of the tokens are FEMININE. Overall,

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<sup>58</sup> Chapter II contains a description of the different types of nominal forms found in Hebrew and the grammatical paradigms for the declension of nominal forms.



the women in this study demonstrate a clear preference for using FEMININE plural forms for definite sex-specific reference.

The high percentage of FEMININE tokens across these speakers and utterances confirms practices I observed in the broader Israeli feminist community. It is not surprising that the use of gender marking in the context of definite sex-specific reference would be a site of ideologically motivated feminist linguistic practice and language socialization. The grammar of the language and the prescriptive rules of MIH, to which speakers have conscious access, support the need to “accurately” reflect the gender of sex-specific definite referents with the corresponding grammatical markers. Thus, I would argue, gender in this particular syntactic and semantic context is a highly salient linguistic feature. Salience in this case refers to the speakers’ conscious access to and use of a linguistic element. Given that gender is an overt grammatical category in Hebrew, it is also not surprising that gender marking is available for ideological rationalization by speakers. The overt ideological conceptualization of this particular element by the feminists, claiming it as a means of making women visible, is supported by the structure of the language itself. The feminists’ use of gender in this case also supports the assertion that they are adopting a practice that runs counter to the ongoing trends in CIH.

Despite the overwhelming preference for using FEMININE plural forms in this communicative context, there are several noticeable examples of my informants using the more conventional MASCULINE form. Three speakers use the FEMININE form in fewer than 80% of their relevant utterances, and many of

the women use the MASCULINE form in at least one utterance. A discussion of the possible explanations for variation across speakers might reveal more information about the ways in which the linguistic resource of gender marking is used by Israeli feminists and other CIH speakers to convey socio-cultural information. One explanation for their deviation from the ideologically preferred form is that these women are attempting to undo years of language socialization and habitual practice. Their ability to monitor their speech in online processing has limits and occasional “slips” are to be expected. However, this processing explanation assumes that the women must constantly monitor their speech to adhere to the newly adopted feminist norm and that the meaning of the grammatical gender markers is constant. The salience of gender classification as a linguistic element may also contribute to a speaker’s ability to use gender consistently across a variety of syntactic and semantic contexts.

Questions regarding this variation led me to examine how the semantic and morpho-syntactic environments of third-person versus first-person reference might affect the use of gender differently. As discussed in chapter two, grammatical gender in both first-person and third-person plural contexts carries referential and indexical meaning; however, for most CIH speakers, the FEMININE forms are more productive in the third-person context than in the first-person context.<sup>59</sup> Overall, gender agreement is more productive in the third-person context than in first-person syntactic context, because all third-person

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<sup>59</sup> The term productive in this context refers to the fact that the grammatical parameters for the use of gender in first-person contexts are more limited, and as such, the grammatical distinction is not linguistically realized in this context.

pronouns must agree in gender with the intended referent(s) and gender is marked on predicates in all tenses except past tense plural forms.<sup>60</sup> In the first-person context, pronouns are not marked for gender, and predicates are only marked in present tense conjugations. (Adjectives, including numbers, always show gender agreement.) In addition to the grammatical parameters for marking gender agreement, there are, as I have previously mentioned, social parameters that constraint the contexts within which FEMININE forms are used. A speaker referring to a group, of which she is a member, is expected to use the first-person FEMININE plural only when all the members of the group are female. It seems possible that the self-inclusive nature of definite first-person plural reference to an all-female group might contribute to its salience for feminists. However, outside of the world of feminist organizations there are limited contexts within which speakers would find themselves part of an all female group. This combination of social factors, grammatical parameters, and discursive practices make it possible that FEMININE plural forms would occur with more consistency in the third-person context than in the first-person context. The table on the following page includes the separated quantitative data for each syntactic context.

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<sup>60</sup> The ongoing simplification of the gender paradigm for plural forms to a single plural form – the historically MASCULINE form – does result in the loss of gender distinction in the second and third-person contexts. Nonetheless the prescriptive rules of grammar which speakers learn still include this distinction, and in most written and formal oral contexts, the distinction is maintained.

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Total 3<sup>rd</sup> person Tokens</b>	<b>FEMININE 3<sup>rd</sup> person Tokens</b>	<b>Percentage FEMININE 3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Total 1<sup>st</sup> person tokens</b>	<b>FEMININE 1<sup>st</sup> person tokens</b>	<b>Percentage FEMININE 1<sup>st</sup> person</b>
<b>Dafna</b>	5	5	100%	<b>Dafna</b>	0	0	0%
<b>Edit</b>	9	7	78%	<b>Edit</b>	2	1	50%
<b>Einat</b>	15	14	93%	<b>Einat</b>	12	6	50%
<b>Eti</b>	16	15	94%	<b>Eti</b>	7	7	100%
<b>Iris</b>	19	14	74%	<b>Iris</b>	6	3	50%
<b>Meital</b>	8	7	88%	<b>Meital</b>	1	1	100%
<b>Merav</b>	11	11	100%	<b>Merav</b>	0	0	0%
<b>Michal</b>	3	3	100%	<b>Michal</b>	0	0	0%
<b>Na'ama</b>	16	16	100%	<b>Na'ama</b>	0	0	0%
<b>Neta</b>	6	6	100%	<b>Neta</b>	7	7	100%
<b>Nitsan</b>	3	3	100%	<b>Nitsan</b>	6	6	100%
<b>Nurit</b>	19	19	100%	<b>Nurit</b>	3	3	100%
<b>Ofra</b>	9	8	89%	<b>Ofra</b>	12	12	100%
<b>Ora</b>	6	6	100%	<b>Ora</b>	2	2	100%
<b>Osnat</b>	28	28	100%	<b>Osnat</b>	5	5	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>84%</b>

Table 5.2 Separated data on use of gender for third-person and first-person plural definite sex-specific reference

As the data above indicate, the FEMININE forms occur in 94% of the utterances with third-person reference and in 84% of the utterances with first-person reference. A comparison of the use of gender in each context reveals interesting differences in the degree of variation between the use of MASCULINE and FEMININE demonstrated by the speakers. Nine of the fifteen women in the study used the FEMININE form in 100% of the possible third-person utterances. Two of the six speakers who showed variation between MASCULINE and FEMININE forms, Iris and Edit, used the MASCULINE form in more than one utterance. Eight out of the eleven women who used first-person definite plural reference used the FEMININE form in 100% of their relevant utterances, a higher ratio than that for the third-person context. However, the three speakers who showed variation in the first-person context used the FEMININE plural in only 50% of the possible utterances. The variation between MASCULINE and FEMININE forms in both contexts may be a function of individual speakers' language practices, or it may be related to other linguistic or sociolinguistic factors that conditioned gender agreement in a given context. Below is an analysis of contextualized utterances from those speakers who demonstrated variation in both contexts.

While Iris demonstrated the most variation across both syntactic contexts, five other women also used the MASCULINE plural form at least once in the third-person context. Below are transliterated texts of the utterances in which they used the MASCULINE third-person plural to refer to group of females.

3.     ha'ish   haze yodei'a she**kulam** she**kulan** po nashim  
       the man this knows(M) that all(M) that all(F) here women  
       this man knows that all, all of us here are women.
  
4.     gam nashim **medabrim**   beineihen    kaxa  
       also women speak(M,P) between them(F) such  
       women also speak with each other this way

Example (3), from Edit, shows a speaker self-correcting from MASCULINE to the FEMININE. She was discussing how a particular man always used MASCULINE forms to refer to the women working at a feminist organization. In this context, gender and gender marking were the explicit topics of the discourse. Edit first used the MASCULINE pronominal form for ‘all’ /kulam/ with the final [m], but immediately corrected herself to the FEMININE form /kulan/ with the final [n]. As discussed previously, the distinction between the [m] and [n] final forms is falling out of spoken Hebrew in most informal contexts. For many speakers the use of *kulam* is totally gender neutral. There is evidence of the use of the MASCULINE forms of ‘all’ – *kulam*, ‘everyone’ - *kol exad* and ‘no one’ - *af exad* followed by personal pronouns and predicates with FEMININE gender agreement markers. Edit’s initial use of the MASCULINE form can be understood as evidence that these forms are the default impersonal pronouns and the forms she habitually uses. Her immediate self-correction to the FEMININE form indicates her awareness of the “error.” Gender may be more salient for her in this context because it is the overt topic of discourse. The content of her utterance may also effect her awareness of gender marking. Since the MIH copula is not overly realized in the present tense, Edit is not required to coordinate

the impersonal pronoun *kulam* with a predicate. The fact that she is coordinating the impersonal pronoun with the antecedent, *nashim* ‘women’ may contribute to her awareness of gender and her ability to catch and correct her grammatical error. In example (3), therefore, discourse topic as well as proximity of pronouns to nominal antecedents seems to counteract the habituated use of plural MASCULINE impersonal pronouns.

Example (4) above, also from Edit, is clearly a simple production error. The plural form of the word *isha* ‘woman’ is *nashim* ‘women,’ which has the same phonological shape as the MASCULINE plural morpheme [im].<sup>61</sup> The word is assigned FEMININE gender and should co-occur with FEMININE agreement markers, but the phonology triggers occasional “processing errors.” There are several irregular Hebrew nominal forms for which the phonological shape of the plural form conflicts with the gender classification. For example, the plural for *av* ‘father’ is *avot*, which has the [ot] ending morphologically associated with FEMININE plurals but retains a MASCULINE classification and takes MASCULINE agreement markers. It is not surprising to find native Hebrew speakers making these types of online processing errors in gender agreement with these irregular nominal forms. It is interesting to note that in this phrase, despite the MASCULINE agreement marker on the predicate, the anaphoric objective pronoun *hen* ‘them (F)’ preserves the FEMININE gender agreement of the referent *nashim* ‘women.’ The use of the FEMININE pronominal form for

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<sup>61</sup> As noted in Chapter II, MIH has root and pattern morphology. Reference to [im] as the MASCULINE plural morpheme is not meant to imply that MIH has concatenative morphology but that the [im] ending is one of the morphological markers that distinguishes between FEMININE and MASCULINE plural nouns.

reflexive reference to the nominal subject “women” suggests that the explanation of a phonologically triggered production error is correct.

In the next set of utterances, speakers use predicates with dropped subjects, often referred to as “pro-drop predicates.” The agreement marking on these predicates supplies the “missing” information that allows hearers to identify the implied subject. In each of the examples below, the implied agents are women but there is no overt nominal or pronominal element to trigger the FEMININE agreement marker. It is not surprising to find that in this context, speakers may revert to the habitual practice of using MASCULINE plural agreement markers with seemingly ambiguous plural subjects.

5.     anaxnu rak nashim po   baxeder     vekama kef im yed'u.  
      we     only women here in the room an how fun if knew (M,P)  
      we are only women here, and how fun if (they) knew that

kol pa'am shemedabrim belashon zaxar  
every time that speak (M,P) in language male  
every time that (we) speak(M,P) in masculine language

ze ke'ilu lo lasim lev la'uvda hazot.  
it is like no put heart to the fact this  
it's like not paying attention to this fact.

6.     hameser   hagalui ze okei   **medabrim** belashon  
      the message overt this okay speak(M,P) in language  
      the overt message is, okay we speak in FEMININE language

nekeiva       ki     kulan nashim  
FEMININE because all(F) women  
because all are women.



7.       gam biglal she'ani kan ve'ani ken, eh **me'irim** li.  
 also because that I here and I yes, eh comment(M,P) to me  
 also, because I am here and I yes eh (they) comment to me
- ve'anaxnu me'irot axat leshniya gam.  
 and we comment(F,P) one(F) to second(F) also  
 and we also comment to one another.

The agents of all the predicates in bold type are defined by the context or content of the utterance rather than by an overt nominal or pronominal form. In Eti's utterance, (5), the missing agents of the MASCULINE marked predicate are overtly mentioned in an earlier part of the utterance - *anaxnu rak nashim po* 'we are all women here' - nonetheless, the predicate was produced with MASCULINE agreement. In example (6), Iris's statement about the implied message of insisting that a group of women students use FEMININE forms about themselves, the implied agents of the verb *medabrim* 'speak' were Iris, herself, and the women in her class. Despite the topic of the utterance and the gender of the implied agents, Iris marks the predicate with MASCULINE plural agreement. Finally, Meital's utterance, (7), also demonstrates that predicates with implied subjects seem more likely to trigger MASCULINE agreement even if the subject or agent of the predicate is a specific group of females. Meital's utterance was in the context a longer exchange about language use at the feminist organization where she works and they way women monitor each other's speech. Notice that in (7), the third-person plural form without an overt nominal or pronominal agent was MASCULINE variant. The occurrence of the first-person plural variable in the second part of the statement was coordinated with an overt first-person

pronoun *anaxnu* and Meital used the FEMININE variant for agreement on the same predicate. Although the first-person pronoun is not marked for gender, the use of the pronoun may have raised Meital's awareness of the antecedents of the pronoun, the women at the center.

What is of interest to this investigation is that in all of these examples, the overt topic of discourse is language use practices and the use of gender in reference to female subjects. Based on the evidence of Edit's overt self-correction, we might assume that discourse topic would lead Eti, Iris, and Meital to use FEMININE agreement even without overt FEMININE nominal or pronominal forms. In the three cases above, however, the discourse topic did not seem to trigger greater awareness of gender or condition these speakers to use FEMININE agreement on plural predicates with implied subjects. In separate analysis of gender agreement on predicates with implied agents or subjects, I found only two occurrences of FEMININE agreement marking and both of these were on singular forms. (See Appendix B for the quantitative data on my informants' use of grammatical gender with dropped-subject predicates.) The combined evidence from the three utterances above and the analysis of other dropped subject predicates seems to indicate that when a predicate has an implied subject, speakers are more likely to revert to the use of "generic" MASCULINE agreement. The lack of an overt nominal or pronominal form to condition gender marking seems to lead these speakers to use the form they have been socialized to treat as the unmarked or generic. Even for utterances in which the context or content defines the implied agent clearly.

Example (8) also shows third-person plural reference, Ofra used a MASCULINE impersonal pronoun and coordinated predicate in reference to her female coworkers.

8.      aval af exad    lo rotse et ze  
          but no one(M) no want(M,S) D.O. this  
          but no one wants this

This example of the use of a MASCULINE form for ‘no one’ in the context of an utterance where the only possible referents are women is similar to Edit’s initial use of MASCULINE *kulam* in example (3). As I stated earlier, the majority of speakers use MASCULINE forms for the impersonal pronouns, ‘all,’ ‘everyone,’ ‘no one,’ and ‘someone,’ even in reference to women. The use of MASCULINE forms in these cases may be due in part to the generic construction of the utterances. Despite the fact that the possible referents of Ofra’s statement are limited to her female coworkers at a feminist organization, the construction of the sentence is generic. The context of Ofra’s utterance and information gathered from other parts of the conversational exchange defined the set of possible referents for impersonal pronoun ‘no one.’ Ofra’s utterance is similar to Edit’s statement “*shekulam shekulan po nashim*” ‘that all(M), that all(F) here (are) women.’ In both cases, the construction of the statement is generic. I will refer to this type of utterance as a pseudo-generic because although the grammatical construction is clearly generic, the scope of referents is limited to a specific and known set of referents. Here, it was the women from Edit’s feminist organization.

The use of the MASCULINE forms in these somewhat ambiguous or generic contexts might be seen as evidence that the MASCULINE category is

grammatically or structurally the unmarked or generic. I would, however, caution readers from drawing that conclusion. It should not be surprising that the generic structure of Ofra's and Edit's statements leads them to use MASCULINE forms, just as it is not surprising to find that Eti, Iris, and Meital use MASCULINE plural agreement with subjectless predicates. They have been socialized by years of exposure to prescriptive rules and conventional practices of language use to treat the MASCULINE as the unmarked or generic. In the absence of overt FEMININE forms, it is not surprising to find these "slips" into conventional usage despite the fact that the implied or referential subjects can only be female.

I turn now to an examination of the use of gender with first-person plural forms. As stated earlier, first-person only triggers gender agreement on predicates in the present tense.<sup>62</sup> Table 5.2 shows that Edit, Einat, and Iris used FEMININE forms in only half of their possible utterances. In comparison to the language use of the other women, the behavior of these three women might be seen as unusual. While some deviation from the communal norm is to be expected, the degree of variation from the feminist norm and the lack of clear preference for either gendered form warrant an examination and the positing of possible explanations.

An examination of some contextualized utterances in which Einat and Iris use plural first-person reference might provide more information about the factors that are conditioning their choices. The examples below contain both

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<sup>62</sup> I use the term "predicates" to include forms that are referred to colloquially as "verbs" in Hebrew but are in fact predicate nouns or adjectives. The lack of the copula in the present tense results in these predicate nouns (sometimes called adjectives) appearing as nouns or adjective in translated texts but in the MIH grammatical system they are predicates. For example, *anaxnu re'evot* would be translated into English idiomatically as 'we are hungry' but in the Hebrew the "adjective" *re'evot* 'hungry' is literally 'the ones (F) who hunger.'

MASCULINE and FEMININE forms coordinated with first-person plural reference to women. In example (9), Einat was discussing the new voice mail system and the use of FEMININE singular forms in the recording to address callers. In example (10), Iris was reporting an instruction she gave to her female students in a class of all women. Each use of the plural first-person is in bold type.

9. gvarim hitkashru elai veze me'atsben otam.  
 men(P) called(M,P) to me and this angers them(M,P)  
 the men called me, and this angers them

me'atsben shelo **medabrim** eleihem besafa shelahem  
 angers that no speak (M,P) to them in language that to them(M,P)  
 it angers them that (we) don't address them in their language.

10. mehayom **medabrim** belashon nekeiva  
 from today speak (M.P.) in language feminine  
 from today (we) use the feminine

mekeivan sheyesh po rak nashim  
 because that existence here only women  
 because, there are only women here

In both (9) and (10) above, the agent of the verb *medabrim* 'speak' is implied rather than overt. The intended agent of Einat's statement, in (9), could have been anyone. However, the context of the utterance led me to conclude that Einat was referring to herself and the other women who made controversial linguistic choices regarding the voicemail recording. In (10), Iris's use of MASCULINE agreement on the predicate *medabrim* is interesting given that she was speaking about what she and her students should do in the class or any all female context.

She could have avoided the issue of gender agreement altogether by using the first-person plural in future tense *nedaber*. Her use of the present tense form forced her to use either MASCULINE or FEMININE agreement. An overt nominal or pronominal agent would likely have conditioned gender agreement. Despite the fact that the first-person pronouns are not marked for gender, the overt pronoun did appear to aid Meital's use of the FEMININE first-person variant in example seven. Gender agreement on the predicate is the only way to index the gender of an intended first-person agent and agreement is only marked in present tense. As I have demonstrated in the analysis of the third-person context, the absence of an overt nominal or pronominal subject seems to trigger MASCULINE agreement even when the implied agent(s) are female. Given these related conditioning factors, it is not surprising to find that feminist speakers will use MASCULINE plural forms in the first-person plural context, particularly in the case of "subjectless" predicates.

In example (11), Einat varied agreement marking on predicates coordinated with the first-person plural.

11. ha'emda neged omeret she'**anaxnu osim** lahem  
 the position against says that **we do(M,P)** to them(M,P)  
 the opposing position says that we are doing to them(men)

ma shehem osim lanu  
 what that they(M,P) do (M,P) to us  
 what they(men) do to us.

veha'emda sheli omeret sheze lo bediyuk kaxa,  
 and the position mine says that this not exactly so  
 and my position says that this is not exactly the case,

mikeivan sheze irgun nashim.  
because that this organization women.  
because this is a women's organization.

ze irgun shetishim axuz meihatelefonim shelo  
this organization that 90 percent of the calls of his  
this is an organization where 90% of the calls it gets,

ze lenashim, eh shenashim mitkashrot.  
this to women eh, that women call (F,P)  
are to women eh, that women call.

ze irgun shetsrixa lihiyot frendli lasviva shelo,  
this organization that must(F,S) be friendly to constituents of his  
this is an organization that must be friendly to its constituents,

shenashim yargishu kan kmo babayit.  
that women will feel here like in the home  
that women will feel at home here.

az ein tsorex, dafka kan **anaxnu tsrixot** lihiyot, letaken.  
so there is no need, actually here **we need(F,P)** to be, to fix  
so there is not need, actually here we must be, fix,

ah zot omeret ze margiz oti she'**anaxnu tsrixot** lihiyot,  
ah that says this angers me that **we need(F,P)** to be  
ah that is to say it angers me that we(women at org.) need to be

afilu kan, ke'ilu beseder, velesharet gam et hagvarim.  
even here like in order and to give service also (DO) the men.  
even here, like, okay, to give service the men also. <sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> It is interesting to note that while *irgun* 'organization' is a MASCULINE noun, she used a FEMININE agreement marking on the predicate, though the possessive pronoun *shelo* maintains MASCULINE agreement. While I am not addressing the use of gender with inanimate nouns, it is possible that this grammatical "slip" was due to Einat's focus on the fact that the organization in question was a women's organization. If she were to personify the organization itself, she would probably have used a FEMININE personification.

In example (11), there are three occurrences of first-person plural reference, highlighted by bold type face, each of which has an overt subject. In the first occurrence, Einat uses the MASCULINE agreement marker on the coordinated predicate. The second and third uses of the first-person plural pronoun are both coordinated with predicates that show FEMININE plural agreement. What might have triggered the use of the MASCULINE agreement marker with the first use of ‘we’? Or conversely, what might have caused Einat to switch from the MASCULINE to the FEMININE between the first and second use of the first-person plural?

Einat’s first use of the first-person plural occurs within the following set of phrases: *anaxnu **osim** lahem ma shehem osim lanu* ‘we [the women at the organization] do(M,P) to them(M,P) what they(M,P) do to us.’ It is possible that the proximity of three MASCULINE forms, one of which was within the relevant syntactic phrase, triggered an adjacency production error. The first-person plural pronoun, *anaxnu*, is not marked for gender, so the referents and their gender are evident only from other contextual clues. The only pronominal form in the initial verb phrase with overt gender marking is the object *lahem* ‘to them(M,P),’ which refers to men. In addition, the predicate *osim* ‘do(M,P)’ occurs twice within this initial statement in close proximity. The first time, the agents are the women at the feminist center, which should trigger FEMININE agreement. The second predicate has a different agent, men or at least those who use MASCULINE forms to address women. The close proximity of the two predicates, as well as the overt use of the MASCULINE plural third-person pronoun in both verb phrases, may



have pushed the MASCULINE gender category to the forefront of Einat's consciousness.<sup>64</sup> The conventional practice of using MASCULINE agreement even for female agents may also have contributed to Einat's use of MASCULINE agreement for the predicate with female agents.

A comparison of this initial occurrence of the first-person plural with the latter uses of the first-person plurals reveals that the latter uses were not in proximity to other plural predicates. Additionally, they were preceded by several statements that overtly referred to women and the fact that the organization served women. It could be argued that her explicit reference to women and women's needs pushed the FEMININE and feminine categories forward in her consciousness, thus increasing the probability that she would produce the "correct" FEMININE form. The discourse topic, the approval of using the FEMININE forms to address callers to a feminist organization, may also influence the salience of the gender and the FEMININE category. As I have already demonstrated, discourse topic seems to influence speaker behavior in the use of gender agreement.

Another possible explanation for Einat's behavior is related to the fact that in the beginning of the utterance, she was reporting the content of the "opposing position" regarding the linguistic choice made for the voice mail recording.

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<sup>64</sup> It is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss the various theories regarding the source of production errors for gender agreement. Badecker (2004) discussed various theories and explanations for agreement errors in the case of conflicting gender forms within sentence level syntactic units. Badecker's research focused on gender agreement with inanimate referents. Nonetheless, I believe his theories can be applied in this case, particularly in light of the asymmetrical use of MASCULINE and FEMININE forms for plural gender agreement by MIH speakers.

*ha'emda neged omeret she'anaxnu osim lahem ma shehem 'osim lanu* ‘the opposing position says that we are doing to them [men] what they do to us.’ The use of the predicate *omeret* ‘says’ is a discourse marker. It indicates to the hearer that the following statement is a direct quote or paraphrase of speech from the supporters of the “opposing position.” Her report about the “opposing position” was followed immediately with a presentation of her own position: *veha'emda sheli omeret sheze lo bediyuk kaxa mikeivan sheze irgun nashim*. ‘And my position says that this is not exactly so, given that this is a women’s organization.’ Einat used the same construction *veha'emda omeret* “the position says” to express each perspective; however, her presentation of the second position was her own perspective. The language she used to express her own position is more likely to reflect her own practices, or those she felt were in line with her ideological position. Based on this observation, I would like to argue that it is possible to interpret Einat’s use of MASCULINE gender within the report of the “opposing” position as an indexical marker of her relationship to the opposing ideological perspective and those who held it.

The referential meaning of the two gender categories is altered or augmented by Einat’s ideological perspective on how gender agreement is used in mainstream varieties of CIH and how it is used by feminists. The use of MASCULINE agreement in the statement representing those opposed to the use of FEMININE forms of address on the voicemail indexes their language practices as well as their ideological distance from the feminist practices. The FEMININE agreement on the predicates linked to the expression of a feminist ideological

perspective index that position as well as the practice itself. The “meaning” of the gender agreement, therefore, cannot be read simply from the forms as they occur but must be interpreted through the context within which they are uttered. In the examples of MASCULINE agreement on third-person plural forms, Eti also used the MASCULINE plural to describe an action she found problematic, women using MASCULINE language to talk amongst themselves. In (5) her use of MASCULINE agreement on a predicate with an implied agent may also have indexed Eti’s personal or ideological relationship to that practice. This sample of data cannot conclusively determine which factor or combination of factors influenced Einat’s and Eti’s behavior. Nonetheless, it seems possible that their behavior is an example of using the grammatical system to create distinctions between feminist and non-feminist perspectives or membership in their communities of practice.

The contextualized examples analyzed above demonstrate some of the various factors that influence the use of gender marking in the syntactic/semantic context of plural definite reference to females. The women in this study demonstrated a clear preference for the use of FEMININE agreement markers in reference to females; however, certain grammatical and contextual parameters seemed to condition the use of MASCULINE forms in some utterances. There is a strong association between seemingly ambiguous or generic referents and the MASCULINE gender category. Agents or nominal subjects that are implied rather than explicitly realized may resemble ambiguous or generic referents, which may explain why several of the MASCULINE tokens for the variable

occurred within utterances with implied or pseudo-generic referents. The evidence from Einat and others shows that discourse topic influenced the realization of gender agreement. If the discourse topic was explicitly about women or about language and gender issues, gender appears to have been more salient for the speaker, which generally led to the use of FEMININE forms. Finally, speakers appear to use gender pragmatically to index the nature of their social relationships with referents in their utterances or their ideological stance vis-à-vis a particular position. In the utterances of Eti and Einat, the use of FEMININE forms indexed solidarity while the use of MASCULINE forms indexed distance.<sup>65</sup> Despite the various contexts within which my informants used MASCULINE agreement in reference to females, the quantitative data clearly indicate that the preference for these feminist women was to use FEMININE gender markers in utterances about women and girls. This evidence is consistent with my observations of the use of this variable in the larger feminist community. Together they support a broad assertion that within the Israeli feminist community, the hyper-standard use of FEMININE forms for definite feminine reference is an emerging norm.

Before concluding the analysis of this variable, I would like to discuss its overall indexical value as a marker of feminist Hebrew and by extension feminist identity. The high percentage of use for this variable and a strictly quantitative perspective might lead to the conclusion that this is a very salient indexical marker of feminist Hebrew. Statements about the way women are socialized to

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<sup>65</sup> I return to the issue of gender as a pragmatic index of solidarity or distance in chapter six.

use FEMININE plural forms in feminist organizations is clear evidence that this variable indexes a feminist sensibility within the feminist community of practice. However, this variable does not contradict existing prescriptive rules of MIH and it is an acceptable, if hyper-standardized, use of Hebrew. Hebrew speakers who are not members of the feminist community of practice, might understand the use of FEMININE plural marking with plural definite reference as an index of grammatical correctness or careful speech. In formal speech contexts, the use of this variable might not be remarkable at all. Nor is its use limited to members of the feminist community. Educated Israelis in academic contexts, newly fluent speakers of Hebrew, and women who find themselves in culturally marked female contexts, such as a girls' religious school, are also likely to use FEMININE plural marking for definite plural reference to females. This variable does index a feminine cultural context for most Israeli Hebrew speakers, however it does not necessarily index a specifically feminist practice or ideology for mainstream Hebrew speakers.

### **5.3 INCLUSIVE DEFINITE PLURAL REFERENCE**

The use of FEMININE plural forms for definite plural reference to females may be a form of hyper-standard or contextually conditioned language use, but the use of FEMININE forms for definite plural reference to mixed gender groups is a specifically feminist practice. Several times throughout the course of my field research, informants told me that the Hebrew Language Academy (HLA) had passed a ruling that allowed speakers to use the FEMININE plural when addressing or referring to a mixed group of males and females. In one version of

the rumor, a speaker could choose agreement forms based on the apparent gender of the majority, (i.e. FEMININE for majority female groups, MASCULINE for majority male groups). In a separate version, there were no restrictions; a speaker could simply choose which gender she/he wanted to use.<sup>66</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the Academy had never passed such a ruling, nor was it ever likely to do so. Nonetheless, the rumor of this ruling was so widely believed in segments of the Israeli population, that it appeared as a triumph of feminist activism in some popular and academic articles about language use and the expression of gender identity. One of my informants reported that she had adopted the innovative practice of using FEMININE plural forms with majority female groups until she read a statement issued by the HLA to the popular press that “set the record straight.”<sup>67</sup> Rumor or no, many of the women I knew or worked with in the feminist community claimed to use the FEMININE plural for definite reference to mixed gender groups in a variety of social contexts. Some of these speakers also reported using the SLASH form, MASCULINE and FEMININE forms together, when addressing a mixed audience. In this section, I present the quantitative data on the use of both FEMININE and SLASH forms for definite reference to mixed gender groups.

For the purposes of data analysis, I defined “inclusive plural definite reference” as the use of grammatical forms to mark agreement on nominal,

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<sup>66</sup> I alternate between using she and she/he for generic reference to speakers. The reader should understand that the use of either convention applies to any Hebrew speaker regardless of gender.

<sup>67</sup> As noted in chapter two, I never found this “statement” or any other article regarding the HLA’s retraction of the rumored ruling; nonetheless, the existence of this rumor points to the interesting and complex value that Israeli Hebrew speakers seem to place on the “correct” use of Hebrew.

pronominal and predicate forms with definite mixed gender referents, agents, or subjects. Definite reference, in this analysis, includes direct address, as well as third-person reference to a defined group or community. The rules of prescriptive grammar and conventional practices socialize speakers to use MASCULINE plurals when referring to or addressing a mixed gender group. Nonetheless, the rumored HLA ruling allowing speakers to choose the gender marking according to the majority in a given context was adopted by members of diverse social communities including the LGBT community and other socially progressive sub-cultural groups. The concept of gender equality and transparency also led to the use of the SLASH form in both formal and informal contexts.

The examples below demonstrate the three variants of gender marking for this variable context. All of the examples are taken from the same informant, Osnat, who reported using FEMININE forms to address her students in some of the classes she taught.

12. baseminar **hem** **matxilim** ledaber axeret  
 in seminar they(M,P) begin(M,P) to speak differently  
 in the seminar they begin to speak differently

Example (12) contains the conventional and prescribed use of MASCULINE plural forms for reference to a mixed group of males and females. The bolded words are the MASCULINE plural third-person pronoun *hem* followed by the predicate *matxilim* ‘begin’ with the plural MASCULINE agreement marker [im]. Out of context, this utterance could be interpreted as reference to an exclusively male group or a group of males and females together. The context of the utterance, Osnat’s explanation of how her language practices effect both her male

and female students, provides the necessary information to interpret the MASCULINE plurals as inclusive.

In (13) below, Osnat uses both the FEMININE plural and then the SLASH form to refer to her students. The bolded words are the FEMININE plural form of the word 'students' *studentiyot* followed by the explicit inclusion of the MASCULINE –*studentim* – and FEMININE – *studentiyot* – forms in the SLASH form. I identified the hesitation marker *em*, as an indication that the use of the SLASH forms was a qualification of the initial use of the FEMININE forms. This example points to the inherent problem of using the FEMININE plural forms for definite reference in a third-person context. Without the explicit inclusion of males in the SLASH form, most MIH speakers would assume that Osnat was referring specifically to her female students. My knowledge of Osnat's practice of using FEMININE plurals as inclusive combined with the qualification of the SLASH form helped me to identify the token in line (13) as an example of the FEMININE plural being used for inclusive plural reference.

13. keshe'ani pona el **hastudentiyot** sheli belashon  
when I address to the students(F,P) mine in language  
when I address my students in language

em **lestudentim** **vestudentiyot** belashon nekeiva  
em to students(M,P) and students(F,P) in language feminine  
em to male students and females students with feminine language

14. bashi'urim hem nihyim venihyot  
in class they(M,P) become(M,P) and become(F,P)  
in class they become



me'od muda'im vemuda'ot leze  
very aware(M,P) and aware(F,P) to this  
very aware of this, both the men and women.

Example (14) contains two uses of the SLASH form. Osnat began this utterance with the MASCULINE plural third-person pronoun *hem* in reference to her students, but she used both the MASCULINE and FEMININE forms of the predicates *nihyim venihyot* 'become' and *muda'im vemuda'ot* 'aware.' This example is typical of the way that the SLASH form appears in speech. Speakers often begin with a MASCULINE nominal or pronominal form and then provide some overt qualification that informs hearers that the intended referent group includes both males and females. In the case of the example above, Osnat conjugated both predicate forms. Often the SLASH form appears only as an overt qualification of the nominal form such as: *hem, gam nashim vegam gvarim* 'they(M,P) men and women.' In my analysis of the SLASH forms, any explicit qualification of a MASCULINE (or FEMININE) plural form as inclusive was counted as a SLASH token.

The variable context potentially includes first, second, and third-person plural reference; however, the structure of the interview only elicited third-person reference. The use of either the FEMININE or SLASH variants for inclusive reference seemed to occur more readily in second-person forms of direct address than in the other contexts. Since the quantitative data on the use of this variable was quite limited by the context of the interview, Table 5.3 includes data on reported use of either the FEMININE or the SLASH forms in speech or writing.

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Total # definite referents</b>	<b># FEMININE tokens</b>	<b># SLASH tokens</b>	<b>Reported use of FEMININE</b>	<b>Reported use of SLASH</b>
Dafna	0	0	0	no	yes (in writing)
Edit	0	0	0	yes	no
Einat	<b>3</b>	0	0		
Eti	0	0	0	yes (by majority)	
Iris	<b>6</b>	0	0	no (did before)	yes (in writing)
Meital	<b>1</b>	0	0	yes (by majority)	yes
Merav	0	0	0	yes	
Michal	<b>3</b>	0	0	no	yes (in writing)
Na'ama	<b>4</b>	0	0		
Neta	<b>7</b>	0	0	yes	
Nitsan	<b>1</b>	0	0	yes (by majority)	
Nurit	0	0	0	yes	
Ofra	0	0	0		yes
Ora	<b>3</b>	0	0	yes	
Osnat	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	yes	yes

Table 5.3 Usage of grammatical gender for definite plural reference to mixed gender groups

The quantitative data presented in table 5.3 show that Osnat was the only informant to use either the FEMININE plural or the SLASH construction in the context of the interview

Of more significance for the analysis of this variable is the reported use of the FEMININE and SLASH variants. Table 5.3 presents the data on reported use of both the FEMININE plural and SLASH forms. If an informant reported using either form, the entry in the relevant column is “yes.” A “no” entry in the column indicates that an informant reported that she did not use the form. If an informant did not directly indicate whether or not she used either form, the space on the table was left blank. The table shows that nine of the fifteen informants reported using the FEMININE forms to address or refer to mixed gender groups. A few of the informants qualified their answer by stating that they used the gendered form that corresponded to the gender of the majority of the members of the referent group. Iris, whose “no” response is qualified, revealed that she had used the FEMININE form in contexts where there were more women than men until she discovered that the rumor of the HLA ruling was false. When I asked her why she had change her practice, she responded that she felt it was her duty as a native speaker and an educator to model “correct” grammar. In response to questions about the use of the SLASH variant, six informants reported using this double gendered construction. As the table indicates, however, three of these women reported only using it in writing. When I asked why they did not try to use it in their speech, they responded that the double gendering of forms was too cumbersome for spoken language use.

It is not surprising to find that the use of FEMININE plural forms as inclusive is limited even within the feminist community. Language ideology and concepts of grammatical correctness as well as habituation to naturalized practices of using MASCULINE plurals as inclusive clearly shaped their practices with respect to the use of the FEMININE and SLASH variants in this context. In addition, the need to communicate clearly and effectively in a variety of social contexts limits the usefulness of this innovative practice. As example two illustrated, Osnat felt the need to qualify her use of an inclusive FEMININE plural, even in the context of a discussion about the use of this variable with another feminist. Israeli feminists clearly place ideological value on the use of FEMININE forms as gender inclusive, using language to reverse the naturalized relationship of men and women to the linguistically constructed collective.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the use of FEMININE plurals as inclusive can often result in miscommunication. The quantitative data on those who reported using the FEMININE forms in certain contexts, illustrates that this variable was ideologized within the feminist community. Given that the FEMININE variant clearly violates prescribed grammatical rules as well as conventional practices of use, it is also highly marked as an index of feminist practice and ideology for most MIH

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<sup>68</sup> Prescribed and conventional practices of language use naturalize the relationship between the grammatical and social categories of gender. The metaphorical relationship of the unmarked linguistic form to the unmarked social category of Israeli is reified through the use of MASCULINE plural forms to address a collective of males and females. Thus, feminist use of the FEMININE plural form to address a mixed gender group inverts this naturalized relationship between males as unmarked and females as marked members of the collective. By inverting the relationship, the practice also calls attention to the underlying ideological associations, associations that are keenly felt by those who are consistently marked as OTHER vis-à-vis the ‘normalized’ collective identity.

speakers. Of course, the interpretation of the indexical meaning of the variable depends on interlocutors correctly interpreting the inclusive referential meaning.

The SLASH variant is less controversial than the FEMININE variant. It does not violate any prescriptive rules but it does diverge from conventional practices of language use. The SLASH construction also overtly calls attention to the ambiguity inherent in using MASCULINE (or for that matter FEMININE) plural forms as inclusive. As such, many feminists prefer this form for written texts, particularly in education textbooks. One of my informants, an elementary school teacher, reported her conscious effort to use the SLASH variant when she addressed the girls and boys in her class for advanced students. She said that her practices did not affect the students use of language, but the girls in the class noticed and appreciated being addressed directly. In mainstream Israeli society, the SLASH form is identified as a form of “politically correct” language use, a label and concept borrowed from the United States. Israeli equal employment opportunity laws include a mandate that all published employment advertisements must include explicit reference to males and females through the use of both MASCULINE and FEMININE grammatical forms. The mandated use of the SLASH form as well as recent efforts to reform language use in other public contexts has raised awareness of this variable and linked it to the greater Israeli movement for gender equality and modernization.

#### **5.4 GENDER-SPECIFIC PLURAL REFERENCE: RECLAIMING HISTORICAL FEMININE PREDICATE FORMS**

Historically, second and third-person plural FEMININE forms in the future tense were distinguished from the MASCULINE forms. The

reconstruction of MIH grammar from biblical Hebrew maintained this distinction, but in the early part of the twentieth century the paradigm was reduced to the MASCULINE form in most oral contexts. The historical or literary grammatical forms for showing FEMININE plural agreement on future tense and imperative predicates, hereafter referred to as the historical, or the historical FEMININE, forms, became limited to higher registers of MIH in the 1950's. I was not taught these forms in the *ulpan*, language immersion program, in which I participated in 1993. A survey of similar programs aimed at new immigrants revealed that most *ulpanim* present the MASCULINE forms as the only forms in these syntactic paradigms.<sup>69</sup> They are still included in Hebrew Verb Table books (Tarmon & Uva, 1991), and the forms are part of the gender paradigm for verb declension still taught in schools. Nonetheless, the vast majority of CIH speakers use them only in the most formal socio-linguistic contexts, if at all. Academics may use these forms as part of an academic register of speech, and some older Israelis who learned Hebrew before 1950 also use these historical FEMININE forms. Despite the almost complete simplification in CIH of the gender declension paradigm for plural future and imperative predicates, I found that some of the feminists with whom I interacted used the FEMININE forms in informal communicative contexts. This discovery led me to identify these historical FEMININE forms as potential markers of feminist Hebrew.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ulpanim* are the language immersion programs offered to all new immigrant citizens by the Israeli state and contracted agencies. The goal of these programs is to help new citizens in their process of acculturation. The language taught in these classes follows prescriptive rules of MIH but accommodates for changes in CIH such as the simplification of the gender paradigm for certain verb classes or tenses.

I understand the use of these forms as another example of the feminist practice of resisting the loss of FEMININE forms from CIH. The practice of using the historical FEMININE form is similar to the feminist practice of using FEMININE plural forms and agreement markers for definite plural reference to females. The primary difference between the historical forms and other plural FEMININE forms is that the historical forms began falling out of use at a much earlier period in the history of MIH. As such, the use of these forms by members of the feminist community might be seen as an attempt to revive or reinsert a lost form into the grammatical paradigm. The forms are used for both definite and sex-specific generic plural reference to females. Below are tables presenting the conjugation paradigms for plural future and imperative predicates. I include both the historical and the conventional forms for the conjugation of predicates with FEMININE subjects.

person	Hebrew plural <sup>70</sup>	English gloss
first MASC/FEM	navo	we will come
second MASCULINE	tavo'u	you (M) will come
second historical FEMININE	tavona	you (F) will come
second conventional FEMININE	tavo'u	you (F) will come
third MASCULINE	hem yavo'u	they (M) will come
third historical FEMININE	hen tavona	they (F) will come
third conventional FEMININE	hen yavo'u	they (F) will come

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<sup>70</sup> In the future and past tense paradigms the pronouns are optional for first and second person conjugations, thus I have left them out of the representation of the Hebrew forms in second column of Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Conjugation of Hebrew future tense plural verbs

As table 5.4 shows, the second-person and third-person FEMININE plural pronouns are used with either the MASCULINE form or the historical FEMININE form. FEMININE nominal agents would also occur with either form of the predicate. Table 5.5 below presents the conjugation of imperative Hebrew verbs. Again, MIH speakers can address females with either the historical FEMININE or the conventional MASCULINE form.

Gender	Hebrew Plural	Gloss
MASCULINE	bo'u	you come (M,P)
historical FEMININE	bona	you come (F,P)
conventional FEMININE	bo'u	you come (F,P)

Table 5.5 Conjugation of Hebrew plural imperative verbs

The women in my study used both the historical FEMININE forms and the MASCULINE forms in their utterances. The interview setting did not elicit any examples of the imperative forms, but the future forms appeared in some utterances as either simple future or conditional predicates. Below are examples from the data of sentences in which speakers used either the conventional MASCULINE form or the historical FEMININE form with a FEMININE subject.

15. shehabanot sheli **titstarexna** la'avor et ze  
that daughters mine will need (F,P) to pass through D.O. this  
that my daughters will need to endure this [sexism]



16. **shetargeshna** babayit. hinei hen higi'u lamakom  
 that will feel(F,P) at home here they arrived to a place  
 that they will feel at home. Now they got to a place,  
  
 shemedabrim eleihen beleshonan  
 that speaks(M,P) to them(F,P) in language theirs  
 that addresses them in their language.
17. rov hanashim ba'aretz **yeshanu** et shem hamishpaxa  
 most the women in Israel will change(P) D.O. name the family  
 most Israeli women will change their family name  
  
 shelahen axarei hanisu'im leshem ba'alan  
 of theirs(F,P) after the wedding to the name husband (pos.F,P)  
 after the wedding to their husbands' name

In example (15), Merav expressed her fears about the sexist attitudes that her future daughters might face. She used the future plural form with female subjects twice and in both instances, she used the FEMININE form. Merav did not comment directly on her use of this variable. In both occurrences, the uninterrupted flow of the discourse seems to indicate that the historical forms were part of her normal repertoire of linguistic resources. In (16), Iris was referring to women who might call her organization and feel encouraged by the use of FEMININE forms to address callers. Although she was ambivalent about this policy, she did see this as a potential positive outcome.<sup>71</sup> This use of the historical form was the only occurrence of a plural future tense predicate in Iris's discourse. Both of these examples are typical of the utterances in which my

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<sup>71</sup> In chapter seven, I examine the attitudes of Iris and three other women, from her organization, regarding the issue of the voicemail recording and the "underlying message" of using only FEMININE forms of address.

informants used the FEMININE future plural form. Example (17), from the interview with Dafna, contains an example of the historically MASCULINE form coordinated with a FEMININE subject.<sup>72</sup> Dafna's utterance is a typical example of the more conventional use of gender agreement for plural future tense verbs with female subjects.

The majority of my informants did not use any future tense verbs in the context of our interviews. Of the eight women who did use the plural future tense forms, four used the historical FEMININE forms exclusively. Some of my informants claimed that they tried to use it but found it difficult to incorporate into their speech. Table 5.6 presents the quantitative data on their behavior as well as their reported use of the FEMININE form. The tokens counted in the analysis represent the use of plural future tense predicates with any plural FEMININE subject; the semantic contexts include plural reference to definite FEMININE subjects as well as sex-specific generic FEMININE nominal and pronominal subjects. In the column that contains data on reported use of the variable, "yes" indicates an informant claims to use it, "no" indicates the informant reported not using it, and a blank space indicates that the informant did not comment directly on her use of this variable.

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<sup>72</sup> Readers should not confuse the use of the qualifier "historically" with the adjective "historical." In CIH the "historically" MASCULINE form is now the only form – i.e. gender neutral – for most speakers. See the discussion of this variable in Chapter II.

Informant	Total # tokens	# of FEMININE tokens	% of FEMININE tokens used	Reported use of FEMININE forms
Dafna	1	0	0%	no
Edit	0	0		yes (not always)
Einat	1	0	0%	no
Eti	1	0		yes
Iris	1	1	100%	yes
Meital	2	0	0%	aspires to use it
Merav	2	2	100%	yes
Michal	0	0		
Na'ama	0	0		
Neta	0	0		yes (takes effort)
Nitsan	0	0		yes (rarely)
Nurit	0	0		
Ofra	0	0		
Ora	1	1	100%	no
Osnat	3	3	100%	yes
<b>Total</b>	12	7	<b>58%</b>	

Table 5.6 Use of future/imperative predicates w/feminine subject/agent

The quantitative data indicate that a slight majority of my informants reported using or trying to use the historical form. In addition to the four women who used it during the interview, four other women reported using or trying to use the historical form. The gap between the number of women who used it and those who reported using it may be an indication of the fact that this variable is not an easily accessible element of the linguistic repertoire for these women or for most Israeli Hebrew speakers. As previously stated, these FEMININE forms fell out of most registers of spoken Israeli Hebrew in the 1950's. The majority of my informants were born after this change had taken place. Thus, their reports of trying to incorporate the historical FEMININE into their linguistic practices seemed to indicate that the variable was ideologized within the feminist community. These reports may also indicate that within the community the variable has a positive evaluation as an index of feminist sensibilities.

However, two of my informants reported that they did not use the historical FEMININE because it was too difficult or because using it would make them sound like "snobs." The remarks of these two informants point to the problem of using this variable as an index of feminist practice or feminist ideology. Osnat, an academic whose metalinguistic and linguistic data indicate that she paid close attention to her use of language, was one of the four informants who used this variable in the interview and reported using it consistently. She was the only one who seemed surprised to find that other women, particularly other feminists, did not use it regularly. In our conversation, the historical FEMININE form occurred within a larger statement about women's language use:

18. ani xoshevet sheze yihiye tsa'ad me'od gadol kadima beshalav ze  
I think that this will be step very great forward in stage this  
“I think that it would be a great step forward at this stage,

im lefaxot **nashim tedaberna** al atsmān benekeiva  
if at least women will speak about themselves in feminine  
if at the least women would speak about themselves in the feminine.”

Osnaṯ used the FEMININE plural future tense form in the context of speaking about the need for women to use FEMININE forms about themselves. In latter parts of our conversation, she stated that she considered the historical form to be one of the forms that women should use in self and other reference. Osnaṯ’s practice and attitude regarding this variable may reflect her academic identity as much as her feminist identity. The combination of her academic background with her feminist convictions makes her more likely to use this variable unselfconsciously. As I stated at the beginning of this section, the historical FEMININE plural forms are mostly understood as forms used in literary or high-level Hebrew. Their use is usually restricted to the academy, literary speech, or the elite newspaper, *Ha’aretz*. Osnaṯ’s convictions and practices notwithstanding, for most MIH speakers including many within the feminist community, the historical form indexes education and high culture rather than feminism or feminist identity.

## **Chapter VI: *Lashon nekeiva kolel gam et hagever* ‘FEMININE language also includes the man’**

### **6.1 GENDER AND GENERIC REFERENCE**

In this chapter, I examine my informants’ use of grammatical gender for generic reference. As the reader might expect, standard rules for the use of MIH instruct speakers to use MASCULINE forms for ambiguous generic reference to animate referents. Advertisements, public safety signs, instructions for use of products, voicemail outgoing messages, instructions on government forms, and other forms of address aimed at the general public are usually written in the MASCULINE singular. Speakers making ambiguous generic statements are socialized to use the MASCULINE form in impersonal or generic statements, including examples in educational settings. The term “ambiguous generic reference” refers to those generics that are gender-neutral or inclusive of male and female referents. I have used the term “ambiguous” here to call attention to the ambiguity inherent in using gendered forms for generic reference to all human referents. Ambiguous generics are distinct from gender-specific generic reference to males or females exclusively. However, as I will discuss in this chapter, it is not clear that speakers are always able to clearly differentiate between an ambiguous use of MASCULINE (or FEMININE) forms and gender-specific generic uses. My analysis of gender agreement in generic contexts focuses on the use of third-person and second-person forms of ambiguous generic reference.

The use of FEMININE forms in the context of generic statements can be understood in a similar light to the use of FEMININE forms for specific reference to males and females. In both contexts, feminists are using the “marked” gender form as though it were the “unmarked” form. As in the context of definite third-person plural reference to a mixed group of males and females, the use of FEMININE forms for ambiguous generic reference can lead to miscommunication. Hearers may assume that the use of the FEMININE gender in a generic statement is intended to limit the potential referents to females. In contrast, the use of the SLASH convention, with its explicit inclusion of both males and females as potential referents, can be seen as a strategy to disambiguate the use of gendered forms as gender-neutral or inclusive generics.

## 6.2 VARIATION FOR THIRD-PERSON GENERIC REFERENCE

Within the feminist community, I encountered several women who used either FEMININE forms or SLASH conventions for ambiguous generic reference. The sentences below present the three variants, MASCULINE, FEMININE, and SLASH, for the ambiguous generic variable context. Each example was taken from the speech of an informant.

19.     kedei shekol **exad**    **yargish**            tov im hasafa **shelo**  
           so that every one(M,S) will feel (M,S) good with the language his  
           So every one will feel comfortable with his language

In example (19), Einat used the MASCULINE form of the generic ‘everyone’ *kol exad* with MASCULINE gender agreement on the coordinated predicate and possessive pronoun. This utterance is an example of conventional practices for

gender marking of ambiguous generics. It occurred in response to a question about the types of changes Einat might make to language use in educational settings. She suggested that creating two sets of textbooks, one using MASCULINE and one using FEMININE forms of address, could be a solution. By creating “gender appropriate” texts, neither boys nor girls would have to find themselves in the texts aimed at the opposite gender. Her solution also would alleviate the need for the use of the cumbersome SLASH convention, which many MIH speakers believe *mesarbel et hasafa* ‘complicates the language.’ ‘Everyone’ in this context refers to all the students, male and female, who would receive these gender appropriate books and presumably be more comfortable with the language used to address them. It is interesting to note that only girls are likely to be uncomfortable or alienated by conventional practices of language use in the classroom or in textbooks. Einat’s generic statement obscures this fact, particularly when taken out of context.

The next example, (20), also taken from my interview with Einat, contains the use of a FEMININE form as an ambiguous generic.

20. im yesh **lemishehi** ben o yeladim, banim o banot  
 if (existence) to someone(F,S) son or children(M), sons or daughters  
 if someone(F) has a son or children, sons or daughters

ha'olam sheniftax bifneihem, hu olam shave hizdamnuyot  
 the world that opens before them(M) he world equal opportunities  
 the world that is open to them is a world of equal opportunities

Einat used the generic pronoun ‘someone’ in its FEMININE form *mishehi* literally ‘who that she’ as opposed to the MASCULINE form *mishehu* ‘who that he.’ This generic FEMININE form occurred in the context of her utterance about



how she defined feminism and feminist principles. Her use of the FEMININE generic *mishehi* “someone” may have been influenced by the fact that she was talking about a person having children. Nonetheless, the semantic meaning of her whole utterance led me to conclude that *mishehi* “someone(F)” was an ambiguous generic. In my analysis of the data for this variable, I will demonstrate that cultural associations influence the use of both MASCULINE and FEMININE generics in both predictable and unexpected ways.

The next example contains the use of the SLASH convention. The utterance below was taken from a conversation with Iris, in which she described her vision of feminist change.

21. kol exad ve'axat matslixim o matslixot  
 every one(M,S) and one(F,S) succeeds(M,P) or succeeds(F,P)  
 everyone, male and female, succeeds
- bizzut atsmam  
 in right theirs(M)  
 on their own terms”

Example (21) is typical of the SLASH variant in a generic context. Often, the speaker does not maintain the double gendering of the forms consistently throughout the entire utterance. Iris used both MASCULINE and FEMININE forms of the generic pronoun ‘one’ and the coordinated predicate; however, she did not maintain the double gender agreement marking on the anaphoric possessive pronoun *astmam* ‘theirs (M,P).’ As I demonstrated in chapter five, section 5.3, speakers have a difficult time maintaining the double gendering of forms. The use of two nominal forms in subject position also created problems for number agreement on the predicate. Below, I have rewritten Iris’s statement

carrying the paradigm of parallel agreement for both gender and number through the entire utterance:

kol exad o exat matsli'ax o matslixa  
every one(M) or one(F) succeeds(M,S) or succeeds(F,S)  
everyone male or female succeeds

bezxut atsmo o atsmo  
by right his or hers  
by his or her own right

A comparison of this “model” SLASH sentence with Iris’s actual utterance reveals that double gendering of each linguistic element is not necessary to achieve the pragmatic goal of explicitly including males and females as potential referents of the ambiguous generic. (Though, as noted, those who value consistency would be likely to criticize her utterance.) In example (20), Einat also used the SLASH convention in a limited manner. She began her comment about children having equal rights with the use of the singular masculine form *ben* ‘son.’ She then expanded the singular form, first to the plural MASCULINE *yeladim* ‘children (M, P)’ and finally to the phrase, *banim<sup>1</sup>o banot* ‘sons or daughters;’ however, the anaphoric pronoun in the objective position that refers back to the hypothetical children is the simple MASCULINE plural form for ‘them’ *hem*. The data will show that feminist speakers use the convention of double gendering in a variety of ways to achieve their pragmatic goals.

The use of either the SLASH convention or FEMININE forms as ambiguous generics is ideologized within the feminist community and to a lesser extent in the general Israeli public. Legislation related to ensuring equal opportunities in education and employment included the mandated use of the

SLASH convention or some explicit reference to the inclusion of females in educational texts, employment advertisements, and government forms. Most MIH speakers, including members of the HLA, view the SLASH convention as an inelegant solution that makes reading texts unnecessarily cumbersome. They do not expect to encounter it in speech. The legislated changes to the use of language in these public contexts were the direct or indirect result of feminist activism on issues of equal access to education and employment. As such, within mainstream Hebrew-speaking Israeli society, there is a strong association between the use of the SLASH convention and FEMININE generics with principles of gender equality and feminism. Given the ideological arguments attached to these practices and the willingness of feminist activists to push for legislated changes, we might expect members of the feminist community to demonstrate a clear preference for these linguistic alternatives to the generic MASCULINE.

Table 6.1 presents each informant's linguistic choices regarding gender marking for ambiguous generic referents. The data are limited to third-person singular and plural ambiguous generics. (I will address the use of the second-person singular pronoun as the impersonal generic form in section 6.3) The first column shows the total number of ambiguous generic tokens for each speaker. The second column shows the number of FEMININE tokens. The third column records number of tokens for use of the SLASH convention. The fourth and fifth columns record the percentage of use for the FEMININE and SLASH forms respectively. Double gendered forms within a single syntactic clause (VP) counted as a single token.

Subject	Total tokens of variable	# FEMININE tokens	# of SLASH tokens	% of FEMININE tokens	% of SLASH tokens	total % of alternative tokens
Dafna	8	3	0	38%	0	38%
Edit	12	1	2	8%	17%	25%
Einat	24	1	3	4%	13%	17%
Eti	6	0	0	0	0	0
Iris	30	6	4	20%	13%	33%
Meital	7	1	0	14%	0	14%
Merav	10	1	0	10%	0	10%
Michal	15	2	0	13%	0	13%
Na'ama	21	0	0	0	0	0
Neta	15	8	1	53%	7%	60%
Nitsan	9	1	0	11%	0	11%
Nurit	25	4	2	16%	8%	24%
Ofra	13	0	0	0	0	0
Ora	11	1	1	9%	9%	18%
Osnat	63	0	2	0	3%	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>16%</b>

Table 6.1 Ambiguous 3<sup>rd</sup> person generic reference (singular and plural)

Table 6.1 shows that overall the women in this study used the FEMININE and SLASH variants infrequently. Only 16% of the total number of generic tokens were alternative variants. The women primarily used MASCULINE forms for ambiguous generic reference. Nonetheless, eleven of the speakers, a clear majority, used a FEMININE generic in at least one utterance, and Neta used FEMININE generics in 53% of her generic statements. Although the overall percentage of utterances wherein speakers used the SLASH form is only 6%, seven of the women used the SLASH variant in one or more utterances. Edit's use of SLASH forms accounted for 17% of her total generic tokens. The fact that these two variables were used so infrequently does not necessarily indicate that they are not important markers of feminist practice. As noted earlier, the SLASH variable is ideologized within mainstream Israeli culture as a marker of feminist principles. The use of FEMININE generics, a clear violation of conventional practice and prescriptive rules for MIH, is also associated with feminism. These variables may not account for a high percentage of overall generic reference. Nonetheless, any use of them is likely to be very salient for both feminist and mainstream MIH speakers because they violate accepted practices and prescribed standards of use.

Among my informants and more broadly within the feminist community, I found that most speakers expressed a preference for the use of MASCULINE plural forms over the use of MASCULINE singular forms for generic reference. Michal made the following comment about the marking of generic contexts, *barabim hakonotatsiya lezaxar yoter xalasha me'asher bayexid* - 'in the

plural(M) the connotation of the masculine is weaker than it is in the singular(M).’ It is very likely that the ongoing loss of FEMININE plural forms from informal spoken and written CIH contributes to feminists accepting the MASCULINE plural forms as gender-neutral. It is also likely that habitual use of the MASCULINE plural forms for reference to both males and females weakens the link between the FORMAL grammatical category its differential meaning.<sup>73</sup> The difference in attitude towards singular and plural use of MASCULINE generics led me to examine how it might affect the use of alternative forms in each context. Tables 6.2 and 6.3 present the quantitative data for singular and plural ambiguous generics respectively.

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<sup>73</sup> The use of MASCULINE plural forms for differential or male-exclusive reference is also limited by socio-cultural context.

Subject	Total generic or indefinite uses	# FEMININE tokens	# of SLASH tokens	% of FEMININE tokens	% of SLASH tokens	Total % of alternative tokens
Dafna	4	1	0	25%	0	25%
Edit	6	0	2	0	33%	33%
Einat	12	1	0	8%	0	8%
Eti	2	0	0	0	0	
Iris	11	6	1	55%	9%	64%
Meital	5	1	0	20%	0	20%
Merav	6	1	0	17%	0	17%
Michal	5	2	0	40%	0	40%
Na'ama	12	0	0	0	0	0
Neta	10	7	1	70%	10%	80%
Nitsan	4	0	0	0	0	0
Nurit	7	0	1	0	14%	14%
Ofra	5	0	0	0	0	0
Ora	3	0	0	0	0	0
Osnat	17	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>22%</b>

Table 6.2: Ambiguous 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular generic reference

Subject	Total tokens of variable	# FEMININE tokens	# of SLASH tokens	% of FEMININE tokens	% of SLASH tokens	Total % of alternative tokens
Dafna	4	2	0	50%	0	50%
Edit	6	1	0	17%	0	17%
Einat	22	0	3	0	14%	14%
Eti	4	0	0	0	0	0
Iris	19	0	3	0	16%	16%
Meital	2	0	0	0	0	0
Merav	4	0	0	0	0	0
Michal	10	0	0	0	0	0
Na'ama	9	0	0	0	0	0
Neta	5	1	0	20%	0	20%
Nitsan	5	1	0	20%	0	20%
Nurit	18	4	1	22%	6%	28%
Ofra	8	0	0	0	0	0
Ora	8	1	1	13%	13%	26%
Osnat	46	0	2	0	4%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>14%</b>

Table 6.3: Ambiguous 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural generic reference



The data indicate that in the singular context the use of FEMININE tokens was higher than the percentage for the combined data, 17% as compared to the combined singular and plural usage of only 11%. Seven women used the FEMININE form as a singular ambiguous generic in one or more of their utterances, and five of them used FEMININE forms in more than 20% of their utterances. Table 6.3 shows that my informants used the FEMININE forms as plural generics less often than as singular generics. Six women used the FEMININE in the plural context, but the usage only accounts for 6% of the plural generics used across all the women. The difference in use is not surprising given that many of the women in my study commented that plural MASCULINE forms were more acceptable to them as generics.

The difference in the use of SLASH forms between singular and plural generic contexts is less dramatic, but they do account for a high percentage of total number of plural generic uses and fewer of the singular generic forms. In the singular context, SLASH forms accounted for only 5% of the total generics. That is a difference of only 1% from the combined use of plural and singular forms, but only four women used the SLASH forms as singular generics. The use of SLASH forms increases from 6% of the combined generics to 8% of the plural generic forms, and five of the original seven women who used the SLASH form at all used it for ambiguous plural reference.

The comparative data seem to indicate that my informants are more likely to use a FEMININE form than a SLASH form for singular generic reference. The differences in use between the FEMININE form and the SLASH form in singular

versus plural contexts also indicate that the SLASH form is not widely used in either context. Overall, the speakers used one of the alternative forms for 22% of the total singular generic forms. The data for the use of both alternative variants for plural generics indicate only a slight preference for SLASH forms over FEMININE forms. The use of alternative forms for plural generics was only 14% of the total number of plural generic tokens. The overall difference between the use of alternative forms in singular and plural contexts indicates that the feminists in this study were more likely to use an alternative form for singular generics than for plural generics. Thus, it also seems reasonable to conclude that the use of MASCULINE forms for plural generics was more acceptable than singular MASCULINE generics. These conclusions resonate with my observations of language use and metalinguistic discourse about generic reference in the Israeli feminist community. I believe it is possible to conclude that members of the feminist community have an ideological preference for the use of either FEMININE or SLASH forms in all generic contexts, but actual use is more limited.

The data presented in tables 6.2 and 6.3 above demonstrate that the syntactic and semantic environments of singular versus plural reference influence the use of gender marking for generic reference. Gender marking for ambiguous generic reference is also influenced by a number of other factors, many of which are social rather than strictly grammatical. Whether or not we accept theoretical linguistic analyses that identify the MASCULINE forms (and by extension the whole grammatical category) as the structurally unmarked, it is clear that speakers

of MIH are socialized to use and interpret the MASCULINE as the unmarked. As such, habitual associations between the MASCULINE category and gender-neutral usage hinder the use of FEMININE and/or SLASH variants. Speakers using FEMININE forms risk being misunderstood, as was the case in Osnat's use of the FEMININE plural for inclusive reference to her male and female students, discussed in the previous chapter, section 5.3. The SLASH variant clearly disambiguates the intention of the speaker; however, it can lead to confusion between singular and plural agreement, which was evident in example (3) above from Iris. In addition, the SLASH variant is cumbersome, particularly if a speaker tries to use the double gender agreement consistently beyond the initial nominal phrase.

Cultural associations between social roles and gender categories can also influence the use of ambiguous generics. I counted Einat's use of *mishehi*, the FEMININE form of 'someone,' as an ambiguous generic, but it is likely that the association between women and child-rearing influenced her choice in gender marking. It is possible to understand all of the gender use choices of my informants as on some level responding to existing cultural associations between social roles and gender categorization which link the culturally defined masculine class with the grammatically unmarked MASCULINE category. Below are additional examples of my informant's use of alternative generic forms. I contextualize each example and analyze the socio-linguistic factors that may have influenced the speaker's use of gender marking.

One of the most interesting examples a FEMININE ambiguous generic form demonstrates the complexity of the MIH gender agreement system and the manner in which cultural associations result in innovative forms of gender marking. Example (22) occurred in the speech of two different informants, but in reference to the same topic. Both speakers were talking about the motivation to use FEMININE forms of address on the voicemail system of a feminist organization.

22.    rov        haponot                    eleinu hen    nashim  
          majority the ones who call(F,P) to us they(F) women  
          the majority of our callers are women

What makes (22) so interesting is the number of elements that are marked for gender and the possible permutations for agreement. The noun *rov* ‘majority’ is actually MASCULINE but it is coordinated with a FEMININE predicate noun in the above utterance. The predicate noun *ponot* ‘callers,’ literally ‘ones who call,’ should agree with the MASCULINE *rov*, but these speakers used the FEMININE rather than the MASCULINE. The gender marking in second half of the sentence, *hen nashim* ‘they(F) women’ is consistent as a noun phrase but the pronoun *hen* “should” agree with its antecedent, which is not *ponot* but the MASCULINE subject *rov*.

The complexity of the agreement structure in this sentence prompted me to submit it, along with two other choices for expressing the same semantic information, to four native MIH linguists under the pretext of asking for grammaticality judgements. I sent them the construction that had occurred in my data set, (22) above, along with the following alternatives: *rov haponim eleinu*

*hen nashim* ‘the majority callers(M) to us they(F) women’ and *rov haponim eleinu hem nashim* ‘the majority callers(M) to us they(M) women. I did not tell the linguists that the sentence using the FEMININE predicate nominative *haponot* ‘the callers (F,P)’ had occurred in my data set twice. All of the Israeli linguists responded that the construction presented in (22) was ungrammatical and unlikely to occur within spoken CIH. Most preferred the third sentence, *rov haponim eleinu hem nashim*, which used all MASCULINE forms except for women, which has “natural gender.” Ron Kuzar, a well known Israeli semanticist, explained that either of the alternative sentences might occur since the distinction between *hem* ‘they(M)’ and *hen* ‘they(F)’ was not maintained consistently in all varieties of CIH. (His response confirmed my suspicion that these distinctions were being lost in spoken CIH.) Regarding the sentence that used *rov haponot* ‘majority of the callers (F,P),’ he responded, “(t)here is only one condition under which [it] would be felicitous: if it were true that you use the feminine form if the majority in a group is female. But this is a myth. Nobody uses Hebrew this way. If you do come across such a sentence in real languages it is simply a too early application of the feminine category.” (Emphasis mine. See footnote below for the full text of his analysis, which I have reprinted with his permission.)<sup>74</sup> I found Kuzar’s

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<sup>74</sup> Israeli linguist, Ron Kuzar, sent the following response to my grammatical query. With his permission, I have reprinted it below.

1) *rov haponim eleynu hen nashim* 2) *rov haponim eleynu hem nashim* 3) *rov haponot eleynu hen nashim* There is also a fourth option: 4) *rov haponot eleynu hem nashim*. Numbers three and four are identical. In spoken Hebrew, there is a weakening of the *hen* form towards the *hem* in either unsupervised or lower-class variants. The difference would be between careful educated speech (3) and unsupervised speech or lower-class speech (4). In the case of educated people, there is stylistic choice. In the case of less educated people, only the form *hem* exists. The difference between 1 and 2 is also grammatical. Equational sentences tend to have a copula

response interesting, though not surprising. Given that he was not aware that the sentence was part of my data set, he may have been trying to “set the record” straight on his experience of language use in CIH. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the possibility that this use of a FEMININE plural might be evidence of a variety of Hebrew in which speakers did in fact use the FEMININE as inclusive is not seriously entertained.

Kuzar’s analysis, however, does provide a reasonable, semantically based, explanation for the “unconventional” use of gender agreement in this sentence. The anticipation of the FEMININE gender for *nashim* caused the agreement “error” between *rov* (M) and *ponot* (F). (Indeed, one of the linguists stated that she would have been more comfortable with the sentence, if the speakers had used the FEMININE noun *marbit* ‘majority,’ which is derived from a different consonantal root.) Studies on gender agreement errors for reference to inanimate objects show that speakers sometimes make processing errors when the gender of

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agreeing with the subject, but certain factors may change this. Since there is no context here, I don't know what this factor might be.

The real difference then is between 1-2 and 3-4. There cannot be a difference between the meanings of the two sentences. 1-2 present the general group as gender neutral in the masculine form (males and females). This is the more "logical" form, since not all applicants are women. 3-4 is awkward, because once you name the group as feminine (hence female), you can only add other attributes, such as "nashim ovdot" [women workers(F,P)] or "akrot bayit" [housewives], but to use the attribute "nashim" [women] is tautological. There is only one condition under which 3-4 would be felicitous: if it were true that you use the feminine form if the majority in a group is female. But this is a myth. Nobody uses Hebrew this way. If you do come across such a sentence in real languages it is simply a too early application of the feminine category, just as might be the case in 3. It would be a *constructio ad sensum* as illogical as "a bunch of people are waiting for you" where "are" is used although "bunch" is singular.

I think that despite all objections to the masculine form as gender-neutral, most people (and most women) under most circumstances use it unproblematically. Note the following sentence, said by a woman on the radio on the 22.10.2003 on *reshet bet* [channel bet] at 06:50: "ani, ke'adam shemetapel behafra'ot akhila, khoshevet she..." [I, as a person that takes care of (M,S) eating disorders, think(F,S) that...]. This is a skillful use of both masculine and feminine forms in the appropriate places.

an object in a dependant clause differs from that of the initial noun phrase. It seems possible that the use of the FEMININE plural in this sentence (22) might be the result of processing errors that associated the initial noun “callers” with the semantic intent, that the majority of the callers were women. Although in that case, we might expect the noun used for “majority” to have been FEMININE as well, but I believe that *marbit* is a less common noun (i.e. less used) in spoken CIH.

The use of the FEMININE form might also be interpreted as emphatic marking. The utterance, as it occurred in the discourse of both women, was a report of the justification given to a phone technician who objected to the organization’s decision to use FEMININE singular terms of address on the outgoing voicemail message. The women may have wanted to highlight the fact that their decision was based on the desire to meet the needs of their primary demographic, hence the emphatic gender marking. All of these factors may have contributed in some measure to the use of a FEMININE plural form as a generic in this utterance. Regardless of the various factors that conditioned their use of *ponot* ‘callers(F),’ it is clearly intended as an ambiguous generic reference to all callers. This example also raises a question about theories of the underlying semantic markedness of either the FEMININE or MASCULINE forms (Silverstein, 1985). (See example (24) below and the related footnote for the discussion of another agreement error in a generic equational statement with the construction “the ‘majority’ of a ‘group of X’ are women.”)

Several of my informants indicated they felt the use of MASCULINE singular forms for gender-neutral generic reference was particularly offensive. It is likely that their ideological objection to this prescribed and naturalized practice supported their alternative use of language, but there are several other socio-linguistic factors that may also contribute to their use of gender in generic utterances. The association of certain social roles or occupations with one gender or the other clearly conditions the use of grammatical gender in generic contexts. Several cross-linguistic studies have demonstrated this socio-linguistic phenomenon.<sup>75</sup> The examples below provide a comparison of the contexts in which speakers used FEMININE, MASCULINE and SLASH forms for generic reference.

The first set of utterances below includes examples in which speakers used the FEMININE grammatical forms as the unmarked generic. (The words in bold text are the FEMININE singular or plural forms.)

23.    ani lo ma'amina shemora    bəkita    **takri**    kaxa  
           I   no believe   that teacher(F) in a class read(F, S) like that  
           I don't believe that a teacher, in the class, would read like that

          layeladim.            **hi**    **tagid**    kitvu  
           to the children(M,P). she would say "you write(M,P)"  
           to the children. She would say "you write"

**hi** lo **tagid** ktov kitvi  
           she no would say write(M,S) write(F,S)  
           she would not say "you (masculine) write, you (feminine) write."

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<sup>75</sup> See Ervin (1962) for detailed discussions of this phenomenon.



In (23), Iris stated that although she preferred the use of SLASH forms in education texts, she did not expect teachers to address the class in that manner. Her use of the singular FEMININE form of the noun ‘teacher’ – *mora* as well as her consistent use of FEMININE pronouns in reference to the hypothetical teacher were not intended to refer only to female teachers. She was speaking about any teacher in an elementary classroom. The use of the FEMININE form as the generic in this context indexes the Israeli gender stereotype that elementary school teachers are women. In the next example, Nurit used the plural FEMININE form also in reference to elementary school teachers. Unlike Iris, she justified her use of the FEMININE plural form.

24.    **keshehamorot**    **omdot** mul hakita,  
          when the teachers stand before the class  
          when teachers stand before the class
- vemarbit        **hamorot**        bemedinat yisrael ze nashim.  
          and majority(F) the teacher(F,P) in state of Israel this(M) women <sup>76</sup>  
          and the majority of teachers in the state of Israel are women’

Nurit’s explanation that ‘the majority of teachers in the state of Israel are women’ may have been triggered by the fact that we were overtly discussing the manner in which conventional practices for the use of grammatical gender often reflect

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<sup>76</sup> It is interesting to note that the construction of Nurit’s utterance in (24) is very similar to the earlier use of the FEMININE plural as an ambiguous generic in (22) *rov haponot eleinu hen nashim*. In both sentences, there are agreement errors related to the use of the words *rov* (MASCULINE) and *marbit* (FEMININE) for reference to an unmarked ‘majority’ of X. In (24), the error occurred between the FEMININE noun *marbit* ‘majority’ and the deitic pronoun *ze* ‘this(M).’ The MIH rules of gender agreement would lead us to expect the FEMININE form *zot* because the antecedent of the deitic pronoun in this sentence is the FEMININE *marbit*. I will return to examples (22) and (24) and the implication of these processing errors for understanding issues of markedness and gender agreement in Chapter IX.

cultural stereotypes. She may also have felt the need to clarify that she was speaking about teachers in general not female teachers only. Despite the fact that FEMININE forms are not understood as gender-ambiguous in generic reference and the prescriptive rules of MIH discourage this practice, *mora* ‘teacher(F) and *morot* ‘teachers(F)’ are culturally unmarked.<sup>77</sup> The same is true for *axot* and *axayot* ‘nurse’ and ‘nurses’ respectively. Iris and Nurit’s uses of the FEMININE grammatical form as the generic in this context are not necessarily markers of feminist language practice. More likely, they simply reflect the socio-cultural norms, which have a strong governing effect over the use of gendered forms for generic reference.

In contrast example (25), Neta’s use of FEMININE forms in reference to a hypothetical university professor might be understood as a marker of feminist language practice since professor is not a professional role generically associated with women.

25. kemo she'ani yoshevet behartsa'a, beseder,  
 like that I sit in a lecture, okay  
 like, if I sit in a lecture, okay,

venani'ax she'axat **hamartsot** **matxila** lehartsot,  
 and imagine that one(F) the lecturers(F,P) begins(F,S) to lecture  
 and imagine that one of the lecturers begins to lecture

vehi **mishtameshet** besafa universalit, beseder.  
 and she uses(F,S) in the language universal, okay.  
 and she uses the universal language okay.

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<sup>77</sup> I had the opportunity to volunteer in elementary and pre-kindergarten classrooms where I observed that many reading books portrayed only female teachers working with small children.

The above utterance occurred within a larger conversation about the importance of language and forms of address. Neta revealed herself, throughout our discussions, as a strong believer in the need for feminist language reform. The utterance above was her description of the level of alienation she experienced when speakers addressed her with MASCULINE forms. The relevant issue for this part of my analysis is her use of FEMININE forms for reference to the hypothetical lecturers. Neta used singular FEMININE forms in reference to the hypothetical university instructor as well as the plural FEMININE form of the noun ‘lecturers’ – *martsoṯ* in reference to university lecturers as a collective.<sup>78</sup> Neta’s choice of grammatical gender does not conform to some cultural norm conditioned by the gendered division of labor in Israeli society. (Both Michal and Osnat, university faculty members, commented on the general assumption that university professors are male.) Observations of language use in the general Hebrew-speaking Israeli population confirm my assertion that the MASCULINE forms are the unmarked generics for reference to university lecturers. I presented these three examples together to demonstrate two points. First, socio-cultural associations played a role in determining which grammatically gendered form these speakers used as the unmarked generic. Second, not every use of a FEMININE noun as the generic should be understood as an indexical marker of feminist practice.

With the examples of FEMININE generics in mind, I turn to utterances in which my informants used MASCULINE forms as generics. In the example

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<sup>78</sup> In Israel, the title *martse/martsa* ‘lecturer’ is used interchangeably with ‘professor’ in most informal contexts. The title professor is generally reserved for tenured faculty members.

below, Einat used the MASCULINE singular form for the noun ‘doctor’ as a generic. She was speaking about the connection between the use of MASCULINE grammatical forms as generics and the use of male bodies as the baseline for medical research. In the context of this discussion, she referred generically to women’s experiences of going to the doctor with the following statement:

26. kemo keshe<sup>1</sup>at holexet **larofe**  
 like when you(F,S) go(F,S) to the doctor(M,S)  
 for instance, when you go to the doctor

In example (26), Einat used the MASCULINE singular form of the noun ‘doctor’ in generic reference to doctors and more broadly the medical profession. It seems likely that Einat’s generic use of the MASCULINE *rofe* was an example of habitualized linguistic behavior. In Israel, the majority of doctors are men, and there is an assumption, supported by linguistic practices, that male doctors are the unmarked group. It is interesting to contrast Einat’s use of the MASCULINE form of *rofe* in the above utterance, with a latter statement she made regarding the use of language as a tool to socialize children in non-gender biased ways.

yesh li yeled ben shalosh vexetsi. az eh az ani omeret lo nagid,  
 stam nagid, eh **rof'im**. ani metaeret lo ma afilu yesh **rof'im**  
**verof'ot**. she<sup>1</sup>az ani lo agid rak rof'im. shehu yavin sheha<sup>1</sup>olam hu  
 lo banu rak rof'im gevarim, yesh rof'im verof'ot

I have a child(M) three and a half years old. So, eh, so I say to him, let’s say, for example let’s say eh doctors(M). I describe to him what, that there are male doctors and female doctors. That thus I don’t say only doctors(M), so that he will understand that the world is not built only doctors(M) male, there are male doctors and female doctors.’

In the statement above, Einat expressed her commitment to using language as a means of countering gender stereotypes in Israeli society. Despite her conscious commitment to using language as a tool for re-creating the gendered social order, she used the MASCULINE form of the noun as a generic in her conversation with me. The apparent contradiction between Einat's ideological stance and her linguistic behavior is evidence of the strength of language socialization and naturalized associations between grammatical gender categories and social roles. Einat's attitude regarding language socialization and the importance of using language to challenge cultural stereotypes was salient for the women in my study, despite the minimal use of FEMININE or SLASH generic forms.

Feminist innovative language use for generic reference can be understood as a tool to challenge the relationship between the grammatically "unmarked" forms and the cultural system of marked and unmarked gendered behavior. Einat's two statements taken together seem to indicate that the different levels at which markedness functions are interconnected and fluid. The grammatically unmarked status of the MASCULINE nominal form *rofe* both supports and is supported by the culturally unmarked status of male doctors. As I have stated elsewhere, the default generic for most nouns with animate referents is MASCULINE, unless cultural associations dictate otherwise. The qualification "unless cultural associations dictate otherwise" points to a central issue regarding my analysis of feminist language practices. In the case of the FEMININE forms used as generics, the grammatically marked status of the forms makes it easier to observe that cultural concepts of gender roles and socialization lead to specific

language practices. With MASCULINE generics, it is more complicated. How can we know whether the grammatical predisposition or the cultural conditioning leads a speaker to use a MASCULINE generic for reference to ‘doctors’ or any other social role associated with men? Many formal models of gender-based noun classification systems privilege the unmarked status of the MASCULINE category as the determining factor. But, is the grammatical classification of MASCULINE as unmarked simply an artifact of cultural conditioning? It is not my intention to answer these questions definitively; rather, I use this analysis to point to places where feminist language practices raise our awareness of these issues. The predisposition to use MASCULINE forms as the unmarked in all contexts masks those contexts in which the use of the grammatical form is conditioned by cultural stereotypes. Furthermore, in the context of sexist societies, the predisposition to use the MASCULINE as the generic in all contexts becomes suspect not because speakers consciously intend a sexist or male-exclusive meaning, but because the socio-cultural context supports such an interpretation. Feminist innovative language practices point to the collusion of these two phenomena by occasionally “breaking the rules” of association. They disrupt the symbolic privilege of males by symbolically linking the status of “unmarked” with the females.

If we take Einat’s linguistic choices together with those of Iris and Nurit, their behavior supports the conclusion that socio-cultural associations condition the use of both MASCULINE and FEMININE generics with respect to particular social roles. The use of FEMININE forms as unmarked generics is not unique to

feminist language practice, but when used to counter cultural stereotypes, it is a tool of feminist social change. Neta's use of FEMININE forms as the unmarked for reference to university professors is an example of this, as is Einat's report that she used FEMININE and MASCULINE forms together in generic reference to traditionally male professions.

The SLASH construction for generic reference is an important innovation that also can be understood to challenge cultural stereotypes as well as the naturalized relationship between the grammatically unmarked MASCULINE form and the culturally unmarked male. It is interesting to note that most of the uses of the SLASH construction, both plural and singular, were with impersonal pronouns. In most cases, the speaker was referring to "someone" or "everyone," an unqualified generic, if there is such a thing. Examples (27), (28), and (29) present cases in which speakers used the SLASH form with nominal rather than pronominal generic forms.

27.     **ani** osa korsim **lemorim**        **velemorot**  
           I do course for teachers(M,P) and for teachers(F,P)  
           I teach courses for male and female teachers
- vele'olim**                **hadashot**     **olim**                **hadashim**  
           and immigrants(M,P) new(F,P), immigrants (M,P) new(M,P)  
           and female and male new immigrants
28.     **hamo'amad**            tsarix o **hamo'amedet** tsrixim  
           the candidate(M,S) must or the candidate(F,S) must (M,P)  
           the candidate must or the female candidate, they must

lemale et hatofes  
complete D.O. the form.  
complete the form.

29. im yesh **lemishehi** ben o yeladim, **banim o banot**  
if there is to someone(F,S) son or children(M), sons or daughters  
if someone(F) has a son or children, sons or daughters

In the above examples, the speakers used the SLASH convention for generic reference to teachers, new immigrants, political candidates, and children. It is interesting to note that, in (27), Iris used the MASCULINE plural form for ‘teachers’ before using the FEMININE form. She was speaking about elementary school teachers who participated in a program for new immigrants. As I have already noted, most elementary school teachers are women, and Iris herself later explained that most of new immigrant teachers in her classes were women. As such, I believe we might view Iris’s use of the SLASH form as an index of her commitment to using language in non-gender specific ways. Or an attempt to highlight the fact she was responsible for modeling “appropriate” language use to both men and women. In Edit’s utterance, (28) above, the addition of the FEMININE form for the noun ‘candidate’ *mo'amedet* appears to be an afterthought. She had already used the singular MASCULINE nominal form and coordinated the appropriately gender-marked predicate. The context of her utterance, however, was the need to create new application forms for political candidates that would overtly address both males and females. Political office is considered a very masculine realm in Israeli culture, Golda Meir notwithstanding. Edit’s initial use of the MASCULINE nominal form can be viewed as evidence of



this cultural association between the role of politician and masculinity. Her subsequent addition of the FEMININE nominal form can thus be understood as a type of self-correction triggered by the topic of our conversation as well as the overall context of our larger discussion, feminist practice and social change.

The SLASH form, in its various instantiations, provides an opportunity for speakers to monitor their use of gender and “correct” themselves to reflect a gender-neutral or feminist perspective. The “self-corrective” aspect of the SLASH form can also be seen in example (29), Einat’s previously analyzed utterance regarding equal opportunities for all children regardless of gender. Her movement from the initial use of *ben*, the MASCULINE singular form that can mean either ‘child’ or more literally ‘son,’ to *yeladim*, the MASCULINE plural form of the noun ‘children,’ and finally, to the SLASH use of *banim o banot* literally ‘sons or daughters’ appears as a form of online verbal editing. Generic reference to children, singularly or plurally, is often MASCULINE. (In many of the radio and television advertisements for traffic safety that I observed, children were represented as boys.) Einat’s verbal progression moved from the initial use of the “most offensive” form of the generic to the most inclusive double-gendered plural SLASH. Einat’s utterance provides a perfect concrete example of the struggle that most of my informants discussed regarding their attempts to bring their ideological convictions and their linguistic behavior together.

The majority of my informants, thirteen of the fifteen, reported using alternative forms for generic reference, but most of them also reported finding it difficult. As the numbers in the data tables showed, the use of alternative forms

for ambiguous generics was a semantic context in which my informants did not use feminist linguistic innovations consistently. The inconsistent use of the alternative forms, however, should not be understood as implicit acceptance of the MASCULINE as the unmarked gender category. Rather, the analysis of my informants behavior with respect to this variable context demonstrates that innovative linguistic behavior need not be consistent to create change within a sociolinguistic system. Linguistic attitudes and language ideologies are equally important to shifting sociolinguistic norms. The metalinguistic discourse within the feminist community regarding the practice of using the MASCULINE as the unmarked generic coincides with heightened awareness of gendered social issues at the micro-level of women in the feminist community and the macro-level of mainstream Israeli society.

### **6.3 GENERIC USES OF THE SECOND-PERSON SINGULAR IMPERSONAL PRONOUN**

When asked to describe language use practices that they found particularly salient, many of the women in my study remarked on the phenomena of women using the MASCULINE form of the second-person singular pronoun in impersonal statements. Regarding this practice, Edit made the following comment:

ma shehaxi bolet etsli. she'ani ro'a, mashehu me'od me'od bolet. ...  
ze shekeshe'isha medaberet al mashehu bestami. vehi omeret *nagid*  
*ata holex*. zot omeret keshehi medaberet al mashehu be'ofen ke'ilu  
stami. zot omeret ke'ilu tsad shlishi aval ze belashon zaxar ze kol  
kax tsorem li. ani pashut lo yexola lishmo'a et ze.

The thing that is the most obvious to me. That I see as something very, very obvious. ... This is when a woman speaks about something generically. And she says “let’s say you(M,S) go(M,S)” That is to say when she speaks about something in the manner like generically. That is to say like from the other side but it is in the masculine language. This really irritates me. I simply cannot listen to it.

The majority of the women in my study as well as many other feminists with whom I interacted, echoed her statement. An informal survey of Israelis from the general Hebrew-speaking population regarding this variable indicated that it was not a salient a grammatical context or a recognized site of gender-oriented language reform outside the feminist community. (Most speakers understood the issue of gender marking on this variable once we discussed it but viewed it as no different than any other generic form of reference.) In contrast, nearly every women who participated in my study raised the issue of *guf sheini keguf stami* ‘the second-person as the generic’ as a critical example of the problem with gender agreement in standard MIH. They claimed a clear preference for using the FEMININE variant of the informal pronoun. Why should this variable, in essence another type of generic, be more salient for the feminist community than the third-person generic variable? In this section, I address this question by examining my informants’ linguistic behavior and ideological claims regarding gender agreement on second-person pronouns. I focus on the impersonal form because it was the semantic use that was the most productive in the interview context. It is also quite an interesting variable with respect to the pragmatic use of gender to index social identities and stances.

The second-person impersonal is a form of generic. However, its characteristics distinguish it from both third-person generic forms and personal

second-person generic terms of address and warrant its investigation as an independent variable.<sup>79</sup> The use of personal second-person pronominal forms as generics is limited mostly to outgoing voicemail messages and written texts. In these contexts, there is an intended addressee of unknown gender. The form is generic because it must refer to either a male or female addressee, but it is a personal form of address nonetheless. My informants reported using the SLASH or FEMININE forms for personal second-person generic reference, but the context of the interview led to only metalinguistic data about the use of personal second-person ambiguous generics forms.

In contrast, the second-person impersonal pronoun usually occurs in the context of statements in which a speaker uses *at* or *ata* “you(F)” or “you(M)” in place of a third-person impersonal pronoun such as *mishehu/hi* “someone” or *exad/exat* “one.” In this semantic context, the form is generic because it potentially includes any human referent if it is ambiguous or all males or females if it is sex-specific. Unlike generic uses of third-person impersonal pronouns, such as *mishehu/hi* ‘someone (M or F),’ *ze* ‘this (M),’ *zot* ‘this(F),’ and *eile* ‘these (M or F),’ the impersonal use of the second-person pronoun carries with it a cognitive (and pragmatic) association with the direct form of personal address. In the context of a conversation, speakers and hearers must rely on contextual clues to interpret the meaning of the second-person singular pronoun as the impersonal. Most uses of the impersonal second-person convey a sense of

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<sup>79</sup> In the context of this discussion, I will use the terms ‘impersonal second-person’ and ‘second-person impersonal’ interchangeably. The use of the term ‘impersonal’ alone will also refer to the second-person impersonal forms unless otherwise noted.

explicitly including the interlocutor/addressee in the referential scope of the generic pronoun. Metalinguistic comments by the women in the study demonstrated that they clearly understood the difference between uses of the personal and impersonal pronouns. Nonetheless, this pragmatic aspect adds to the complexity of determining gender agreement for the impersonal pronoun. Another characteristic of the impersonal second-person is its use by speakers to relate personal experiences or perspectives in a generalized manner. The impersonal second-person creates some cognitive distance between the speaker and the “agent” of the her utterance. These characteristics combined with the metalinguistic discourse I observed regarding this variable led me to investigate it separately from other generic pronouns.

The presentation of my analysis of the impersonal second-person singular pronoun differs slightly from those of the other variable contexts. In addition to presenting quantitative and qualitative data regarding the linguistic behavior of my informants, I include data related to their metalinguistic discussion of this variable. For the purpose of this analysis, I defined the second-person impersonal as the use of the singular form of the second-person pronouns *ata* or *at* as generic impersonal pronouns. I have further limited the scope of my investigation to the use of the second-person impersonal pronoun by females in conversation with female interlocutors. While some of my informants reported using the FEMININE form of the impersonal even in conversation with male interlocutors, I have no data to evaluate these claims. My observations of language use within the general Israeli population revealed that the MASCULINE impersonal *ata*

'you' is used by both male and female speakers regardless of the gender of the conversational partner(s), topic, or gender of possible referents. The practice of using *ata* as the generic impersonal is supported by the prescriptive rules of MIH, which identify the MASCULINE grammatical category as the unmarked.

One of the characteristics of the impersonal second-person variable, noted above, is the cognitive link between the impersonal and personal uses of the second-person singular pronoun. There are no morphological or phonological markers to distinguish between the personal and the impersonal forms of the pronoun. In addition, the personal pronoun can be used in generic contexts, further complicating the differentiation between the impersonal and the personal uses of the second-person pronoun. The sentences below provide readers with examples of personal (direct address of an interlocutor), generic personal address, and impersonal uses of the second-person singular pronouns. Examples (30), (31), (32), and (33) show the use of the personal second-person pronoun in direct address and generic contexts. These are followed by examples (34) and (35), in which speakers used the MASCULINE and the FEMININE forms of the second-person, respectively, as impersonal generic pronouns.

Examples (30) and (31) below are sentences in which the second-person pronoun was used as the personal form of direct address between a speaker and her interlocutor.

30.     ani yexola lehagid **lax**                   shebaseminar  
       I    can    tell     **to you(F,S)** that in the seminar  
       I can tell you that in the seminar

hem matxilim ledaber axeret  
they(M,P) begin to speak different  
they(the students) begin to speak differently.

31. ve'at tsrixa lir'ot. ani xoshevet shebemisgeret  
and you(F,S) must see. I think that in the context  
And you have to see (it). I think in the context of

hara'ayonot **shelax** lara'ayen  
the interviews of yours(F,S) to interview  
your interviews, to interview

et hatalfani'ot shel ha'iriya.  
D.O the phone operators(F,P) of the municipality  
the female telephone operators of the municipality.

In example (30), Osnat was reporting the influence of her own language use practices on her students' use of language. The “you” refers directly to me, her interlocutor. In number (31) above, Na'ama was encouraging me to include the telephone operators in my study because of their interesting experiences with language use. Again, the “you” refers directly to me. While the initial use of the pronouns may not immediately indicate that these are personal uses of the second-person, other contextual clues rule out a generic reading, for example Na'ama's reference to my research. In both sentences, the content and context of the utterances allow us to interpret them as direct forms of address between a speaker and her interlocutor.

Examples (32) and (33) below present the use of the second-person singular pronoun as a form of generic personal address. These sentences were both taken from outgoing voicemail messages I encountered in Israel.

32. shalom **higata** lebezek  
 hello **you(M,S) reached(M,S)** to Bezeq  
 hello you have reached Bezeq (Israeli phone company)'

As the outgoing message on a voicemail system, this utterance must address any caller who reaches the voicemail system. It is a personal address but the context of use is generic. The agent of the predicate *higata* 'reached (M,S, 2<sup>nd</sup>)' is unknown to the "speaker" in this case the voicemail system. Those who recorded the message used the default MASCULINE singular as the "unmarked" second-person pronoun. Although the use of the MASCULINE singular was acceptable to most MIH speakers, I found that many organizations and individuals used the plural MASCULINE form *higatem* in outgoing messages. It is likely that this practice was adopted because the connection between the pronoun and the MASCULINE gender category is weaker in the plural form. Nonetheless it should be noted that voicemail systems of many individuals and organizations used the MASCULINE singular pronoun to address callers.

An exception to these conventions was recording for the voicemail system of one of the feminist organizations. The organization had installed a new automated voicemail system and chose to use the FEMININE singular second-person pronoun to address callers. Below is the opening address from the system.

33. shalom **higat** leshdulat hanashim  
 hello **reached(F,S)** to political lobby the women  
 hello you have reached the Women's Political Lobby

The use of the FEMININE second-person singular pronoun in this outgoing message is highly marked. As noted above, most organizations or individuals that did not use the MASCULINE singular form adopted the equally acceptable



practice of using the MASCULINE plural.<sup>80</sup> The use of the FEMININE singular form was controversial even in the context of the organization's feminist community. I found that the decision to use the FEMININE singular form generated several debates of potential positive and negative consequences of the innovative practice. As with the use of the MASCULINE form *higata* in the Bezeq message, *higat* is an ambiguous generic because the gender of each individual caller is unknown. In context of a phone message, we might interpret the FEMININE term of address as an index of the feminist identity of the organization. The use of grammatical gender to index a particular stance or identity is also relevant to the analysis of the impersonal second-person pronoun.

The next two examples contain uses of the second-person singular pronoun as the impersonal. In the first sentence, example (34), Osnat used the MASCULINE form of the second-person pronoun. It is an example of conventional MIH use for gender agreement with impersonal generics.

34.    ani omeret lahem   okei haxalon    haze  
       I   say   to them(M) okay the window this  
       I say to them, okay this window,
- hu zaxar       o nekeiva?   hu o zaxar o nekeiva  
       he masculine or feminine? He or masculine or feminine  
       it is masculine or feminine? It is either masculine or feminine.

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<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note that the use of the MASCULINE plural form in this context would violate the rule for number agreement between a pronoun and its potential referent. Presumably the message is heard by individual callers not groups. This practice of using *atem* rather than *ata* to highlight the generic nature of the pronoun is very similar to American English speakers' practice of using the third-person plural pronoun in generic statements.

ve'im **ata**        **pone**    elav        lo naxon  
and if **you(M,S,2<sup>nd</sup>)** **address(M,S)** him not correct  
and if you address it incorrectly

o **medaber**        alav        banekeiva keshehu zaxar  
or **speak(M,S)** about him in feminine when he is masculine  
or you speak about it in the feminine when it is masculine

o hahefex,        zo        ta'ut        dikdukit        ayuma.  
or the opposite, this is mistake grammatical terrible  
or the opposite, it is a terrible grammatical mistake.

The bolded words are the impersonal second-person pronoun and the coordinated predicates. In this utterance, Osnat was comparing attitudes towards the use of gender agreement with inanimate nouns to attitudes regarding its use for reference to humans. According to Osnat, most CIH speakers judge the incorrect use of gender with inanimate objects as a significant grammatical mistake. In contrast, no one (other than feminists) thinks twice about using MASCULINE terms for generic (or plural definite) reference to women. (See chapter nine for a discussion of Osnat's language ideology and the way it shaped her innovative use of language as a feminist pedagogical tool.) The statement was made in the context of a conversation about the relationship between linguistic gender issues and socialized sexism in Israeli society. Given that I was Osnat's only interlocutor during the interview, her use of the MASCULINE second-person pronoun can be understood as a signal that the statement is generic. As additional test, we can substitute "someone," the third-person impersonal pronoun, in place of *ata* 'you' in Osnat's statement. "If someone speaks about it incorrectly, or speaks about it with the feminine when it is masculine or the opposite, it is a terrible grammatical

mistake.” Note that the substitution of “someone” does not change the meaning of the utterance, nor do we lose any contextual clues regarding the gender of speaker or hearer. The statement is a hypothetical generic that Osnat used to illustrate her larger point. (The salience of gender for MIH speakers.)

Example (35) below contains the use of the FEMININE form of the impersonal second-person pronoun. In this statement, Nitsan expressed her belief that language is an important tool for socialization. The larger context for the utterance was my interview with Nitsan and our conversation about the relationship between language use practices and the status of women in Israeli society. (In her statement, *ze* –‘this’ – refers to the use of the SLASH convention and other forms of feminist language practice.) The bolded words are the impersonal second-person pronoun in subject and object positions.

35. she'im megil tsa'ir **at** mitragelet leze  
 that if from age young **you(F,S)** become accustomed to this  
 if from an early age you become accustomed to it,
- sheyesh kax vekax veze, az ze nitma.  
 that there is such and such and this, then this internalized  
 that this is how it is, then it is internalized.
- veze melave **otax** veze meshane devarim  
 and this accompanies **you(F,S)** and this changes things.  
 and this goes with you and it makes things change.

As with Osnat’s statement, we can substitute the third-person impersonal pronoun “someone” for Nitsan’s use of *at* and *otax* ‘you’ without changing the meaning of the sentence or losing contextual clues. Nitsan was expressing the belief that if one is socialized to use the SLASH form, then one views it as normal and the

normalization of this practice can affect other things. The “you” in her utterance is anyone who might experience this form of socialization. The syntax of Nitsan’s statement parallels that of Osnat, in the preceding example. Both women use a conditional construction to present a hypothetical example of a contingency.

The important difference between Osnat’s utterance and Nitsan’s is that Nitsan used the FEMNINE form of the second-person singular pronoun. MIH speakers might assume that the FEMININE form in the utterance is the personal pronoun because the conventional rules of language use prescribe the use of the MASCULINE form for generic statements. Nonetheless, the fact that we can substitute the third-person impersonal without otherwise changing the syntax of the sentence supports the categorization of this variable as an impersonal use of the FEMININE second-person singular pronoun. Nitsan’s use of the FEMININE form may have been influenced by a number of factors. The topic of her utterance was the use of language to create social change and her interlocutor was a woman. She may also have been more conscious of her language use given the context and topic of our overall conversation and the physical location of the interview, a feminist organization. Regardless of the configuration of factors that led Nitsan to use the FEMININE form, her behavior is a typical example of innovative feminist practice with respect to this variable.

Given the volume and tone of the metalinguistic discourse regarding gender marking on the impersonal second-person pronoun among the women in my study, we might expect a high percentage of overall use for FEMININE variant. Table 6.4 presents the quantitative data on my informants’ use of gender

agreement with the impersonal second-person singular pronoun. The first column records the total number of impersonal tokens; the second column records the total number of FEMININE tokens. A token consists of the use of the second-person impersonal pronoun with any coordinated predicates within a single syntactic clause. As noted, Hebrew is a pro-drop language; therefore, the conjugated form of a predicate in past, future, or imperative tenses incorporates the semantic information of the pronominal element into the conjugated predicate form. (*Ata higata* 'you(M,S) reached(M,S,2<sup>nd</sup>) usually occurs as *higata* where the overt pronoun is dropped because the relevant semantic and syntactic information is marked on the predicate.) The third column presents the percentage of FEMININE tokens out of the total number of occurrences. The final column on the right shows whether or not an informant reported using the FEMININE form of the impersonal. Although I included metalinguistic discourse and mentions of this variable in my overall analysis, the tokens in the Table 6.4 represent only direct uses of the impersonal second-person.

Informant	Total # impersonal pronouns	# of FEMININE tokens	% of FEMININE tokens	Reported use of FEMININE forms
Dafna	0	0		yes
Edit	3	3	100%	yes
Einat	24	24	100%	yes
Eti	0	0		yes
Iris	10	7	70%	yes
Meital	0	0		yes
Merav	1	0	0%	only w/women
Michal	23	23	100%	
Na'ama	1	1	100%	yes
Neta	26	16	61%	yes
Nitsan	10	10	100%	
Nurit	15	14	93%	yes (self-correction)
Ofra	11	7	63%	yes (self-correction)
Ora	14	14	100%	yes
Osnat	15	8	53%	yes
TOTAL	153	127	83%	N/A

Table 6.4: Use of gender with 2<sup>nd</sup> Person Singular Impersonal

As the data in table 6.4 show, the women in my study used the FEMININE form of this variable in 83% of their utterances. Twelve of the fifteen women use this variable in at least one of their utterances, and six of the twelve women who used it did so in all of the relevant contexts. All of the women, except of Michal and Ora, explicitly reported using the FEMININE form. Michal and Ora, though they did not explicitly discuss their practice, used the FEMININE variant in 100% of their utterances. The percentage of overall use for this variable is the second highest for all the variables. (The use of FEMININE plural forms for definite gender-specific plural reference was higher at 93%.) The quantitative data are evidence that the FEMININE singular impersonal second-person pronoun is the preferred variant for this group of Israeli feminists. As I have stated previously, the women who participated in this study are in many ways representative of a broad range of native Hebrew-speaking women within the Israeli feminist community. The data above confirm my impression of language use tendencies within the larger feminist community, impressions based on eighteen months of working within the Israeli feminist community.

There are, however, three women who demonstrated considerable variation between the MASCULINE and the FEMININE variants of the impersonal second-person. Neta, Ofra, and Osnat used the MASCULINE form in over one-third of their utterances. Column four of the table shows that each of these women claimed to use the FEMININE form of the impersonal. All of them also made strong ideological claims regarding the importance of using FEMININE forms as generics. The apparent “gap” between their reported usage,

ideological claims, and actual recorded behavior presents an opportunity to investigate the factors that may condition gender agreement on impersonal second-person forms. An examination of contextualized examples from these three women and my other informants, will also facilitate an analysis of the pragmatic and ideological value of this variable within feminist language practice.

During our interview, Ofra “caught” herself using the MASCULINE form of the impersonal and self-corrected. Her metalinguistic comment presented in example (36), reveals confusion between the personal and impersonal uses of the second-person pronoun and seems to support an explanation that the frequent usage of the FEMININE variant may be the result of hyper-correction. (The bolded words are the MASCULINE and the FEMININE forms of the impersonal pronoun and their coordinated predicates. The underlined text is the metalinguistic commentary preceding the self-correction.)

36. im **ata** **me'unyan** belashon zaxar lexats eks.  
 if **you(M,S)** **interested(M,S)** in language MASCULINE press X  
 if you are interested in the MASCULINE language press X

ve'az **ata** **over** le'od kategoriya,  
 and then **you(M,S)** **move(M,S)** to other category  
 and then you would move to another category

vebakategoriya haba'a **ata** **mekabel** lashon zaxar ve,  
 and in category next **you(M,S)** **get(M,S)** language MASCULINE and  
 and in the next category you would get the MASCULINE language and

hinei at ro'a ani medeberet itax belashon ata,  
here you(F,S) see I speaking to you in the language ata  
here you see, I am speaking to you in the language ata [i.e.  
MASCULINE]



bekategoriya haregila at ke'ilu tekabli ota.  
in category the regular **you(F,S)**, like, **will get(F,S)** her  
in the regular category you would get the message

belashon nekeiva  
in language FEMININE  
in the FEMININE

Ofra began this statement using the MASCULINE variant of the impersonal second-person. She was explaining how someone could navigate the new voicemail system if it had an added feature that could allow the caller to choose whether he/she was addressed with MASCULINE or FEMININE language. The impersonal pronoun refers to an unknown caller. After the third use of the impersonal, Ofra recognized that she had been using the MASCULINE form and made the following metalinguistic comment, *hinei at ro'a ani medeberet itax belashon ata* 'here you(F,S) see I am speaking to you(F,S) in the language of *ata* (i.e. MASCULINE).' The 'you' addressed in this part of the utterance is the researcher. She became aware, it seems, of a contradiction between the gender of the second-person pronoun she was using and the gender of her conversational partner. Following her metalinguistic comment, Ofra completed her utterance with the statement that in the primary category *at ke'ilu tekabli ota belashon nekeiva* 'you(F), like, get it [the message] in FEMININE language.' Her comment that she had been addressing me in the MASCULINE seems to have precipitated her switch to the FEMININE form. However, the second-person forms that precede and follow her self-interruption are all impersonal uses with generic referents. There was no need for them to index the gender of her female

interlocutor. As such, her choice to switch can be seen as an example of hyper-correction; applying the rules governing gender agreement for definite reference in a generic context.

Ofra's utterance illustrates the ambiguity for speakers between the personal and impersonal uses of the second-person pronoun. The most salient use of the second-person pronoun is as a form of direct address, in which case the agreement markers on the second-person forms must index the gender of the addressee. Ofra's "misanalysis" of the linguistic form as a personal address to her female interlocutor points to one possible explanation for my informants' apparent preference of the FEMININE impersonal pronoun. The women in the study were incorrectly applying grammatical rules for personal differential gender reference in an impersonal generic contexts. Researchers critical of feminist linguistic innovations have pointed to this type of hyper-correction as proof that the "problem" with the use of the MASCULINE as generic is the ideological "misanalysis" of the relationship between the pronominal form and linguistic categories. According to some, the asymmetry of markedness in the discursive context is to blame for this "misanalysis." Feminist language reformers are simply not aware, as speakers, of the difference between the generic HE that corresponds to all referents in the personal category and the differential 'he' that corresponds to male members of the personal category exclusively (Silverstein, 1985, pp. 228-30).<sup>81</sup> In the case of Ofra's utterance, the hyper-correction analysis

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<sup>81</sup> These examples actually point to one of the ways explanatory models based on English cannot fully account for the Hebrew case. In English, the grammatical system includes MASCULINE, FEMININE, and NEUTER forms; thus, the use of the MASCULINE as a generic can differentiate between animate and inanimate reference. In the Hebrew system of grammatical gender, however,

might lead us to conclude that she was “correctly” using the MASCULINE generic impersonal pronoun but hyper-corrected to the FEMININE form because of the gender of her interlocutor.

Ofra’s metalinguistic discourse clearly supports the explanation of hyper-correction for her shift between the MASCULINE and FEMININE forms at the end of her utterance. However, if the source of feminist linguistic behavior in this context is a form of hyper-correction, then how do we account for Ofra’s use of the MASCULINE forms in this utterance? As I have noted, contextual clues are often used to signal the difference between the personal and impersonal pronoun. They also seem to play a role in determining whether a speaker is likely to use the MASCULINE or FEMININE form. The meta-context of the utterance was a conversation between two women, two feminists. The immediate context or the “focal event” was our discussion of the choice to use only FEMININE singular forms of address on the IWN new voice mail system. Ofra expressed doubts that this choice reflected a truly gender egalitarian perspective. She felt that the new female-oriented recording would not address male callers and might offend them. She reported that she had suggested an alternative that would allow male callers to choose a recording that addressed them in the MASCULINE. The utterance below includes the all the lines that preceded the “hyper-correction.”

37.    hahatsa<sup>1</sup>a      sheli hayeta lakaxat ke<sup>1</sup>ilu  
          the suggestion mine was      to take like  
          my suggestion was to take like

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there are only two categories MASCULINE and FEMININE; thus, the use of the MASCULINE generic does not differentiate between animate and inanimate reference.

**shemishehu mitkasher** ve'az yesh efsharut livxor.  
that **someone(M) calls(M)** and so there is possibility to choose  
'someone calls and there is the possibility to choose

ke'ilu, hama'ane koli omer, naxon bahatxala hama'ane koli omer  
like the voice mail says, right, at the start the voice mail says  
like the voicemail recording says, right, at the beginning it says

im ata rotse meser belashon anglit lexats exad, nagid  
if you(M) want(M) message in language English press one, let's say  
if you want the message in English press one, let's say,

ve'az **at overet** le'anglit.  
and so you move to English  
and then you switch to English'

ve'az efshar lish'ol she'ela, im hama'ane koli belashon nekeiva  
and so possible to ask question, if the voicemail in language feminine  
so it's possible to ask a question, if the voicemail is in the feminine,

im **ata me'unyan** belashon zaxar lexats eks.  
if **you(M,S) interested(M,S)** in language MASCULINE press X  
if you are interested in the MASCULINE language press X

ve'az **ata over** le'od kategoriya,  
and then **you(M,S) move(M,S)** to other category  
and then you would move to another category

vebakategoriya haba'a **ata mekabel** lashon zaxar ve.,  
and in category next **you(M,S) get(M,S)** language MASCULINE and  
and in the next category you would get the MASCULINE language and

hinei at ro'a ani medeberet itax belashon ata,  
here you(F,S) see I speaking to you in the language ata  
here you see, I am speaking to you in the language ata (i.e.  
MASCULINE)

bakategoriya haregila at ke'ilu tekabli ota.  
in category the regular **you(F,S)**, like, **will get(F,S)** her  
in the regular category you would get the message

belashon nekeiva  
in language FEMININE  
in the FEMININE.

In line two of example (37), Ofra used the MASCULINE singular third-person impersonal pronoun *mishehu* 'someone' to refer to a person calling the IWN. The pronoun *mishehu* is the unmarked inclusive generic in standard MIH, but it can also be used differentially to refer to males exclusively. It is likely that in this utterance, Ofra used *mishehu* because she was thinking about male callers to the IWN. Ofra also used the MASCULINE pronoun, the generic personal second-person *ata* in the made-up message from the type of voicemail she wanted to imitate. Following these two uses of MASCULINE generics, however, Ofra used the FEMININE impersonal in the phrase *ve'az at overet le'anglit* 'and so you(F,S) change to English.' If she was focused on male callers, why would she use the FEMININE impersonal in line five? A close examination of the order of her utterance shows that the FEMININE form in line five refers to a caller who is given the option to choose between English and Hebrew. Ofra had based her own proposed changes to the IWN system on this model. Thus, this use of the FEMININE impersonal must be an ambiguous generic. In contrast, the MASCULINE impersonal pronouns used in the following lines are most likely gender-specific referring, as I noted, to the potential male callers who would prefer MASCULINE forms of address.

If we return to the table reporting the informants' behavior, we see that Ofra used the MASCULINE form four times out of a total of eleven throughout our interview. Three of these occurred in this utterance. The fourth occurred later in the conversation about the voicemail system, in reference to how the FEMININE message could affect male callers. All of Ofra's other uses of the impersonal second-person, which were all ambiguous generics, were FEMININE forms. Ofra's variation between MASCULINE and FEMININE forms was triggered in part by the topic of her utterance and the gendered scope of her intended generic references. This explanation does not negate the analysis of her metalinguistic comment and subsequent switch to the FEMININE form as hyper-correction. Rather the two explanations of her overall behavior demonstrate that numerous contextual factors interact in any given utterance to govern a speaker's use of gender agreement with the impersonal pronoun.

The pragmatic and semantic functions of the impersonal second-person also effect variation between MASCULINE and FEMININE forms of the variable. In my analysis of the data, I identified two primary pragmatic uses for this linguistic element. The first was the use of the impersonal in place of the first-person personal pronoun. As noted previously, speakers often used the impersonal second-person as a means of representing personal experience in a generalized manner. I refer to this use of the impersonal as self-incorporative. Usually, the self-incorporative impersonal is preceded by first-person singular reference. The first-person reference preceding the impersonal second-person tells the hearer that the speaker is relating a personal experience or perspective.

The speaker's shift into the second-person impersonal has the pragmatic effect of inviting the hearer to place her/himself in that of the speaker. Below is an excerpt from Michal's discourse containing an example of the self-incorporative impersonal form.

38.   ani nani'ax,   **asarev**        be'ofen hakavu'a lo lehagid ba'ali.  
       I, let's assume will refuse(1<sup>st</sup>) in manner established no to say *ba'ali*  
       I let's assume I will refuse to ever say *ba'ali* (husband/owner)

ve'**ani agid**   ishih   o ben zugi az **ani** yexola la'asot et hanekuda.  
       and **I will say** my man or my partner then **I** can to make the point  
       so I say my man or my partner then I can make that point

velaxen       ma   shekore       harbe pe'amim ze  
       and therefore what that happens many times is  
       and thus what happens many times is

she'im **at**       omeret ben zugi o ishi  
       that if **you(F)** say my partner or my man  
       that if you say my partner or my man

az anashim xoshvim shebe'emet **einex**       nesu'a  
       then people think that in truth **you(F)** not married  
       then people think you are not really married.

In this utterance, Michal gave an example of how using feminist innovative practices within mainstream Israeli society can result in miscommunication or misunderstanding between feminist speaker and non-feminist hearer. Michal began her utterance using the first-person pronoun *ani*, but in the second half of her utterance she used the second-person impersonal *at* 'you(F).' Her use of *at* 'you' in the second part of her utterance creates some distance between her as the speaker and the "subject" of the second half of her utterance. Michal's experience of having people question her marital status because she did not use the

conventional word *ba'al* 'husband/owner' becomes the experience of every women who uses the alternative forms.

It also accomplishes the pragmatic goal of inviting her interlocutor to see the specific issue from her perspective, an invitation or request for feminist solidarity. This pragmatic goal or stance could not be achieved with the use of either third-person impersonal pronouns or a continued use of the first-person pronoun. Michal's utterance is a typical example of the self-incorporative use of the impersonal second-person. As one might expect, a survey of the self-incorporative uses of the impersonal by my informants revealed that in this pragmatic context, most speakers consistently used the FEMININE form.

There were only two occurrences of speakers using the MASCULINE form in the self-incorporative context. Iris and Nurit each used the MASCULINE self-incorporative impersonal, but in each case the speaker caught herself and self-corrected to the FEMININE form. Nurit switched mid-utterance from the MASCULINE *ata* to the FEMININE *at* and continued without comment to coordinate the predicate with the FEMININE form. Iris, however, stopped her initial statement to comment directly on her usage. The utterance occurred in the context of discussing her personal language practices and the social contexts in which she felt most comfortable using feminist innovations. Iris commented that her belief in the transformative power of linguistic innovation did not prevent her from using more conventional practices in certain social contexts. In example (39) below, I highlighted her use of the first-person and impersonal second-person forms.



39. **ani** muda'at al **atsmi** she'**ani**,  
I am knowledgeable about **myself** that I  
I know about myself that I

eh gam **natati** lax et hadugma  
um also I **gave** to you the example  
um also, I gave you the example of

shel mishehu yakum veyitnadev.  
someone(M,S) get up(M) and volunteer(M)  
someone (male) get up and volunteer

**ani** gam harbe pe'amim medaberet kaxa  
I also many times speak so  
I also a lot of times speak that way.

**beini** levein **atsmi** baxevara hapratit **sheli**.  
**in me** to between **myself** in community the private of **mine**  
with myself in my personal community (life)

ki alef ze paxot shone ki ze ma sheragil beyisra'el.  
because (A) it is less different because it what that is regular in Israel  
because first it stands out less because it is what is normal in Israel

ve'az keshe'**at** medaberet belashon nekeiva  
and then when **you(F)** speak in the language FEMININE  
and then when you use FEMININE language

az *ehx* ketsat, lo over tamid.  
so yuck little no pass always  
so it's a little icky it doesn't always go over

az yesh bemekomot sheze ken yaxol la'avor  
so there are in places that it yes can to pass  
so there are places where it can go over [well]

veyesh mekomot shelo. ve'**ata** **mat'im** et **atsmexa**,  
and there are places that no. and **you(M)** **match(M)** **yourself(M)**  
and there are places where it doesn't and you adjust yourself

ve'ata mat'im et atsmexa, hine at ro'a ze  
and you(M) match(M) yourself(M), here you see this  
and you adjust yourself, here you see this

veze ze hasafa ha'ivrit lamrot she'**ani** medaberet alai  
and this this the language Hebrew, despite that **I** speak about myself  
and this is the Hebrew language, despite the fact that I am speaking  
about myself [I used the masculine].

Iris began her utterance talking about her tendency to use MASCULINE forms despite her ideological convictions. She used the first-person in the first four lines of this utterance. Then in line six, she switches to the FEMININE impersonal second-person: *ve'az keshe'**at** medaberet belashon nekeiva* 'so when you(F) speak in the FEMININE.' Her use of the impersonal in this context was self-incorporative and had the pragmatic effect of including me, her interlocutor in her experience. My gender and the topic of the utterance as well as the fact that it was self-incorporative might have triggered her use of the FEMININE. In line nine, however, she used the MASCULINE impersonal in a self-incorporative statement. Iris immediately caught herself, in line ten, and commented directly on her "mistake."

Several factors probably contributed to Iris's awareness of her language use in this utterance. The topic of conversation itself was her variation between the MASCULINE in conventional language practices and the FEMININE in innovative language practices. It is also likely that the pragmatic aspect of this particular MASCULINE impersonal – as a self-incorporative use – raised her awareness of the contradiction between her own gender and the agreement marking on the impersonal second-person forms.

It was precisely women's use of MASCULINE impersonal forms in the self-incorporative manner that generated many of my informants' metalinguistic comments about the impersonal second-person variable. As noted, the self-incorporative impersonal is also a pragmatic tool for inviting or requesting solidarity from an interlocutor. Iris's use of the MASCULINE impersonal, particularly in a feminist context, would likely have the opposite effect. It could create a more generic feel to the impersonal form and mitigate the sense of solidarity with a female interlocutor. The pragmatic effect of the MASCULINE impersonal, to create distance, may also have triggered Iris's self-correction. Not only did the impersonal form conflict with her own gender but it also conflicted with the gender of her interlocutor. Here again, it would be possible to propose the hyper-correction analysis, however, I believe that the analysis I present above accounts for both the behavioral data as well as the ideological and cognitive salience of this variable in each of the uses of the self-incorporative.

The second major use of the impersonal second-person occurs in the context of generic reference. The impersonal is often used within the context of hypothetical, conditional, or explanatory statements. In Hebrew, the generic second-person impersonal is often preceded by one of the following phrases:

ha'im, im – 'if'	nagid, nomar – 'let's say'
nani'ax she – 'let's assume'	ke'ilu – 'as though or like'
lemashal, ledugma – 'for example'	

Two of the examples presented at the beginning of section 6.3 were hypothetical statements containing the impersonal second-person. The conditional impersonal

can be either ambiguous or gender-specific. Recall my analysis of Ofra's statement in which she presented a hypothetical scenario and used MASCULINE impersonal forms to refer to an imagined caller. The use of the MASCULINE form in that context was a gender-specific generic. Below is an example of the conditional impersonal used as a female specific-generic:

40. im ba **elayix** shravrav habayita vebiglal  
 if come to **you(F)** plumber the home and because  
 if the plumber comes to your house because

she'**at** isha, hu mityaxes **elayix** axer  
 that **you** woman he treats to **you(F)** different  
 you are a woman he treats you differently.

me'asher im **at** gever  
 than if **you** man  
 than if you were a man.

The topic of Einat's utterance, in example (40), was a discussion of how sexism manifests itself in everyday life in Israeli society. She clearly limits the scope of potential referents for this conditional impersonal at the end of the first line: *vebiglal she'at isha* 'and because you are a women.' The contrastive nature of this statement clarifies her intent. Most of my informants did not use the female-specific conditional impersonal forms in such an obviously gender-exclusive contrastive manner. Usually the context or content of the utterance provided clues to the gender-specific nature of the generic.

Einat's use of the impersonal second-person rather than a third-person generic also invited her female interlocutor to identify with the experience.<sup>82</sup> As

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<sup>82</sup> The final phrase in Einat's utterance *me'asher im at gever* 'than if you were a man' is an interesting semantic construct to examine. On the referential level *at* cannot be a man since *at* is

we might expect, all of the gender-specific conditional impersonal forms that my informants used agreed with the gender of the hypothetical referent group. Within the larger feminist community, I also found this to be the case. However, most of my informants reported observing other women use the MASCULINE impersonal forms even when talking specifically about female experiences such as pregnancy and sexual assault. Nurit reported that she interrupted a training session for rape crisis counselors to correct their use of the impersonal second-person. Nurit's motivation for correcting the other women's language was both ideological and pragmatic. On the ideological level, Nurit felt that the use of the MASCULINE forms obscured the reality that rape is primarily a crime with female victims. On the pragmatic level, she believed that the use of FEMININE forms would facilitate a sense of female solidarity that could be harnessed to address the issue of violence against women.

In the context of ambiguous generic reference, speakers used both the FEMININE and MASCULINE forms for the conditional impersonal. Recall Osnat's use of the impersonal earlier in this section, repeated below as (41):

41. im **ata**            **pone** elav      lo naxon  
       if **you(M,S,2<sup>nd</sup>)** **speak(M,S)** about him not correct  
       if you speak about it incorrectly
- o **medaber**        alav      banekeiva keshehu zaxar  
       or **speak(M,S)** about him in feminine when he is masculine  
       or you speak about it in the feminine when it is masculine

---

FEMININE, but MIH does not provide a gender-neutral way for expressing this contrastive statement.

o hahefex, zo ta'ut dikdukit ayuma.  
or the opposite, this is mistake grammatical terrible  
or the opposite, it is a terrible grammatical mistake.

Osnat was making a generic statement regarding the use of Hebrew. Any Hebrew speaker was a potential referent for this generic impersonal. It is not surprising to find that all of Osnat's MASCULINE tokens occurred in ambiguous generic context. It is also not surprising that a close examination of all the impersonal second-person forms revealed that the majority of MASCULINE tokens, for all the speakers, occurred in ambiguous generic contexts.

At an earlier point in the same utterance, Osnat used the FEMININE form of the second-person impersonal to refer to a generic Hebrew speaker.

42. im **at** pona lemishehi,  
if **you(F)** address someone(F)  
if you address someone

shehi nekeiva belashon zaxar  
that she feminine in language MASCULINE  
that is female in the MASCULINE language

In this part of her utterance, Osnat not only used the FEMININE form of the conditional impersonal but also the FEMININE form of the third-person impersonal *mishehi* 'someone.' Osnat's variation between the two impersonal second-person forms in examples (41) and (42) does not seem to be triggered by any specific contextual factor. The MASCULINE and FEMININE ambiguous generic impersonal forms seem to be in free variation. This is not surprising given that Osnat strongly advocated the use of innovative language to promote gender equality. Her alternation between MASCULINE and FEMININE forms

for generic impersonal reference is consistent with her ideological stance that innovative use of grammatical gender is the best tool for deconstructing the male-bias embedded in Israeli socio-cultural practices.

Despite Osnat's strong claims, it is still possible for some to evaluate her use of FEMININE forms as hyper-correction and the use of MASCULINE forms as adherence to rules for standard MIH. The absence of data on my informants' use of the second-person impersonal with a male interlocutor prohibits me from determining the role of hyper-correction in gender agreement. This is particularly the case for ambiguous generic reference, in which other contextual and pragmatic factors are weaker or non-existent. Nonetheless, the pragmatic value of the second-person impersonal pronoun – to convey solidarity or distance between a speaker and an interlocutor, or a speaker and the perspective or experience – is valuable a linguistic resource. It is the type of resource that would be very useful for achieving the ideological and pragmatic goals of Israeli feminist language innovators. To conclude my analysis of the second-person impersonal variable, I present an example of how the second-person impersonal pronoun can be used to index alternate concepts of social gender relationships.

In our discussion about her relationship to feminism, Neta alternated between using the MASCULINE and FEMININE forms of the second-person pronoun as the impersonal form. An examination of her behavior reveals the use of language as a means of differentiating between a male-dominated hierarchical concept of the gendered social order and a feminist egalitarian orientation to gender marker of social distinction. In the following utterance, each use of the

impersonal pronoun is in bold type. (The English gloss follows the Hebrew transcription.):

bishvili ma ze feminizim eh ze lo shivyon bein haminim. ani xoshevet sheze tsurat xayim berama shel eh. ze ken ze, im ani kax lezugiyut. az zu zugiyut im shituf. ze zugiyut shel, bli bli devarim shehem brurim me'aleihem. zot omeret zugiyut bli xukim mugdarim bli **ata ose** kaxa ani osa kaxa. em bli lehagid oh **ata ata zaxar ata gever** az haxeshbonot **ata mesader**, et hatashlumim **ata mesader**. et habank, **ata mit'asek** ito. ze bayom yom. ze lehagid, ze im ani nimtset be'eize shehu makom ve'ani nimtset be'eize shehu, nomar masa umatan al kol davar. az hagisha hi shel ani avater ketsat **ve'at tevatri** ketsat. ze lo she'ani rotsa et hakol **ve'at taftsidi**, o **at tikxi** et hakol ve'ani afsid. ze ketsat ani veketsat **at**.

For me what is feminism? eh It is not [just] equality between the sexes. I think that it is a type of life on the level of eh. It is yes, it is, if I take a couplehood [for example] so this is couplehood with partnership, without things that are clear from above. That is to say, without the roles being set. Without **you(M)** do this and I do that, without for instance **you(M)** are male **you(M)** are the man so the bills **you(M)** take care of, the payments **you(M)** take care of, the bank, **you(M)** interact with it. It is [rather] that day by day it is to say, it is that if I am some place I am in negotiation on everything, It is that I give up a little and **you(F)** give up a little. It is not that I want everything and **you(F)** lose out or **you(F)** take everything and I lose out. It is a little me and a little **you(F)**.

The first use of *ata* 'you(M)' in the phrase *ata ose kaxa ani osa kaxa* could be an ambiguous generic, but in the context of her description about the division of labor along gender lines, it is likely to be male-specific. The use of *ata* you(M) in the next part of her utterance refers appears to index the patriarchal division labor. By saying "you(M) are male, you(M) are the man" she limited the most likely interpretation of the impersonal generic to gender-specific



MASCULINE reference. Contrast that usage with her use of *at* “you(F)” in the second part of the utterance. This use of the second-person pronoun was clearly an impersonal use. She was not addressing her female interlocutor directly but using the FEMININE form as an impersonal generic, and the most likely interpretation of this use, in the context of her utterance, is ambiguous. The referential scope includes anyone, male or female, with whom she might interact and have to negotiate matters. Her use of the FEMININE form is particularly notable because she began her utterance by referencing the division of labor in the context of a domestic partnership. In Israeli culture, the normative representation of domestic partnership is a heterosexual marriage.

Neta repeated this pattern throughout our conversation. At a later point in our conversation, she again used the MASCULINE impersonal to reference a masculine or patriarchal perspective. (The bolded text are the MASCULINE impersonal forms.)

ani lo rotsa shet**agdir** oti. ani lo rotsa shet**asim** oti benish  
she'**ata** **xoshev** haxi nexona. ma ani isha, az ani adina ve'ani  
raka.

‘I don’t want for **you(M)** to **define(M,S)** me. I don’t want **you(M)**  
to **put** me in the niche that **you(M)** **think(M,S)** is the most correct.  
What I am a woman, so I am fragile and I am soft.’

Out of context, these forms seem to be directly addressed to a male interlocutor, but they are a form of impersonal. They were addressed generically, it seems, to those who would try to prescribe Neta’s identity as a woman. All ten of the MASCULINE tokens of the impersonal in Neta’s speech were either overtly

gender-specific or conceptually limited to those who would promote a male-centric social order. In contrast, her FEMININE tokens included ambiguous and gender-specific generic and self-incorporative impersonal forms.

On the surface we can analyze Neta's variation as an example of alternation between the sex-specific use of MASCULINE forms and the feminist use of FEMININE forms as ambiguous generics. I believe there is also a deeper level of meaning encoded in the regular variability between her use of MASCULINE and FEMININE second-person impersonal forms. Neta emphatically stated a belief in using language to subvert the sexism embedded in Israeli social practices. The alternation that occurred between the MASCULINE and the FEMININE forms can be interpreted as a signal of a shift in the conceptual or contextual frame being referenced. When she spoke about the dominant patriarchal social reality and its division of household chores along traditional gender-lines, she used the MASCULINE form. When she moved on to describe the way she thought things should be divided between a couple, or in relationships generally, she immediately switched to using the FEMININE form for the impersonal. The switch to the FEMININE form, which for this informant functioned as the unmarked, indexed a feminist ideology and feminist practices. The spontaneity and rate of Neta's speech make it unlikely that she was consciously alternating her production of forms; the switching between MASCULINE and FEMININE forms seems to occur at a deeper level of cognition.

It is also possible to understand her alternating use of gender agreement on the second-person impersonal forms as inter-textual reference to the language practices associated with each contextual frame. She used the MASCULINE forms as the impersonal second-person generic only in the context of statements about patriarchal norms, a linguistic practice that conforms with conventional uses of language. She used the FEMININE as the impersonal second-person in the context of ideological statements about the feminist conceptualization of gender and women's right to self-determination. The use of the forms can thus be understood, within a feminist context, to index not only to the different ideological concepts of gender but also to the practices of language use associated with each contextual frame or set of communal norms. Her innovative use of gender agreement on the impersonal second-person disrupts, both literally and metaphorically, normative Israeli social order.

## **NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND THE USE OF FEMINIST HEBREW**

### **Chapter VII: The social meaning of language variation among Israeli feminists**

#### **7.1: INDEXICALITY, VARIATION AND THE CONTEXTS OF USE**

The analysis of the morpho-semantic variables in the preceding chapters demonstrated the relationship between a set of innovative language use practices and Israeli feminist communal practice. Taken together, the description of these practices constitutes a partial mapping of the parameters of a variety of CIH that I refer to as Israeli feminist Hebrew.<sup>83</sup> The women in my study, representatives of the feminist community, used or claimed to use grammatical gender strategically in a variety of sociolinguistic contexts. In the analysis of each variable, I presented some explanations for the reasons that particular morpho-semantic context was incorporated into feminist practices. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed a considerable level of inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation with regard to the use of the conventional and feminist morpho-semantic variants. This variation as well as an apparent gap between their behavior and their ideological claims could be interpreted as a measure of each woman's identification with the feminist community. Alternatively, it could be used to examine the value of each linguistic element of feminist Hebrew in the performance of a feminist social identity. In this chapter, I relate my findings on

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<sup>83</sup> As noted, feminist Hebrew also includes a number of lexical variables.

feminist linguistic behavior to the issue of using language to index social identities and ideologies.

## **7.2 MEASURING THE RELATIVE INDEXICAL VALUE OF THE VARIABLES**

Some of the variables, such as the use of FEMININE plurals for definite feminine reference, represent a hyper-standardized use of language. These hyper-standard variables have socially constitutive value within the feminist community, but in the meta-communal context of Israeli Hebrew speakers, they are not necessarily viewed as innovative practices. Other variables, such as the use of FEMININE plural forms for gender-inclusive reference, are recognized by most speakers of MIH as markers of feminist practice because they clearly violate accepted norms for language use. However, the value of these easily recognizable variables may be more ideological than practical because they generally occur in socio-cultural contexts that are already highly marked. What, if any, relationship exists between the productiveness of a variable and its value as a marker of feminist practice? Does the relative indexical value of a practice change as a speaker moves from one community of practice, in this case, the feminist community, to another community of practice, such as mainstream Hebrew-speaking Israeli society? If yes, does the social meaning remain constant, or does it change? All of these questions relate to the larger question of how innovative linguistic practices are used strategically to construct and deconstruct social relationships.

Although all the morpho-semantic variables are related through the use of grammatical gender, the syntactic and semantic environment for each is different.

Therefore, it should not be surprising to find that the value of each variable as an indexical marker is not equal. Nor is it surprising to find that the meaning of some variables changes depending on the sociolinguistic context of use. How do we assess the relative value or weight of the morpho-semantic variables that constitute feminist Israeli Hebrew? If, as I claim, these variables index feminist language practice and by extension a feminist identity, then we must assume that the source of the indexicality is not arbitrary. Based on observations of language use in a variety of mainstream, feminist, and integrated sociolinguistic contexts, I developed a set of criteria by which to weight the relative value of each variable as an indexical marker of feminist speech.<sup>84</sup>

The following are the criteria used to evaluate the relative indexical value of each feminist practice:<sup>85</sup>

(1) Flouting or breaking with conventional practices of use is the first criterion. As discussed in chapter two, not all conventional or mainstream practices of language use adhere to prescriptive rules for the use of standard MIH. For example, the use of MASCULINE plural forms for reference to females does not follow standard rules for gender agreement, but it is an accepted practice in informal sociolinguistic contexts. If a feminist linguistic innovation flouts conventional practice, it may or may not also violate the prescribe rules of MIH grammar.

(2) Violating a prescriptive grammatical rule is the second criterion for evaluating indexical value. As demonstrated with the analysis of gender agreement and generic reference, the same syntactic and semantic context

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<sup>84</sup> I use the label “integrated sociolinguistic context” to refer to social situations in which women who identify as feminist interact with Israelis who do not identify with the feminist community. The majority of these interactions take place in local communities of practice that ascribe to the norms of the larger community of Israeli Jewish Hebrew-speakers.

<sup>85</sup> The evaluation of these practices was based on behavioral and metalinguistic data collected between the years of 1996 and 1998. The metalinguistic data include discourse about language and gender issues by my informants as well as discourse exchanges in the broader feminist and the general Hebrew-speaking population.

can support variables that violate clearly established grammatical rules and variables that only appear to challenge or question the strength of prescribed practices of use. I used prescriptive rules as the basis for this criterion because these are the grammatical rules to which speakers have conscious access and to which they refer when speaking about issues of language use.

(3) Whether or not a variable was ideologized in the general Israeli Hebrew-speaking population was the third criterion. I use the term “ideologized” to refer to the phenomena of a particular linguistic practice generating metalinguistic discourse about its relationship to feminist values or issues of gender-equality. The rumor about the use of grammatical gender for reference to mixed-sex groups is a clear example of an ideologized practice.<sup>86</sup>

(4) Whether or not a variable is ideologized in the feminist community is the fourth criterion. It takes into account the fact that the feminist community is a distinct community of practice within the larger Israeli society and that several variables were only ideologized within the feminist community. These variables were overtly discussed as innovative practices that, the feminists contended, support a more gender egalitarian vision of Israeli society.

(5) Whether or not a variable is used as a tool of feminist socialization is the fifth criterion. In addition to being ideologized, a few variables were clearly incorporated as tools of socialization within the feminist community. A variable was considered an aspect of feminist socialization, if women within the feminist movement reported learning or teaching others women to use the feminist variant(s) of a variable.<sup>87</sup>

I have assumed that each criterion has equal weight in determining the indexical value of a feminist practice. The indexical value of each variable is determined individually and then compared, by means of a “score” to the other

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<sup>86</sup> Discussion in media outlets or the overt incorporation of a practice in institutional policies was the basis for determining whether or not a variable was ideologized in the general Hebrew-speaking population.

<sup>87</sup> This criterion is specifically concerned with socialization within the feminist community; however, several of my informants reported correcting the language use of other women regardless of the social context.

variables. Table 7.1 presents the evaluation of all the morpho-semantic variables. The SLASH variants were evaluated separately from the FEMININE variants in the relevant contexts because they have different grammatical, pragmatic and ideological characteristics. For each criterion listed horizontally, a variable has a score of +1, +.5 or 0. A score of 1 indicates that the relevant feminist practice clearly meets that criterion. A score of .5 indicates that the variable partially meets the criterion. For example, the use of second-person FEMININE impersonal does not violate an overt prescriptive rule, but it does violate the prescribed principle of using MASCULINE forms as ambiguous generics. If a variable did not satisfy a particular criterion, it received a score of zero. The final column in table 7.1 presents the relative indexical “score” for each variable and a rough ranking of their values as markers of feminist practice.



Variable	Flouts conventional practices of use	Violates prescriptive grammar rules	Ideologized in general population	Ideologized in feminist community	Tool of feminist socialization	Score
FEMININE definite sex-specific plural	1	0	0	1	1	<b>3</b>
Historical FEMININE	1	0	0	.5	0	<b>1.5</b>
FEMININE inclusive definite plural	1	1	1	1	0	<b>4</b>
SLASH inclusive definite plural	1	0	1	1	0	<b>3</b>
FEMININE generic	1	1	1	1	0	<b>4</b>
SLASH generic	1	0	1	1	0	<b>3</b>
FEMININE 2 <sup>nd</sup> person impersonal	1	.5	0	1	1	<b>3.5</b>

Table 7.1 Relative indexical value of variables as markers of feminist Hebrew

There are several ways to assess the meaning of the data presented in this table. Considering the table vertically, we can examine which variables share the same sociolinguistic characteristics. As we might expect, all the variables flout conventional practices of language use. Linguistic practices that mark social distinctions must be recognizable as a set of practices that diverge from the norm in some way. Only three of the seven variables violate prescriptive rules for the use of gender agreement in MIH. All three of the variables that violate prescribed rules involve using the FEMININE form for reference to males as part of either a mixed gender group or potential referents of an ambiguous generic. (The use of the FEMININE second-person impersonal satisfies this criterion when it is used as an ambiguous generic.) The use of FEMININE forms for reference to males has the pragmatic affect of forcing males to relinquish their social and sociolinguistic privilege as the unmarked members of the collective. Thus, these variables have a high ideological value within the feminist community. Although the SLASH forms do not violate prescriptive rules, they also pragmatically challenge the validity of using the MASCULINE as the inclusive category. The use of FEMININE forms force males to identify with the culturally and linguistically marked FEMININE category, while the use of the SLASH forms simply expands the paradigm to explicitly include both genders in the linguistic construct.

Let us now compare those variables that are ideologized in both mainstream Hebrew-speaking communities of practice society and the feminist community of practice with those only ideologized in the feminist community of

practice. In this comparison, we find that only variables that overtly challenge the status of the MASCULINE as the inclusive category are ideologized in the macro-community of practice, that of Israeli Hebrew speakers. These include using the FEMININE or the SLASH form for ambiguous generic reference and the use of the FEMININE form for inclusive definite reference to a group of males and females. It should not be surprising to find that those variables ideologized in mainstream Israeli community are related to subverting or violating a grammatical rule associated with the use of MASCULINE forms as the generic. As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, most of the morpho-semantic elements of feminist linguistic practice are related to an ideological rejection of this grammatically justified practice. The violation or subversion of the grammatical rule and resultant practices are likely to be very salient for all speakers of MIH. On the ideological level of meaning, the use of any alternative form for generic or inclusive reference to males and females disrupts the naturalized association between the MASCULINE unmarked grammatical category and the socio-cultural category male. As such, we might expect all of these variables to have equal value as indexical markers of feminist practice. But according to the evaluation presented in table 7.1, the FEMININE inclusive forms (both definite and generic) have higher scores.

It also seems logical to assume that the variables that are ideologized in mainstream Israeli society would have higher scores than those only ideologized in the feminist community. For a set of practices to index a specific social identity or create social distinctions, we would expect the indexical value of those

practices that are ideologized in the widest social grouping to carry the most weight. However, the indexical scores presented in the above table do not support this expectation. For example, the use of the FEMININE second-person impersonal has a higher score than either of the SLASH variables, but the second-person FEMININE impersonal is ideologized only in the feminist community. As discussed in chapter six, section 6.3, the pragmatic meaning of this variable is dependent on the gender of the speaker and the hearer. The variable only violates prescribed grammatical rules if it is used in a generic reference that is clearly intended to include both males and females. As I have shown, the violation of prescribed grammatical rules is a characteristic likely to make a variable salient to mainstream CIH speakers. The ideological value of this variable in the feminist community is the associated pragmatic meaning of inviting or extending solidarity between a speaker and her interlocutor. This indexical meaning, extending feminist solidarity, is limited to contexts in which the social meaning of an inclusive FEMININE category is evaluated as positive. The use of the FEMININE as inclusive is evaluated positively within the feminist community of practice, not the mainstream community. As such, this variable has more limited applications in mainstream Hebrew-speaking society than the use of SLASH forms for generic or definite gender-inclusive reference.

If we compare the indexicality scores of the SLASH variables to the score of the FEMININE plural forms for definite FEMININE reference, we find that they all have the same indexical value. The use of FEMININE plural forms for definite feminine reference may be falling out of informal styles of CIH, but it

does not violate prescribed grammatical rules. The ideological and indexical value of this variable is covert rather than overt. As noted in section two of chapter five, the norms of the macro-community of Israeli society are such that most speakers of CIH are more likely to view this practice as hyper-standard language use than a marker of feminist practice. Again, it is only within the feminist community of practice that the consistent use of FEMININE plural forms is valued as an index of feminist solidarity and recognition of women's communal efforts.<sup>88</sup> Given these sociolinguistic facts, it is surprising to find that the use of FEMININE plural forms for definite gender-specific reference appears to have the same indexical score as the use of SLASH variables.

How can variables that do not appear to be salient enough to generate metalinguistic discourse in the macro-community of practice serve as useful indexical markers of social distinction? The answer to this question lies in understanding the dual nature of indexicality in the context of Israeli feminist innovative linguistic practices. As discussed in chapter two, the women in this study are members of both the macro-community of practice that is Hebrew-speaking Israeli society and the feminist community of practice. The indexical value of a variable is not necessarily absolute when speakers shuttle between two communities of practice with ideological perspectives that are sometimes incongruous. To create a meaningful assessment of the relative indexical value of

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<sup>88</sup> It is likely that the use of FEMININE plural forms in other all-female contexts such as a girl's school or a religious community of women has the same constitutive effect that it does in the feminist community of practice, but the indexical meaning is unlikely to be the same. It is the ideological value that feminists place on recognizing women's work and women's solidarity that gives the use of FEMININE plurals their social meaning.

the variables that constitute feminist Hebrew, it is necessary to evaluate them separately within each sociolinguistic context of use. At the macro-level of mainstream Israeli society, only the first three criteria are meaningful. Within the feminist community of practice, the ideologization of a variable in mainstream Israeli society is likely to be secondary to the other four criteria. In the tables on the following pages, I present the indexical value scores of each variable according to the specific sociolinguistic context.

Variable	Flouts conventional practices of use	Violates prescriptive grammar rules	Ideologized in general population	Indexical value score
FEMININE definite sex-specific plural	1	0	0	1
Historical FEMININE	1	0	0	1
FEMININE inclusive definite plural	1	1	1	3
SLASH inclusive definite plural	1	0	1	2
FEMININE generic	1	1	1	3
SLASH generic	1	0	1	2
FEMININE 2 <sup>nd</sup> person impersonal	1	.5	0	1.5

Table 7.2 Relative indexical value of feminist variables in mainstream Jewish Israeli society

Variable	Flouts conventional practices of use	Violates prescriptive grammar rules	Ideologized in feminist community	Tool of feminist socialization	Indexical value score
FEMININE definite sex-specific plural	1	0	1	1	<b>3</b>
Historical FEMININE	1	0	.5	0	<b>1.5</b>
FEMININE inclusive definite plural	1	1	1	0	<b>3</b>
SLASH inclusive definite plural	1	0	1	0	<b>2</b>
FEMININE generic	1	1	1	0	<b>3</b>
SLASH generic	1	0	1	0	<b>2</b>
FEMININE 2 <sup>nd</sup> person impersonal	1	.5	1	1	<b>3.5</b>

Table 7.3 Relative indexical value of feminist variables within the Israeli feminist community



Separating the criteria for evaluating indexicality according to the sociolinguistic context of use results in a clear distinction between those variables that are valuable markers of feminist practice in the mainstream context from those more valuable in the feminist context. As expected, in the mainstream community of practice, the use of FEMININE forms for generic or definite reference to males and females has the highest value. The SLASH forms, which also symbolically challenge the conventional practices that naturalize a one-to-one relationship between the unmarked status of the MASCULINE grammatical category and the unmarked status of the culturally masculine category, have the next highest indexical value in this communal context. The three variables that are more related to defining culturally and linguistically female-exclusive space are the least valuable in the mainstream sociolinguistic context. This is not surprising given that the use of the FEMININE impersonal second-person is the only one of the three to violate an overt grammatical rule and only when it is used as an ambiguous generic. The use of FEMININE forms for feminine reference may flout certain conventional practices of use, but they do not challenge any associations between grammatical and cultural categories of gender.

At the macro-level of mainstream Israeli society, the most meaningful feminist practices are those that symbolically challenge or raise awareness of the male privilege embedded within conventional linguistic practices. From a socio-cultural perspective, this is the most salient ideological stance of the feminist movement. Thus, the value of an innovative practice at the macro-sociolinguistic

level of a multi-layered society is dependent on its ability to symbolically index an iconic aspect of the community of practice with which it is associated.

In contrast, when we examine indexicality in the feminist sociolinguistic context, as shown in table 7.3, it is not surprising to find that the variable that shares characteristics with definite reference to females and the use of FEMININE forms for generic reference has the highest indexical value. The FEMININE second-person impersonal was also the variable that generated the most metalinguistic discourse and was one of only two variables that my informants indicated was incorporated into feminist practices of socialization. The data in table 7.3 indicate that the use of FEMININE forms in all the morpho-semantic contexts has more indexical value in the feminist context than the use of SLASH forms.

The fact that the use of FEMININE forms is more socially valuable in the feminist context is linked to the constitutive value of these variables in culturally defining feminist community. (The one exception to this principle is the historical FEMININE historical form. As discussed in chapter six, section 6.3, this variable is associated for most CIH speakers with either literary or old-fashioned Hebrew. The previous indexical meaning apparently weakens its value as a marker of feminist Hebrew in both sociolinguistic contexts.) The use of FEMININE forms is culturally linked to defining female socio-cultural space as well as the feminine identity of speakers, interlocutors or potential referents (generic or definite). As noted, two of these variables are incorporated into practices of feminist socialization. The qualitative analysis of several examples

from my informants' speech illustrated that these women used FEMININE forms in generic contexts to highlight the feminist identity of a speaker, an institution, or a particular ideological stance. The indexical meaning of this variable in the mainstream context makes helps make sense of the negative response of an informant to the use of *at* 'you (f, s)' on the voicemail recording of the Women's Lobby feminist organization. Her objection to the practice can be seen as concern that the use of the FEMININE form would define the organization as female-only space, functionally excluding potential male participants or supporters. She claimed that her solution of using a system that followed the principles underlying the use of SLASH forms would convey the concept of gender-equality without the potential implication that the organization was female-only space. (In the next section of this chapter, I present an analysis of this "incident" from the perspective of four employees of the organization that adopted this practice.)

Challenging male privilege and promoting gender equality are inherent parts of the ideological and practical goals of the feminist community. As such, the SLASH variables, which primarily index this stance, may not be as valuable within the feminist community as those that index an all-female identity or accomplish both pragmatic goals at once are. Within the sociolinguistic context of the feminist movement, using language to define a space or an interaction as female can raise participants' awareness of female agency. Awareness of female agency is vital to creating feminist community and empowering women to act for social change. The variables that pragmatically support this crucial aspect of

Israeli feminist culture are the most valuable within the local feminist community of practice.

One of the issues central to efforts at language reform is the issue of salience. Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that one of the motivating factors underlying Israeli feminist linguistic innovation is the commitment of the women in the community to create change in the status quo of gender social relations. Linguistic innovations that are not salient are unlikely to be effective tools of change. The evaluation of the relative indexical value of each variable above showed that both indexical value and ideological salience of linguistic practices vary according to the sociolinguistic context of use. Both the unmarked status of the MASCULINE grammatical category and the use of FEMININE forms for gender-exclusive reference are discursively and ideologically unremarkable in mainstream Israeli society, because they conform to the norms of that community of practice. As such, only variables that challenge these practices and the associated cultural gender ideologies are salient in that sociolinguistic context. In the feminist context, all the variables are salient. However, those that contribute to the creation of feminist community and the empowerment of women as agents of change appear to be more valuable for indexing a speaker's membership in the community.

At the beginning of chapter four, I asserted that the morpho-semantic variables that constitute feminist Hebrew are practices that stem from an underlying ideological rejection of the MASCULINE form as the unmarked. The contextualized analysis of my informants' use of the individual variables

demonstrated that the grammatical gender categories are evaluated differently in the feminist and mainstream contexts. They have different social meanings that are determined by the norms of each community of practice. In the mainstream context, the use of MASCULINE forms as inclusive or unmarked creates symbolic privilege for males, because of the iconic relationship between the grammatical and social categories of “masculine.” The iconic relationship creates a metaphorical collective masculine identity, which is evaluated positively within mainstream Israeli communities of practice. By metaphorical extension, the use of MASCULINE forms for female referents can be interpreted as a means of inviting or declaring the inclusion of females within the positively evaluated masculine collective. The social meaning of FEMININE forms in the mainstream context is otherness. The forms are used to identify and separate females, or feminine marked cultural contexts, from the collective masculine.

From a feminist perspective, however, the FEMININE grammatical category cannot not mean “other” or separate. It is the linguistic marker of feminine identity, which as I stated, is central to the feminist goal of creating and supporting female agency. The apparent preferred use of FEMININE plural forms for definite reference to females can be interpreted as symbolic positive evaluation of a collective feminine identity. The use of FEMININE forms for inclusive or generic reference grants females the symbolic privilege that they are denied by conventional practices of language use. In the feminist context, the MASCULINE, and by extension the masculine is either the other or an equal, but not the definition of the norm. To understand the significance of feminist

language use as a tool of feminist social change work, we must look not only at the linguistic elements that constitute the “feminist” variety of a language. We must also evaluate the variability of the indexical meanings they have in the different communities of practice in which women participate.

### **7.3 LINGUISTIC BEHAVIOR AND FEMINIST IDEOLOGY**

As the analysis of data presented in the above section and chapters five and six demonstrated, not all the morpho-semantic variables of feminist Hebrew carry the same meaning across all contexts of use. Nor do the speakers in this study use them with equal frequency. What, if any, relationship is there between the women’s linguistic behavior in the interview context and their reported ideological claims about language and gender? Does observable intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation have more to do with the meaning of a given practice in a particular context or with an individual speaker’s relationship to the feminist community? Is there an explanatory relationship between indexical values, linguistic behaviors, actual usage, and ideological stances associated with each variable or with the overall linguistic behavior of individual members of a community of practice?

I have addressed some these issues through the contextualized analysis of my informants’ uses of specific variables. For example, I showed how my informants’ use of MASCULINE and FEMININE forms for ambiguous generic reference to doctors and teachers, respectively, indexed the gendered norms (and social reality) of Israeli society. Iris’s sense of obligation to model “correct” Hebrew was cited as her motivation for rejecting the use of FEMININE plural

forms for inclusive reference to males and females. The reconceptualization of the relationship between gender categories, both linguistic and social, and the concept of markedness was posited as an explanation of Neta's attested variation regarding gender agreement on generic second-person impersonal forms and her use of FEMININE forms for ambiguous generic reference. The limits of length and time inherent in a doctoral thesis prohibit an exhaustive investigation of these issues for all fifteen informants. However in an effort to address the issues raised by the above questions, I devote this concluding section to the examination of four of my informants' behavioral data and their ideological claims regarding the a specific sociolinguistic event. The sociolinguistic "event" was the decision by the staff of a feminist organization to use *at* 'you (F, S)' as the sole term of address on its voicemail system's recording. I begin with a comparison of the qualitative data on each woman's use of the morpho-semantic variables of feminist Hebrew. On the following pages are tables showing the behavioral data for Einat, Ofra, Iris, and Ora.

Variable	total # of occurrences	FEMININE tokens	Slash tokens	percentage of FEMININE	percentage of SLASH	Reported use of FEMININE *	Reported use of slash form
definite plural female	21	20	N/A	95%	N/A	yes	N/A
inclusive definite plural	0	0	0	0%	0%		yes
future plural agreement w/feminine referents	0	0	N/A	0%	N/A		
ambiguous generic plural	8	0	0	0%	0%	no	yes
ambiguous generic singular	5	0	0	0%	0%		yes
2 <sup>nd</sup> p. singular impersonal	11	7	0	63%	N/A	yes	

Table 7.4 Ofra's usage of morpho-semantic variables



Variable	total # of tokens	FEMININE tokens	Slash tokens	percentage of FEMININE	percentage of SLASH	Reported use of FEMININE form	Reported use of slash form
female-specific definite plural	27	20	N/A	74%	N/A	yes	N/A
definite inclusive plural	3	0	0	0%	0		
Future plural agreement w/feminine referents	1	0	N/A	0%	N/A		
ambiguous generic plural	22	0	3	0%	14%		yes
ambiguous generic singular	12	1	0	8%	0%		yes
2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular impersonal	24 uses	24 uses	N/A	100%	N/A	yes (claimed to “make mistakes”)	no

Table 7.5 Einat’s usage of morpho-semantic variables

Variable	total # of tokens	FEMININE tokens	Slash tokens	percentage of FEMININE	percentage of SLASH	Reported use of FEMININE form	Reported use of slash form
female-specific definite plural	8	8	N/A	100%	N/A	yes	N/A
definite inclusive plural	3	0	0	0%	0%	yes (according to majority)	
Future plural agreement w/feminine referents	1	1	N/A	100%	N/A	no	N/A
ambiguous generic plural	8	1	1	13%	13%		yes
ambiguous generic singular	3	0	0	0	0		yes
2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular impersonal	14	14	N/A	100%	N/A	yes	

Table 7.6 Ora's usage of morpho-semantic variables

Variable	total # of tokens	FEMININE tokens	Slash tokens	percentage of FEMININE	percentage of SLASH	Reported use of FEMININE form	Reported use of slash form
female-specific definite plural	25	17		68%	N/A		
definite inclusive plural	6	0	0	0	0	No (used it until HLA clarified issue)	Yes
Future plural agreement w/feminine referents	1	1		100%	N/A	yes	N/A
ambiguous generic plural	19	0	3	0%	16%	yes (in all female contexts)	yes (in certain settings)
ambiguous generic singular	11	6	1	55% second highest	9%	yes (in all female contexts)	yes (in certain settings)
2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular impersonal	10	7	N/A	70%	N/A	yes (reported inconsistent use)	

Table 7.7 Iris's usage of morpho-semantic variables

A comparison of the overall usage of feminist variants for each woman shows that Ofra used only two of the variables in the context of the interview. Einat used four variables; Ora used five; and Iris used the most, six. If we follow a classic quantitative sociolinguistic approach, we might expect the inter-speaker variation to correlate with differences in each woman's level of identification with the feminist community (Labov, 1972) or the density of her feminist network (Milroy, 1980). Ofra with the "lowest score" would have the weakest or loosest affiliation with the feminist community, and Iris would have the strongest or densest. However, all four women were senior-level staff members of the same feminist organization, and their "feminist" networks were comparably dense. There is not direct correlation between the number of variables they used and their access to, or identification with, the feminist community. In the absence of a direct correlation between use and "identity" we might turn to "non-social" factors to explain the variation. Indeed, in my analysis of each variable, I presented examples of the influence that discourse topic and grammatical environments had on my informants' use of MASCULINE, FEMININE, and SLASH variants in the different morpho-semantic contexts.

I do not mean to suggest that the absence of a direct correlation rules out a social contextual explanation of the variation. Nor do I mean to suggest that a correlation between the observed variation and the social factors of each woman's feminist identity would explain the observed sociolinguistic phenomena. In her article "Demythologizing sociolinguistics: Why language does not reflect society," Cameron (1990) stated that a correlation between linguistic behavior and

aspects of a speaker's social identity do not actually explain social variation of language use. According to Cameron, it simply adds information to the description of a phenomenon (pp. 85-86). A quantitative sociolinguistic approach would lead us to expect certain correlative relationships between the variability of language practice in the feminist community and the identity or position of each speaker in relationship to the community. In the case of my informants, the expected correlative relationship is not apparent from that data; thus, we must look elsewhere for an explanation of the observed behavior.

Cameron also made the case for including metalinguistic discourse as data in the context of investigating the social meanings of language. Let us therefore examine the metalinguistic statements each woman made in her evaluation of the organization's decision to use the FEMININE singular form as the only term of address on the organization's voicemail message.

**Ofra:** hama'ane koli shelanu ose bidiyuk et ota ta'ut she'osim irgunim axerim. ma anaxnu mevakshot, shelo yifnu rak belashon zaxar sheyifnu gam belashon nekeiva. aval etsleinu ma anaxnu osot, ponot rak belashon nekeiva velo mityaxasot lezaxar. az be'etsem, hameser ze she'anaxnu lo rotsot shivyon zxuyot, anaxnu rotsot odef zxuyot lenashim.

**Ofra:** Our voicemail makes exactly the same mistake that other organizations make. What do we ask, that they don't use only masculine language, that they also use feminine language. But here, what do we do? We use only feminine language and don't engage the masculine. So, essentially, the message is that we don't want equal rights, we want extra rights for women.

Ofra expressed clear disapproval of the organization's choice of language use. In the context of our conversation, she described the elaborate alternative she had

proposed, which would allow male callers the choice to opt out of being addressed in the FEMININE by choosing an option for MASCULINE language. (See the analysis of example (37) in chapter six, section 6.3 for the details of her alternative solution.) The principle or norm represented by her elaborate solution is similar to the SLASH variant for generic reference; both can be understood to represent a symbolic equality of male and female privilege. As the quote above highlights, Ofra interpreted the use of the FEMININE form as a message that feminists wanted extra privileges for women and are not interested in engaging men in their work.

Keeping her stance in mind, let us return to table 7.4, which presents her behavioral data. The last two columns show her reported use of each variable. She reported using SLASH forms for generic reference. She also explicitly reported not using the FEMININE form as an ambiguous generic. The one variable she used most consistently, 95%, in the context of our interview was considerably more valuable as an index of feminist identity within the feminist community than it was in the mainstream social context. The work that a speaker “does” with the consistent use of FEMININE plurals for definite feminine reference is to create and define feminist or women’s space or agency without overtly challenging or subverting masculine agency or privilege. Her reported language use viewed in light of her evaluation of the voicemail recording seems to point to a practice of language use that indexes, among other things, an iconic conceptualization of the relationship between grammatical and social gender categories. We might argue, therefore, that the analysis of the data leads to the

following underlying ideological position regarding language use and sexism: the “problem” with conventional male-biased sociolinguistic practices is not the privilege they grant men. Rather, the “problem” is the manner in which they erase or subjugate women and women’s agency. Thus, the solution is to reclaim FEMININE forms and to insist on “accurate” linguistic representation of both males and females in all relevant contexts. These ideological positions would seem to explain her behavior and her reported preferences.

Now, let us compare Einat and Ora’s stances regarding the voicemail issue, quoted below, with their observed and reported usage as shown on tables 7.5 and 7.6 respectively. Both women reported using the SLASH form as an alternative for ambiguous generic reference. Einat and Ora used both FEMININE and SLASH forms for generic reference in the context of their conversations with me. Their observed and reported practices of language use were quite similar. (Ora also used the historical predicate form.) Like Ofra, they both reported using the SLASH form as a generic. Neither woman explicitly claimed to use the FEMININE form in that context, though they did not explicitly exclude its use either. We might expect, therefore, that they would claim some ambivalence about the use of FEMININE forms as the perfect solution for addressing an unknown caller on a voicemail recording. Below are their statements.

**Ora:** ani nora hit'akashti be'inyan shel hama'ane koli, shelo yihiye ma'ane koli, ... berabim o mashehu kaze. eila lo, sheyihiye ma'ane koli lenashim, biglal shehinei rov haponot eleinu hen nashim. vaha'inyan hu gam she'ani rotsa lehaxdir et ze, sheze yihiye barur me'eilav, shegam im mishtamshim balashon eh nekeiva ze kolel gam et hagever. zot omeret sheyihiye po izun.

**Ora:** ‘I was very stubborn in the matter of the voicemail, it not be a voicemail that would be ..., in the MASCULINE plural or something like that. That, in contrast it would be a voicemail to women, because, here, most of our callers(F,P) are women. And the issue is also that I want to establish this, so it is clear from the outset, even when (we) use of the feminine language this also includes the man. That is to say that here there will be equality.

**Einat** lama hayiti be'ad ze (...) mikeivan sheze irgun nashim. (...) ze irgun shetsrixa lihiyot frendli lasviva shelo. shenashim yargishu kan kemo babayit. (...) shehagvarim shemitkashrim elai, eleinu, ze gam le'inyanei nashim, rubam.

**Einat:** why was I in favor of this (use of FEMININE forms)? ... Because, this is a women’s organization. ... This is an organization that must be friendly to its constituency. That here women will feel like at home. ... The men who call me, us, this also regarding women’s issues, most of them.

Both Einat and Ora assessed the use of the FEMININE form on the voicemail as an important symbol of the organization’s commitment to its female constituency. These female callers are valued members of the organization’s extended community. Their positive evaluations of and explanations for this linguistic choice highlighted feminist solidarity with all women, an extension of sisterhood, if you will, to the women who called the organization. It contrasts sharply with Ofra’s evaluation of the “meaning” of the voicemail message to callers.

Both Einat and Ora use the FEMININE form of the impersonal generic (gender specific and ambiguous) in 100% of their relevant utterances, but Ofra only used it in 63% of her relevant utterances. Recall that in my analysis of the second-person impersonal, I discussed how the use of FEMININE agreement on this morpho-semantic variable could pragmatically signal the extension of or



request for feminist solidarity between a speaker and her interlocutor or the ideological perspective she is presenting.<sup>89</sup> Given this correlation, it seems reasonable to conclude that Einat and Ora evaluate the symbolism of the FEMININE term of address on the voicemail as an attempt to signal solidarity to its female callers. Indeed, the actual talk on the recording used the FEMININE second-person singular pronoun, *at*, as a generic form of address to individuals of unknown gender. In reference to men, both Einat and Ora focused on the fact that most male callers to their feminist organization were likely to be sympathetic to feminist causes and/or interpret the voicemail as an indexical marker of feminist identity. Einat, in a different part of her statement about the voicemail, reported that some of the men who called did complain to her, but claimed that she used it as an opportunity to educate them about feminist issues.

The apparent correlation between the women's language use and their ideological stances might lead us to think that women who supported the voicemail also consistently used, or preferred the use of, FEMININE agreement on the second-person impersonal and third-person generic forms. In all of these contexts, the use of the FEMININE form indexes a focus on feminist solidarity and the obligation of the feminist community to privilege women over men. Through their use of language they are enacting a woman-centered form of feminist social-change work. In contrast, we would expect that women who were ambivalent or uncomfortable with the use of the FEMININE forms on the voicemail would demonstrate less consistent use of the impersonal form and

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<sup>89</sup> See the discussion of this variable in chapter six.

disapprove of using FEMININE forms as ambiguous generics. The social explanation for this behavior would be that these women understand the mission of feminist organizations as promoting women's equality with men.<sup>90</sup>

With that hypothetical explanation of the relationship between ideological stances and observable inter-speaker variation in mind, let us consider Iris's behavior and her ideological stance regarding the voicemail recordings. Iris demonstrated the second highest percentage FEMININE tokens for ambiguous generic reference. (Only Neta's was higher.) Iris's use of FEMININE impersonal generics accounted for 70% of her tokens. Recall, however, that two of her three MASCULINE tokens occurred in the context of a self-inclusive use of the impersonal second-person, in which she recognized her "mistake" and self-corrected to the FEMININE form. Her observed behavior seems to put her in the category of women who fully supported the use of gender in the voicemail recording. But the ideological stance she took was one of deep ambivalence.

Iris: ani, mitsad exad, me'od smexa sheyesh eh, she'at merima telefon ve'at shoma'at irgun shemedaber beleshon nekeiva. mitsad sheini, ani xoshevet she'ulai ze yaxol lehazik lanu.(...) ani rotsa lihiyot universalit. ani rotsa lehagid xevra shivyonit. ki yesh lexa ben veyesh lexa bat ve'ani rotsa sheyihye lahem et oto davar. az po ani xoshevet sheyesh eize shehu fisfus katan.

Iris: On the one hand, I am really happy that there is, that you call up on the phone and you hear an organization that speaks in the feminine language. On the other hand, I think that perhaps it could hurt us. I

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<sup>90</sup> Feminists and feminist researchers have long acknowledged these types of conceptual variations within the feminist community and how they are manifested in the practices of those who ascribe to one position or the other. See Freedman (2002), and Dale and Foster (1986) for discussions of ideological variation within feminist communities.

want to be universal. I want to say an equal society. Because, you(M,S) have a son and you(M,S) have a daughter and I want it to be the same thing for both. So, here, I think that there is some kind of small loss.

In the above statement, Iris expressed similar concerns to those that Ofra expressed about the potential for the message to imply that the organization is not interested in male callers or gender equality. She also acknowledged the positive message that was the focus of Einat and Ora's evaluation, that the language of the voicemail would be a welcome signal of explicit inclusion to female callers. Iris's case seems to weaken the argument that there is an explanatory relationship between the women's linguistic behavior and their ideological stance vis-a-vis the voicemail. Despite the fact that she used the widest variety of variables, including FEMININE ambiguous generics and impersonal second-person forms, her stance is ambivalent.

Recall, however, that some of Iris's generic uses of the FEMININE reflected culture norms about elementary school teachers, i.e. they were not necessarily uses of grammatical gender according to the norms of feminist Hebrew. As shown in table 7.7, Iris reported limiting the use of FEMININE generics to all female contexts. She also reported that she stopped using the FEMININE form as an inclusive plural when she learned that the relevant HLA ruling was a false rumor. In other ideological statements, Iris highlighted the need to focus on the context of use and the social identity of one's audience. The following statement was her response to my question about what linguistic changes should be advocated for in educational contexts. *ani xoshevet sheze me'od me'od meshane mi oxlusiyyat haya'ad*. 'I think that it really, really makes

a difference who the target audience is.’ Iris’s commitment to varying language use to suit the context and audience is evident in her reported use of the difference practices. (See the far right columns of table 7.7.) She claimed to tailor her usage to suit the sociolinguistic context. Her ideological claims seem to indicate an acute awareness of the way in which linguistic indexicality is flexible and meaning is conditional upon the conceptual frame of her interlocutors.

Iris’s clear concern with adjusting linguistic behavior to suit the sociolinguistic context provides a potential clue to a more meaningful explanation of the relationship between the observed and reported language use and the ideological claims of these women. Ofra’s and Iris’s ideological stances regarding the voicemail recording clearly differ from the stances of Einat and Ora, but the quantitative data on their behavior place them at opposite ends of the interspeaker continuum of variation. Therefore, it seems unlikely that their similar ideological stance regarding the voicemail language directly “reflects” their commitment to using feminist Hebrew as tool of social change. All four women make clear statements about the potential of feminist innovative language practices to challenge the reproduction of male privilege encoded in conventional practices of language use. In light of these facts, how might we explain the data?

The data can be explained by incorporating an analysis of what each woman’s ideological statement revealed about how she conceptualized the “interaction” between the voicemail recording and potential callers. Einat’s and Ora’s statements seem to indicate that they understood the “event” as an interaction between members of the feminist community of practice and potential

members (or peripheral members) of the community. They both focused on the feminist identity of the organization and the fact that most of the callers would be women. With respect to male callers, both Einat and Ora saw the practice as an opportunity to raise awareness of the subordinate position that they believe conventional practices impose on women. Iris's and Ofra's talk about the practice focused on the potential harm the recording might cause the organization's image by deliberately excluding or ignoring the needs of male callers. These two women seem to conceptualize the voicemail as an interaction between the feminist identified organization (and by extension the members of that feminist community), and members of the mainstream community of practice. Their ideological stance reflects an awareness of the potential conflict between the norms of each community of practice and the desire to find a way to accommodate both sets of norms.

The concept of communities of practice helps make sense of their ideological stances and perhaps even their observed and reported practices of language use. Iris and Ofra's behavior and ideological stances reflect a conceptualization of feminist work that always includes attention to how feminist communal practices are understood by those with power in the mainstream community. The salient social factor for them seems to be the status of the feminist community within the context of the larger community of Israeli Hebrew speakers. Einat and Ora, on the other hand, took ideological stances and support language use practices that focused on the social relationship between the core of the feminist community and its extended membership, which they define as all

women, or at least any woman who would call a feminist organization. For them, the salient meanings of the feminist innovative language practices are those that obtain within the context of the feminist community of practice.

Although there is clearly some correlation between the observed linguistic behavior of these women and their ideological stances, the nature of this relationship cannot be “read” in a direct fashion from the quantitative data. If we try to use the quantitative data as a map to their relative status within the feminist community, we are led to believe that Ofra was a more peripheral member of the community; Iris was a core member; and Einat and Ora fitted somewhere in between. However as noted, all these women are core members, paid staff, of the same local feminist community of practice. So what is the meaning of the inter-speaker variation on the community? What might it tell us about Israeli feminist language practices and the relationship between feminist ideological stances and feminist identity? I would argue that the inter-speaker variation (both behavioral and ideological) found in the Israeli feminist community should be viewed as an index of the feminist community’s ability to tolerate a certain degree of diversity with regard to ideologies about how and in what contexts to use language as a tool for creating feminist culture and/or challenging male privilege within Israeli society. Furthermore, it is also possible to interpret the inter-speaker linguistic variation within the Israeli feminist community as a function of the multiple definitions of what it means to be a feminist in the Israeli context.

#### 7.4 LANGUAGE USE AS SOCIAL ACTION

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the relationships between linguistic behavior, indexicality, and language ideology must be understood in the context of the overlapping and conflicting social practices and norms privileged by the multiple communities of practice in which these women participate. On the theoretical level, I have used the data to present an argument for the necessity of incorporating a complex and multi-faceted concept of context into the analysis of the relationship between linguistic behavior, social identity, and ideology. The approach must include the speaker's metalinguistic discourse as data of equal, if different, value as the quantitative data on observed linguistic behavior. In this way, we can begin to explain, how variation in linguistic behavior is related to what a group of speakers is doing with the sociolinguistic resources available to them. If, as Cameron stated, "language-using is a social practice in its own right" (90), then we must look not only at which speakers use language in what ways, but also what they are trying to accomplish through their use of a given linguistic practice in specific socio-cultural contexts. Using this conceptual approach, I will restate my analysis of the social meaning of linguistic variation within the Israeli feminist community. It is a function of the multiple ways a woman can enact an Israeli feminist identity. In the next chapter, I continue my investigation of how the women in my study used language to perform an Israeli feminist identity through a detailed examination of two women's "stories" about their sociolinguistic strategies in different contexts.

## **Chapter VIII: The linguistic negotiation of identity and social change: Strategies of two Israeli feminist activists.**

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. W.E.B. DuBois (1903)

### **8.1 FROM DUBOIS TO ISRAELI FEMINISTS: RECONCILING EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL IMAGES OF SELF**

W.E.B. DuBois's (1903) concept of double consciousness can be applied to the experiences of any individual who is marginalized by the dominant mainstream culture because of his/her race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender-identity, religion or class.<sup>91</sup> For these individuals, the construction of a coherent self is complicated by conflicting images from the separate but overlapping socio-cultural contexts in which they live. In the mainstream context, they are the "OTHER" defined by their differences from the normative concept of SELF that is privileged by the dominant cultural ideologies and practices. This "othered" self image while externally constructed is often internalized by the members of the marginalized community. In the context of the "primary" community of practice, the individual is the normative self. His/her practices and ideological perspectives define these communal norms. The disjunction or dissonance between the two images creates "two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals." The individual is thus set with the task of continuously negotiating his/her creation and performance of self in relationship to different constructions of social reality, that are often simultaneously relevant. In this chapter, I analyze the stories two women told about

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<sup>91</sup> Although "race" is a problematic term, it refers to a constructed category that exerts powerful control over issues of social identity in most socio-cultural contexts.



their strategic use of language to further their personal and political social agendas and their representation of self.

In complex contemporary societies, such as Israel, individuals generally, if not always, belong to more than one of the sub-communities that exist within the larger community of Israeli society. For example in Israel, my identity is shaped by my membership in several different communities some of which place me within the dominant meta-cultural definition of the normative Israeli, and others which place me in the category of the OTHER. As an Ashkenazi Jewish citizen of Israel and a fluent Hebrew speaker, I am a member of the privileged class of Israelis; I fit into the definition of the normative Israeli SELF. However, my social classification as Israeli SELF is complicated by the fact that I am not a *sabra* (native Israeli), I am a native English speaker, and I am a non-Orthodox practicing Jew.<sup>92</sup> These aspects of my ‘self’ place me in the category of the OTHER. As discussed in chapter two, the normative Israeli SELF is constructed as male within a male-dominated social hierarchy. Thus, my femaleness also places me in the category of OTHER.

In patriarchal societies, the concept of gender does not simply center on the differentiation of male as SELF and female as OTHER. This binary distinction is used in the definition of another relevant axis of social categorization, that of normative/non-normative concepts of masculinity and femininity. MAN represents the concept of normative masculinity, and WOMAN represents the concept of normative femininity.<sup>93</sup> Prescribed social behaviors, and associated characteristics, limit self-expression and self-

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<sup>92</sup> In Israel, religious observance is defined by Orthodox laws and practices. The image of the normative Israeli, in the mainstream context, is of a non-practicing Jew. Thus observant Jews from the liberal streams of contemporary Judaism are OTHER both because they are religiously observant and because their practices are non-Orthodox.

<sup>93</sup> In this chapter, I use all capital letters to refer to cultural concepts of identity defined by dominant mainstream and lower-case letters to refer to the concepts related to marginalized sub-communities.

determination for both men and women; however, patriarchal ideologies further disempower women by subordinating them to men in the overall social hierarchy. Even in contemporary “liberated” Western societies that espouse an ideology of gender equality, women’s lives are still constrained by notions of appropriate gender behavior and institutionalized forms of gender discrimination (Clark, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Women’s access to resources and social opportunities may shift in ‘liberated’ or ‘modern’ societies, but concepts of normative femininity, masculinity and sexuality continue to complicate the relationship between a woman’s internally constructed self and the externally constructed image of WOMAN. Therefore, I use the concept of double consciousness to describe women’s experiences and their struggles to create and express a unified sense of self.

The issue of double consciousness and the problems of agency in self-definition emerged as central themes in my conversations with women in the Israeli feminist community. As discussed in chapter two, section 2.4, mainstream Israeli society is shaped by several male-dominated institutions and patriarchal ideologies that inscribe social relationships and communal practices with fairly rigid concepts of what constitutes normative male and female social behaviors. Neta, one of the women I interviewed, made the following comment regarding the way Israeli cultural concepts of WOMAN interfered with her ability to define herself.<sup>94</sup>

43.     ani lo rotsa shet**agdir** oti. ani lo rotsa shet**asim** oti benish she'**ata** **xoshev**  
       haxi nexona. ma ani isha, az ani adina ve'ani raka, ve'ani. ani lo. ani  
       gam, aval ani gam harbe devarim axerim.

I don't want that you(M) will define me. I don't want that you(M) will put me  
 in the niche that you(M) think is the most correct. What I am a woman so I am

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<sup>94</sup> In this chapter, I provide only an idiomatic translation of their speech because the focus is the metalinguistic content, although for examples in which the linguistic elements are also relevant, I include relevant grammatical information in the idiomatic glosses.

delicate and I am soft and I... I am not! I am also but I am also many other things.

Neta's comment highlights the conflict between the external definition of Israeli WOMAN – delicate and soft – with her own definition of self, which might include these characteristics but includes many other things as well.<sup>95</sup>

The patriarchal aspects of Israeli culture are reproduced and legitimized through conventional practices of language use in mainstream Hebrew-speaking society. These practices naturalize an iconic relationship between the culturally defined social behaviors or roles associated with MAN and WOMAN and the linguistic forms (including the gender categories themselves) used to talk about men and women as social actors. In addition, the use of the MASCULINE grammatical category as the unmarked or inclusive naturalizes the privilege afforded to men in a male-dominated society by associating the normative MAN with the normative SELF.<sup>96</sup>

Dominance is sustained by privileging in community practice a particular perspective on language, obscuring its status as one among many perspectives and naturalizing it as neutral or “unmarked.” The privileged can assume their own positions to be norms toward which everyone else orients; they can judge other positions while supposing their own to be invulnerable to less privileged assessment. This privileged relation to a symbolic system, which we shall call symbolic privilege, carries with it interpretive and evaluative authority that requires no explanation or justification. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 483)

Conventional practices of language use are social acts that (re)create the gender inequality within a society. Many of the women I interviewed commented on the way

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<sup>95</sup> As discussed at the end of chapter six, Neta used the MASCULINE form of the impersonal second-person pronoun to index prescribed patriarchal concepts of masculinity and femininity. In the utterance above, her use of *ata* could be understood as patriarchal ideology itself personified by the *ata* a male ‘you’ who would impose the stereotypical characteristics of delicacy and softness onto his definition of Neta’s SELF.

<sup>96</sup> In this chapter, ‘MASCULINE’ and ‘FEMININE’ continue to refer to the grammatical categories and ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ refer to the socio-cultural categories.

that conventional Israeli language practices construct associated the Israeli SELF with a masculine image to which they have been socialized to orient themselves.

44. ze gam muvan me'elav. at, eh nira lax barur sheponim tamid legevarim. at lo xoshevet al ze afilu. ki megil me'od tsa'ir hem melamdim otax, eh lehistakel al ha'olam derex einayim shel gever. ke'ilu at kevar ro'a hahizdahut shelax hi im gever.

this is also built into it. you, um it is clear to you, that always (they) address(M,P) men. You don't think about this, even, because from a very young age (they) teach(M,P) you to look at the world through male eyes. Seemingly, you already see your identification, it is with man.

45. kol haxayim **at xelek** mi min hakahal. notnim lax et hareshut lehitstaref lemo'adon, ke'ilu.

all of life you are a part of the collective gender. they(M) give you(F) permission to join the club, seemingly.

In both of the examples above, it is possible to interpret the unidentified masculine plural agents of *ponim* 'address,' *melamdim* 'teach,' and *notnim* 'give' as either 'people' or the conventional language practices themselves. (The discourse surrounding each of these comments did not clarify the identity of the implied agents, but these statements were made in response to questions about the relationship between conventional practices of language use and women's status in Israel.) Regardless of the intended identity of the agents of these MASCULINE plural predicates, the statements in (2) and (3) illustrate an awareness of the way language use contributes to the "othering" of women in Israeli society.

I am not necessarily arguing that these women understand this relationship in the way that linguists have articulated them, although several women did articulate a very sophisticated understanding of this relationship. For example, consider Einat's comment

in response to my question about why she felt changing practices of language use was so important:

46. ze me'od xashuv, mikeivan sheze meshakef et hadomiantiyut hagavrit, hagavrit vevatfisa hashaletet.

this is very important because it reflects to the dominance of the male, the masculine and the mainstream concept.

As the statements above illustrate, for the women in my study feminist consciousness includes an awareness of the way that language use in mainstream society contributes to the reproduction of sexism in Jewish Israeli society. I argue that this apparent awareness shapes my informants' use of language and their ideological stances vis-a-vis both feminist and conventional practices of language use. Furthermore, if practices of language use contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal concepts of SELF and WOMAN, then it is not surprising to find that feminists, who are engaged in challenging and dismantling patriarchal elements of culture, would use language to index an oppositional stance. Feminist language practices are feminist acts of social change. However, an individual also uses language to construct and perform his/her social identity in a multitude of socio-cultural contexts. Thus, each of the particular elements of the linguistic repertoire that the women in my study use was related to the negotiation of her social 'self' or identity in the different communities of practice in which she must participate.

## **8.2 LANGUAGE USE STRATEGIES AT THE INTERSECTION OF FEMINIST AND ISRAELI JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

Before turning to the individual case studies, I want to review the analytical framework I used to approach this data. McConnell-Ginet (1989) argued that to understand the power of language to reproduce or challenge existing social relationships

we must consider the specific contexts of use. “I argue that to understand the ways that meanings are produced and reproduced and the significance of sex and gender in these processes, we must consider the conditions of discourse.” (p. 37). The “conditions of discourse,” for the talk analyzed in this chapter, include the speakers’ commitment to the feminist movement and the use of language to enact that ideological and socio-political stance. However, in the multi-layered context of Israeli society, feminist or conventional language practices index different social meanings in different communities of practice. Thus, I again make use of the schema, presented in chapter two section 2.3 to contextualize the narratives I examine in this chapter.

The cases presented in this chapter demonstrate how two women made strategic use of their linguistic resources to accomplish specific social acts and how their talk also indexed their relationship to the feminist community. In this analytical framework, I pay attention to the way their strategic uses of language were, or were not, shaped by their perceptions of how other Israeli speakers would understand and react to their use of innovative linguistic practices. My informants’ use of terms such as ‘struggle’ and ‘reform’ in their meta-linguistic discourse clarifies their sense of linguistic innovation as a form of feminist resistance to dominant cultural norms and practices. Thus, I use the concept of language use as social acts of resistance or accommodation in my analysis of the sociolinguistic strategies reported by Na’ama and Merav. Whether or not a particular instance of language use constituted an act of resistance or accommodation depends as much on the context of the utterance as it does on the intention of the speaker and the linguistic forms she used.

### **8.2.2 Organization of the chapter**

The first case, presented in section 8.4, is that of Na’ama. I consider Na’ama’s story about her use of linguistic reform as a strategy to instigate institutional change at

the municipality of one of the three largest cities in Israel. Na'ama overtly discussed innovative use of language as a deliberate form of resistance to Israeli sexism. I examine her accounts of the reactions she got to the strategies she adopted, her choices, the consequences of her choices, her reported motivations, and her assessment of the experience. The second case presented, in section 8.5, concerns Merav's unconventional marriage and the problems she encounters in choosing a term to refer to her husband.<sup>97</sup> Her story demonstrates how competing issues in an individual's life vie for expression in language. A comparison of her actual usage, during our conversation, with her metalinguistic commentary about her particular problems with both the conventional and alternative terms reveals an interesting strategy of what I will call "innovative accommodation." Merav's story also calls attention to the complexity of negotiating through the multiplicity of conflicting and coordinating norms that are meaningful to her construction and performance of a unified self. In both of these cases, we see the evidence of individual speakers struggling to find ways to express themselves with a linguistic socio-cultural repertoire that does not always give them the necessary "tools."

### **8.3 "WHEN YOU REFORM THE LANGUAGE ON YOUR OWN IT JUST DOESN'T WORK": INNOVATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL REALM**

I met Na'ama at the beginning of my time in the field. As noted in chapter three, our conversations about language and gender were not limited to one recorded interview, and she was much more aware of the scope of my research project than any of the other women who participated in this study. When I interviewed Na'ama, she was well known as an elected official whose tenure on the governing council of a major Israeli city was marked by struggles against institutional practices that limited women's access to

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<sup>97</sup> Merav's marriage is considered unconventional because she is an Israeli Jew married to an Arab non-Jew. See section 2.4.1 for a discussion of marriage in the Israeli context.

political and economic power.<sup>98</sup> In one of the many stories she told about *ma'avakim* 'struggles' related to language, gender, and women's political voice, Na'ama claimed to have called the mayor of the city a *tarnegol* 'rooster' during a heated debate. She explained her behavior by reporting that during the interaction the mayor of the city had called her a *tarnegolet* 'hen' and that he consistently described her speech as *tsvixa*, 'screeching.' She explained that in the context of political debate, when men shouted the term he used to describe their speech was *tsa'aka* 'shouting,' but her speech was *tsvixa* 'screeching.' She asked me *aval mi tsovaxat? tarnegolet tsovaxat, ben adam tso'ek.* 'but who (what) screeches? A hen screeches, a person shouts.' She explained that from her perspective, the term he used to describe her speech dismissed her political voice as the "screechings of a barn animal." Thus, she reported, in her response to his comment she did the same to him. *az amarti lo, beseder im ani tarnegolet ata tarnegol.* "So I said to him okay, if I am a hen, you are a rooster." Her response metaphorically recontextualized the political debate as a barnyard squabble between two chickens.<sup>99</sup>

I present the chicken story as a means of illustrating Na'ama's conceptualization of what she was "doing" as a participant in the sociolinguistic interview and her representation of her social identity in the context of the city council. In the context of the interview, this story was one of many interactions she described as *ma'avakim*. Na'ama's discourse during the interview can be divided into two parts. During the first half of the interview, she responded to my questions about language use with stories about her personal life and personal choices. However, all of the stories in the second

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<sup>98</sup> It is important to note that in the Israeli context, politicians elected to the city councils have a status similar to state representatives in the United States. Thus, the impact of policy decisions by city council members from the major cities of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa often filters up to the national level.

<sup>99</sup> I am keenly aware of the sexual connotations of the hen/rooster imagery and the potential of it to undermine the equalizing power of Na'ama's comment. However, in the context of her story, that was not the metaphorical meaning that seemed to be primarily relevant.



half of the interview occurred within the setting of municipal institutions and she prefaced their telling with the following statement.

47. axshav ani rotsa lesaper lax al kama ma'avakim she'ani ne'evakti. ani xoshevet al shelosha.

And now, I want to tell you about some struggles that I fought. I am thinking of three.<sup>100</sup>

Na'ama's choice of language overtly constructs her stories about language use in the municipal context as social actions in which she engaged as a feminist. It also places her actions within the context of the interview as testimony about these feminist acts.

If we consider her telling of the "chicken story" in light of the above contextualization cue, it can be understood as an illustration of Na'ama's concept of her social identity within the city council. The mayor's characterization of her speech as "screeching" was represented as intentional, dismissive and potentially "othering." She was not human but an irritating small female creature, a hen that screeches unintelligibly. The report of her bold response illustrated her sense of herself as a woman who refused to be marginalized. She reclaimed power by taking the mayor's language and using it to equate his own behavior to that of a cock crowing in a barnyard. The next story, one of the "three struggles" referred to in her contextualization cue, further demonstrates Na'ama's clear awareness of her status as OTHER in relationship to the concept of the Israeli POLITICIAN. (Recall that capitalized nominal forms refer to the culturally defined norm of mainstream Israeli Jewish society.) It highlights her strategy to enact the social identity of feminist or female political actor with the mainstream context that locates POLITICIAN in the masculine category of social identities.

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<sup>100</sup> In fact, Na'ama told more than three stories. In the process of telling the three main stories, one of which I will present in the latter half of this section, she also inserted several "tangential" stories about language use like the "chicken story" presented above.

Na'ama's first "struggle" story was about her attempt to get city council stationary that would use the FEMININE title for "member of city council." *harishon ze hama'avak al be'emet niyar hamixtavim sheli*. 'The first, this is the struggle about, truly, my stationary.' She began her telling by contrasting her "struggle" for gender appropriate stationary with the passive acceptance of the MASCULINE stationary by previous female city council representatives:

48. tamid hayu xavrot mo'etsa,  
There have always been female city council representatives

aval hen tamid hitstapku beniyar mixtavim  
but they(F) always made do with stationary

shekatuv **xaver** **mo'etsa**.  
that was written member(M) council.

ani amarti meihahatxala  
I said from the beginning

she'ani rotsa niyar shel xavrat mo'etsa  
that I want stationary of member(F) council.

Note that in the first line of her statement she uses the FEMININE title *xavrot mo'etsa* to refer to these women rather than something like *tamid hayu nashim bamo'etsa* 'there have always been women on the council.' By referring to these women with the FEMININE title, she positions herself as part of a long history of women politicians while at the same highlighting the difference between her presentation of a political identity and that of her predecessors. The statement in (6) sets Na'ama apart from these other female representatives because they made do with something that she would not abide, namely, the obscuring of their female identity by allowing the municipal institution to officially identify them as MEMBER(M) of city council. I will return to exploring the way her language use in the interview indexed her as a feminist vis-a-vis the other

women on the city council, but let us now examine how her language use positions her vis-a-vis the institution of the city council.

Her use of the FEMININE title in (6) highlights the contrast between the institution's use of language to refer to all members of council and the way she wanted to use language to identify herself, and presumably other elected women, as female council member(s). Her FEMINIZATION of the official title used to refer to members of this political body incorporated femaleness into the social identity of POLITICIAN. Her highlighting that these other women were also members of city council in the context of the statement that they had always made do with the existing stationary may also be a way of implicating their behavior as a contributing factor to the resistance she met from the institution itself. The institutional resistance is first represented by her report of the mayor's negative response to her request.

49. verosh ha'ir amar shepashut lo mevin lama.  
and the mayor said(M) that he simply did not understand why.

*ze bizbuz shel niyar hadfus yitstarex la'asot od print.*  
*this is a waste of paper, the printer will have to do another template*

*ze hit'im lekol hanashim lefanayix ma haba'aya.*  
*this was suitable for all the women before you what's the problem?*

amarti tov, hakol nehedar aval ani lo xaver mo'etsa  
I said good, everything is great, but I am not a member(M) of council

ani xavrat mo'etsa veani rotsa shekaxa tixtevu elai.  
I am a female member of council and I want for you to write to me as such.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> In (49), I translated Na'ama's use of *xavrat* as 'female member' rather than 'member(F)' because she was using it in a differential context to highlight that she was a female member not a male member of the city council.

First, I want to call the reader's attention to the phrase Na'ama used to represent the mayor's characterization of all the other women "who made do with the MASCULINE stationary." Contrast her consistent use of the phrase *xavrat mo'etsa* in her own characterization of these women, and herself, with the use of the phrase *lekol hanashim lefanayix*, in her report of the mayor's speech. In the report of the mayor's speech, the language used highlights the fact these other members of council were also WOMEN but they found the existing stationary suitable. Na'ama is not acting like these other women, and the mayor does not understand. The statement *ze hit'im lekol hanashim lefanayix ma haba'aya* 'it was suitable for all the women before you' can be understood to index her perception of the institution or the mayor's lack of understanding regarding the importance of gender in the political realm. It is not necessarily important whether this is an exact quote, i.e. the actual wording used by the mayor, or Na'ama's representation of his speech with her own linguistic choices. In either case, the contrast of the use of terms to refer to the same group of people, the other women who had served as members of city council, indexes the fact that Na'ama's behavior vis-a-vis the use of the title is exceptional. She is the OTHER both with respect to all the other women who served as elected officials and with respect to the institution itself.

Now let us return to how her language use indexed Na'ama's identity as a feminist both in the context of the city council and in the immediate context of the sociolinguistic interview.<sup>102</sup> In the context of Israeli society, the concept POLITICIAN, here represented by the specific social role of MEMBER of CITY COUNCIL, is associated with the concept MAN. Na'ama's awareness of this fact was evident in our conversation, and she pointed to this association as partial explanation for why she

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<sup>102</sup> I use the term 'sociolinguistic interview' to refer to the contextual frame of my conversations with Na'ama and Merav, but the reader should bear in mind that I used both sociolinguistic and ethnographic research methods to guide my interactions with my informants.

wanted stationary that would identify her as *xavrat mo'etsa*. She reported that in her role as a city council representative a significant portion of the correspondence she received was addressed *lixvodo mar na'ama yisra'eli* 'To his honor, Mr Na'ama Yisraeli.' Despite her obviously feminine name, she was still addressed in the MASCULINE. Na'ama explained this behavior with the following comment:

50. tamid medabrim alai belashon zaxar.  
always (they) speak(M,P) about me in the masculine language
- ki im hapolitica, az kvar shehakol yehiye zaxar.  
because with the political, so let it all be masculine.

Even if we understand, as I believe Na'ama did, that the use of MASCULINE title was simply a linguistic convention to refer to all members of the city council, its use in the communal context of a male-dominated political system erases or obscures a part of her social identity. Na'ama's desire for stationary that would officially represent her as a 'female member of council' might be seen as an attempt to disrupt the normative association between MEMBER of CITY COUNCIL and MAN. Her request may also be seen as an attempt to force the mayor, and by extension the political institution and the public, to recognize the relevance of gender in the Israeli political realm.

Herein we see how, in the Israeli macro-community of practice as well as the local community of the city council, Na'ama's linguistic choice indexed a feminist identity. What set Na'ama apart from the other members of city council was not her gender per se, but rather her insistence on incorporating her feminine gender identity into her identity as an elected city official. (Hence, the contrasted use of *xavrat mo'etsa* in (6), which is her own representation of herself and the other female members of the city council, with the use of *kol hanashim lefanayix* in (7), which is her report of the mayor's representation of these other women.) Na'ama's linguistic behavior, both in her

telling of the story and in the context of the story itself, indexed a feminist identity because the insistence of on using FEMININE titles, or grammatical forms, to refer to women is a behavior associated in Israel with the feminist movement.

The consequence of the association between Na'ama's linguistic behavior regarding the stationary and a feminist identity or ideology can be seen in the outcome of this *ma'avak al haniyar* 'struggle over stationary.' Her request was eventually honored. After two years, the municipality finally printed official council stationary with the FEMININE title, but Na'ama was the only female member of council to use it. When I asked if the city gave it to the other women she reported, *ha'axerot lo rotsot et ze* 'the others(F) do not want it.' I did not have the opportunity to speak to the other female council members about their decision regarding the FEMININE titled stationary, but I believe it is reasonable to interpret their actions as a hesitation to linguistically highlight their female identities in relationship to their roles as elected officials. As might be expected, the administration did not act to naturalize Na'ama's linguistic choice.

51. vebimkom sheze yihyeh niyar shenotnim be'ofen ragil lekol xavrot hamo'etsa ze hafx lihiyot *niyar shel na'ama yisra'eli*.

and instead of this being the stationary that (they) give(M) as a matter of course to all the female members of city council, it became *the stationary of Na'ama Yisraeli*.

Without institutional support by way of a policy to distribute "gender appropriate" stationary to all members of city council (i.e. *xaver mo'etsa* for men and *xavrat mo'etsa* for women), the FEMININE titled stationary simply becomes associated with Na'ama.

As I stated at the beginning of this section, Na'ama's identity within the Israeli political community was associated with a feminist agenda. I am not arguing that we should interpret the actions of the other women as "anti-feminist." It is possible that their rejection of the FEMININE stationary simply indexes their awareness of the fact that

linguistically highlighting their femininity in the context of Israeli political culture might hamper their ability to do the political work they were elected to do. However, what is clear from Na'ama's narrative, both in the context of the story itself and in the context of Na'ama's telling of it in the sociolinguistic interview, is that Na'ama understood her use of language as a feminist act. However, as the statement in the title of this section (another quote from Na'ama) makes evident, language reform as an individual act does not really work. I believe her telling of this story in the context of her testimony about her struggles with language use indexes Na'ama's awareness of the way innovative uses of language in the feminist effort to create social change can "backfire." Na'ama's story can be understood as a cautionary tale illustrating that failed attempts at language reform can serve to simply reinforce the marginal position of feminists in the mainstream Israeli socio-political context. In contrast, it can also be interpreted as an explanation of the need for more women to adopt feminist practices of resistance. Had the other women or the institution followed Na'ama's lead, the change in language use might have made a social statement that Na'ama's individual effort failed to accomplish.

#### **8.4 INNOVATIVE ACCOMMODATION: TERMINOLOGY FOR A NONTRADITIONAL MARRIAGE**

As stated earlier, all uses of language are social acts that can have different meanings in different communities of practice. The term *ba'al* in the context of mainstream Israeli Jewish society indexes the relationship between a woman and the man to whom she uses it to refer as a marriage. In the feminist community of practice, however, the use of this term is associated with the unequal relationship between men and women in the patriarchal construction of marriage. Thus, the preferred feminist practice for referring to a woman's husband is the use of the term *ben zug*. The term *ben zug*, literally 'male partner of a couple,' does not, however, clearly identify a relationship

as a legal marriage in either the feminist or the mainstream context. Merav, a feminist Jewish woman married to a non-Jewish Arab man, reported to me that “most of the time” she used the conventional term *ba'al* rather than *ben zug*. In this section, I examine her discourse regarding her reported practice and her actual behavior in the interview to demonstrate the way she skillfully negotiated the representation of her identity as a Jewish Israeli feminist married to a Arab man.<sup>103</sup>

I knew Merav from my previous interactions with women in the Israeli feminist community. Hence, like with Na'ama, we had an established relationship prior to our interaction in the context of the sociolinguistic interview. Unlike Na'ama, Merav was not aware of the focus of my research before the interview conversation, but I was aware of her marriage to an Arab man and the problems related to ethno-religious intermarriage in the Israeli context. The piece of Merav's discourse I analyze is her metalinguistic commentary about the problems she faced choosing language to refer to her husband and, by extension, to their relationship.

When I explained the topic of my research to Merav and asked what she had to say, the first thing she reported was her use of the term *ba'al* to refer to her husband.

52.     yesh li lehagid al ze     she'ani rov hazman  
           I have to say about this that I most of the time
- mishtameshet bamila, legabei ha'ish sheli,  
           use the word, about the man that is mine (my man)
- mishtameshet bamila ba'ali, ki nora xashuv li  
           (I) use the word *ba'ali* because it is very important to me

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<sup>103</sup> Throughout this section I used non-Jewish, Arab or non-Jewish Arab in reference to Merav's husband to highlight that her marriage violated two aspects of the normative definition of MARRIAGE in Jewish Israeli society. First he is not a Jew, so it is a religious intermarriage not sanctioned by the proper authorities. Her husband is also an Arab, which in the context of Israeli society is the much more exceptional fact of the relationship.



sheyid'u she'anaxnu nesu'im.  
that (they) will know that we are married.

mamash mashehu, she'anaxnu asinu harbe  
really, its something that we did a lot

bishvil shenuxal lehitxaten. venora xashuv li  
so that we would be able to marry. And it is very important to me

she'anashim yeid'u she'anaxnu nesu'im.  
that people will know that we are married.

ve'ani lo motset shum mila sheyexola lehasbir et ze, betsura haxi peshuta,  
and I do not find any word, that can explain this, in the most simple way

sheyid'u sheha'ish haze hu gam ha'ish she'ani nesu'a lo.  
that (they) will know that this man he is also the man that I am married to

The focus of Merav's statement in (52) is not the word *ba'al* itself so much as the importance of representing the relationship with her male domestic partner as a MARRIAGE. In the context of mainstream Jewish Israeli society, however, MARRIAGE is a religiously sanctioned relationship between a MAN and a WOMAN, and the definitions of WOMAN and MAN include the social identity Jewish.<sup>104</sup> Merav, as a Jewish Israeli woman, fits within this normative female identity. Her status as a legally married woman would also place her within the Israeli social category of WOMAN, but her husband does not fit into the category MAN. Thus, Merav's marriage to an Arab man is erased by the cultural assumption that a Jewish WOMAN would be married to a Jewish MAN. Thus, Merav's reported use of the term *ba'al* can be understood as a linguistic strategy to "unerase" the marital status of her relationship by using the term that is widely understood to index MARRIAGE in Israeli society. Her

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<sup>104</sup> Recall that marriage in Israel is under the authority of religious institutions. See chapter two, 2.4, for description of the relationship between civil and religious authority in Israel.

strategy is a form of resistance to the hegemonic practices of Jewish Israeli society that proscribe marriage between Jews and Arabs.

Despite her claim regarding this linguistic practice, Merav only *mentioned* the term *ba'ali*.<sup>105</sup> The lexical item she used in (52) was *ha'ish sheli* 'my man' and Merav immediately followed her claim about the use of *ba'ali* with the explanation that it was important to her that people would know they were married. She repeated this claim twice and contextualized it with the explanation of the difficulties they faced *shenuxal lehitxaten* 'that we would be able to marry.' The focus of her discourse on why she used the term and the fact that she did not actually use the term may be seen as evidence of her reluctance to use the term in a feminist context. Recall that her discourse was produced in response to my question about what she had to say regarding the issue of language use and women's status in Israel. She began her utterance with the phrase, *yesh li lehagid al ze* 'what I have to say about this.' Similar to Na'ama's contextualization cue in (48), Merav's statement lets her interlocutor know that the utterance that follows is a conscious report of her ideologies regarding this specific issue. She is performing as well as narrating her stance on language in a feminist context.

As I reported earlier, Merav and I had a relationship outside the interview context and I knew the story of her marriage. Merav could have simply stated I use the word *ba'al* ['husband'], and I would have understood her linguistic practice. Her more complicated and detailed answer indexes a consciousness of the feminist attitudes towards the conventional term. As noted, Merav never actually used the term *ba'ali* directly in any of her utterances during the interview. Table 8.1 shows the quantitative

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<sup>105</sup> The use of the term *mention* in this context refers to the semantic differentiation between "use" and "mention". See (Lyon 1977, pp. 5-7) for reference.

data on both her uses and mentions of the various terms available to refer to a domestic partner.

term for male marital partner	Ba'al	ish/ ish sheli	ben zug	partner's name	other alternative (gever sheli)
gloss	husband/ owner	(my) man/ husband	partner		man of mine
direct usage	0	4	0	0	2
mention	1	0	1	0	0
reported usage	yes		no		
attitude	negative		mixed		

Table 8.1 Merav's usage and assessment of lexical variants for 'husband'

Certainly, one explanation of the gap between Merav's claim and her actual use of language in the context of the interview can be understood as an audience-designed strategy to reinforce her status as a feminist. The immediate context of her discourse was a conversation about feminist language practices with a feminist researcher. Thus, her language use was means of indexing both her feminist identity and her awareness of the meaning of the term *ba'ali* in feminist contexts.

Indeed, Merav explicitly mentioned that her use of the word was problematic within the communal context of the feminist organization where she worked. However, I will demonstrate that, examined together, the data on her use of lexical terms in the interview and her metalinguistic discourse also index Merav's struggle to use the sociolinguistic resources available to her to perform a coherent self. Merav continued her commentary on the use of *ba'ali* with the utterance presented in (53). She explained why for her this word exemplified the problems between language use and women's status and specifically her problem as a feminist woman married to an Arab man.

53. az ani mishtameshet harbe bamila hazot, velo no'ax li ita.  
so, I often use this word, and I am not comfortable with it(the word).

bemeyuxad lo no'ax li ita bamerkaz siyu'a  
I am especially uncomfortable with it in the crisis center<sup>106</sup>

ki ze mila shemamash af axat lo mishtameshet sham.  
because this is a word that really no one used there

kulan omrot ben hazug sheli vekaxa.  
everyone(F) says(F,P) *ben hazug sheli* (my partner) and such.

In (53), Merav's juxtapositioning of her own reported practice with that of the other women at the feminist center highlights one reason why she claimed to be uncomfortable with the conventional term. As discussed in chapter three, the negative feminist attitude towards the use of the word is based on the literal meaning of *ba'al* 'owner,' which is productive in CIH. The semantic duality of the term in CIH is interpreted as an index of the patriarchal nature of marriage in the Israeli context. Thus from a feminist standpoint, Merav's use of the term might be interpreted as either her discomfort with feminist communal practices and/or the characterization of her marriage as an unequal relationship dominated by her male partner.<sup>107</sup> These two indexical meanings are related and mutually supportive in the feminist context.

Merav clearly stated that she was generally uncomfortable using the term, not only at the women's center. Earlier in our conversation, she had discussed her

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<sup>106</sup> At the time of the interview, Merav worked at a feminist organization that supported a center for victims of sexual assault.

<sup>107</sup> The fact that she is married to an Arab man further complicates this issue because in feminist communities, anti-Arab attitudes often take the form of highlighting the way Arab women are treated by husbands and other male relatives. Thus despite Merav's Jewish identity, the fact that she is married to an Arab is likely to raise suspicions about her status within their relationship. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to elaborate on the way racism interacts with sexism in the Israeli context beyond what has already been discussed. For a discussion of these issues from a feminist perspective, see Hassan (1993) and Shaloufeh Khazan (1993).

relationship with her husband and their plans for domestic partnership as one of the primary places where she enacted a feminist resistance to patriarchal norms for domestic division of labor. Thus, Merav's stated discomfort with the term may be seen as evidence that her discomfort is not simply related to performing a feminist identity for the sake of other feminists. She agrees with the feminist analysis of the term and has difficulty with way that MIH and conventional practices of use connect the concept of ownership to the concept of the HUSBAND. Merav's metalinguistic discourse highlights her dilemma vis-a-vis the use of contemporary Israeli Hebrew to perform a unified social identity in every context. The facts of her life made her reported use of the conventional term *ba'al* a form of resistance to laws that oppress ethno-religious inter-married couples. However, her discourse demonstrates that she felt forced to use it because the preferred feminist alternative, *ben zug* obscured, most likely by design, the difference between domestic partnerships and legal marriages.

Therein lies one of the most interesting aspects of Merav's actual language use during the interview in contrast to her reported use, what I referred to in the title of this section as "innovative accommodation." As shown in table 8.1, Merav referred to her husband six times throughout our conversation, three times in the metalinguistic discourse about *ba'al*, but she never actually used either the conventional term or the preferred feminist term. The term she used the most, was *ish* 'man/husband' or *ha'ish sheli* 'my man/husband.' Speakers might understand the use of this term, literally 'my man,' as 'husband' in the context of a conversation about marriage and domestic partnership, because it is the term used in the Hebrew Bible and classic Israeli literary texts. From a feminist perspective, the term would also be acceptable because it is the grammatical parallel of the conventional term for 'wife/woman,' *isha*. It is not clear that Merav intended to use this third alternative, indeed given her commentary it seems

unlikely, but her lexical choice in the context of the sociolinguistic interview does preserve all the relevant elements of her social identity. Her use of the term also points to the fact that the communal feminist practice of using *ben zug* to refer to all male domestic partners may index an overall issue with the institution of marriage. The availability of a third option to index both gender equality and legal marriage supports my analysis of an additional social meaning indexed by the feminist term. The additional indexical meaning would also conflict with Merav's expressed need to legitimize her unconventional domestic situation by highlighted its status as a legal marriage.

Merav concluded her commentary on why the use of a term to refer to her husband exemplified issues of language use and women's status with the following comment.

54. az ani xoshevet shebaroved haxi basisi  
so I think that on the most basic level
- yesh pa'ar me'od gadol bein hatefisat olam sheli,  
there is a very big gap between my world view
- levein hakelim shehasafa me'afsheret karega  
and the tools that the language allows me right now
- o she'ani regila lehishtamesh bahem.  
or that I the way I am used to using them.

The language Merav used to describe her sociolinguistic problem, *baroved haxi basisi yesh pa'ar gadol* 'at the most basic level there is a very big gap,' seems to indicate a real frustration with the way some aspect of her self-definition is erased with either term. Her story also points to the way that even in her community of choice, the feminist community, she felt "othered" by the way both linguistic choices indexed particular stances towards the concept of MARRIAGE. Merav's story is an example of one way Israeli feminists use language to negotiate double consciousness. Her story also

illustrates the way that feminist consciousness in the Israeli context often includes a consciousness of the way the “tools” available in the contemporary Israeli sociolinguistic repertoire are used to reproduce sexist practices and ideologies.

### **8.5 THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC MAKINGS OF ISRAELI FEMINISTS**

All language use by an overtly feminist-identified woman might constitute a form of resistance because the label ‘feminist’ carries with it the assumption of alternative, counter-hegemonic values. Both accommodation and resistance have advantages and disadvantages for the women of the Israeli feminist community and for the larger overall goal of creating social change within Israel. Linguistic innovation as a form of resistance can bring about change, but it can also result in the marginalization of a new practice or lexical item. Just as existing practices of language use encode layers of cultural meanings, so too new practices are invested with cultural meanings that can influence the interpretation of a given practice. Innovators do not have control over the meanings that others attach to their practices. Often the mainstream society invests new lexical items and language practices with indexical meanings that misinterpret the intentions of the innovators (Silverstein, 1985). Na’ama and Merav’s stories illustrate their consciousness of these sociolinguistic facts.

In Na’ama’s case, the fact that neither the other women on city council nor the institution itself adopted her linguistic practice, relegated it to the actions of a lone feminist pedant. Na’ama reported that it became something of a joke. Despite the institution’s implicit disapproval of her choice, actualized by its practice of refilling orders for the paper slowly so that she often ran out, Na’ama was not deterred. She reported,

batkufa shebein hadpasa lehadpasa keshe'ein niyar kaze, ani be'adom osa  
et hataf haze al haxaver mo'etsa. ve'ein, ze me'od ani kotevet (makes slash  
sound) vemosifa po taf laxaver mo'etsa. az ze kvar ole lehem al ha'atsabim  
az hem madpisim od pa'am

in the interim period between printings when there is not stationary like this, in  
red I add the *taf* (which makes it FEMININE) on the MASCULINE title. And  
there isn't, this is a lot (that) I write (makes slashing motion) and add the *taf* to  
*xaver mo'etsa*. So this becomes an irritation for them and so they print (it)  
again.

When I presented this story in the context of classes on feminist language practices at  
universities in the United States, many of the students evaluated Na'ama's actions as  
“over-the-top” and not necessarily central to enacting feminist political change.  
However, I believe it is possible to understand her actions as feminist acts in and of  
themselves. Na'ama succeeded in using language to index her whole social identity in a  
context that she felt was forcing her to choose between POLITICIAN and WOMAN.  
Her use of the term, even if it only served to index her feminist identity, nonetheless  
joined the two concepts through the FEMINIZATION of the title.

The meanings of the various ideologied terms examined in this chapter are  
socially constructed through their use and speakers' experiences with the ways they have  
been used in the past. As McConnell-Ginet (1989) noted, “the reproduction of meaning  
refers to our dependence, in producing meanings, on previous meanings or  
interpretations, to our dependence in particular on one another's experience with the  
linguistic forms being used.” (p. 37). Na'ama's story makes evident that the use of the  
MASCULINE grammatical forms for the official title of city council members linked the  
office itself with the concept of MAN. Her use attempts to create a vehicle for disrupting  
this linguistically socialized association. Merav's story also speaks to the issue of why  
meaning is dependant on our and our interlocutors' previous experiences with language.



Her difficulty in finding a satisfying term for that would index her relationship to her Arab partner as a marriage is very much about her experiences with language in both the feminist and mainstream contexts. In the context of the interview, she used an alternative that accomplished both tasks, but it is likely that this was a coincidence. Given that she did not overtly refer to this strategy in her metalinguistic discourse, it would seem that the term *ish* did not figure in her considerations for finding, *mila sheyexola lehasbir et ze, betsurā haxi peshuta* ‘a word that can explain this in the most simple way.’ This is not surprising considering that within the feminist community debate surrounding the term to use for a male spouse centers on the terms *ba'al* ‘husband/master’ and *ben zug* ‘partner(M).’ Furthermore, the alternative term *ish* ‘man,’ is not generally associated with the meaning ‘husband’ by most speakers of CIH because their experiences with language do not regularly include biblical or literary uses of the term *ish* to mean ‘husband.’

The conflict between external and internal values regarding feminist ideology is played out in Na’ama’s and Merav’s linguistic choices and their metalinguistic discourse about the difficulty of having their meanings understood. In their own ways, both of these women are cognizant of the relationship between practices of language use and the status of women. Their understanding of this connection and their ideologies about language direct their choices in the interview itself as well as in the narrated contexts.

The women discussed in this chapter take predictable stances as members of a marginalized community. Na’ama, who from an external position appears to fit comfortably within the construct of WOMAN, took her battle with sexist practices into every social context. As a grassroots activist and feminist politician, she refused to obey the rules of convention, even when her behavior resulted in her further marginalization. She was a leader in the feminist community, and her behavior, accorded her significant

respect within her chosen community. (The IWN campaign to encourage more women to run for elected office made use of Na'ama's story. The posters printed the word *xaver mo'etsa* with the MASCULINE title crossed out and replaced in red by the FEMININE title.) Merav, who we might say has a triple consciousness as a woman, a feminist and as a Jewish woman married to an Arab man, chose to locate one of her linguistic struggles against Israeli social norms elsewhere. Her commitment to feminist principles is evident in the work she chooses and in her desire challenge sexism within her family, but her primary concern regarding the linguistic element *ba'al* was combating the racist ideology and practices that would negate the legitimacy of her relationship with her Arab husband. Though they employ different means, each of these women acts with agency to assert an alternative vision for Israeli society.

The trap of double consciousness, as DuBois (1903) expressed it, is that members of a marginalized community do not have the power of agency in the development of their own identities. If individuals or communities do not have the power of agency in defining themselves or their experiences, then their experiences cannot be used as evidence to support social change. The women in my study refused to relinquish the power of agency. Na'ama refused to allow conventional practices of language use to curtail her ability to act and identify herself as a feminist politician. For Merav, several aspects of her identity demanded that she carefully negotiate her status as a Jewish woman, a feminist, and someone married to an Arab. By examining her whole experience, we understand that her claimed rejection of certain feminist practices did not negate her ideological commitment to feminist principles. She was an example of a woman who contradicted my former coworker's assertion that a woman who referred to her husband as *ba'ali* relegates herself to the position of being another's property. (See chapter three.) Merav did not allow either the feminist community or mainstream society

to dictate her language practices or how she performed her social identity. Instead, she used her experiences and her status in these two social frameworks to bring attention to yet another community of people whose identities and experiences are outside the norms of both. The issue of double consciousness is a negotiation between two sets of cultural norms; it is a person's struggle to create an individual identity that incorporates all of her experiences and allows her to maintain agency in her own life. Thus, feminist language practices are not simply intentional feminist acts of resistance; they are also linguistic behaviors through which speakers engage in the performance of a unified feminist self.

## **Chapter IX: Feminism and feminist language: Intertwined phenomena of social change**

### **9.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The primary theoretical issue I sought to address in this dissertation concerned the relationship between language, thought and reality, specifically grammatical gender, practices of language use, gender identity, and ideologies about gender and language. My research began with the following question: how do Israel feminists make use of the elements available in the contemporary Israeli Hebrew linguistic system to negotiate the construction and performance of coherent feminist social self in the context of male-dominated and highly militarized mainstream Israeli society? To answer this question, I examined both conventional and feminist practices of language use in Israel. I argued that to answer this question in a meaningful way, I needed to provide a contextualized analysis of the data, which included both the linguistic behavior and metalinguistic discourse from women associated with the Israeli feminist community.

In “An introduction to language and gender ideology among Israeli feminists,” the dissertation was located within the larger body of feminist research that examines the manner in which rigid patriarchal concepts of gender and gendered social roles are continuously reproduced in various socio-cultural contexts, including the cultures of “liberated” Western societies. I presented the two-part approach, based on McConnell-Ginet’s (1988) definition of language,

that I used to investigate variation in CIH speakers' use of grammatical gender to convey meaning in a variety of socio-cultural contexts and provided the readers with the overall theoretical goals of the dissertation. Chapter two began with a discussion of the theoretical perspective that gender is a socio-culturally constructed concept used to classify male and female humans beings as MEN and WOMEN and that the dissertation would address this issue from a sociolinguistic perspective. I explained that McConnell-Ginet's (1989) theoretical claim that gender inequality is reproduced by the prescribed use of MASCULINE forms for generic or inclusive reference was the starting point for both my research and analysis of the data. Using the theoretical concept of "community of practice" (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999) and relevant details about Israeli social, cultural, and linguistic practices as well as dominant ideologies about language and gender, I presented a scheme to illustrate the complexity of the context(s) within which my informants used language to negotiate their social identities and engage in feminist social change work. The schema described three levels of community relevant to my informants use of language and my investigation of the social indexical meanings of the feminist variety of CIH (mainstream Jewish Israeli society, the larger feminist community, and local feminist organizations or communities) and defined each as a community of practice. I also related my research to the larger body of scholarly literature on language ideology and argued that we should not be surprised to find that speakers with a feminist consciousness use language to enact an ideology that values gender equality and/or attempts to address the second-class status of women in the dominant

socio-cultural milieu. Chapter three described the sociolinguistic and ethnographic methods used to investigate the CIH speakers' variable use of grammatical gender for reference to male and females. In chapters two and three, I also presented some of my preliminary findings on language use in the mainstream Israeli and feminist communities of practice.

The second major section of the dissertation, entitled "Grammatical gender in use: Feminist Israeli Hebrew," presented findings from the quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistic analysis of my informant's linguistic behavior. In chapters five and six, the parameters of feminist Israeli Hebrew were defined through my analysis of variables that distinguished feminist language practices from prescribed or conventional practices of language use. I also evaluated the relative value of these variables as indexical markers of feminist identity or ideology and explained how my informants negotiated the meaning of linguistic elements in various contexts to convey referential and indexical meanings. The analysis of my informants' linguistic behavior showed that several linguistic and social factors related to the production of language, including some below the level of consciousness, shaped their discourse and contributed to both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation in the use of feminist and conventional variants in five morpho-semantic contexts.

In chapters seven and eight, located in the final major section, "Negotiating identity and the use of feminist Hebrew," I used the theoretical concept of indexicality (Ochs 1992) to present an integrated analysis of the behavioral and metalinguistic data. This integrated analysis accounted for my

informants' variation in language use by demonstrating that each speaker used the linguistic elements of CIH according to her individual assessment of how particular practices would enable her accomplish the two primary goals associated with her language use: (1) accomplishing the specific work of the sociolinguistic interaction and (2) performing her unique social identity, which usually included enacting a feminist stance vis-à-vis mainstream Israeli culture. In these chapters, I also showed the importance of evaluating feminists' efforts at language reform on both the individual and communal levels to accurately assess the meanings of their linguistic practices. Finally, I provided evidence for the theoretical and methodological arguments that sociolinguistic investigations of language use must examine both linguistic behavior and metalinguistic discourse to explain the relationship between practices of language use and the social identities of speakers.

## **9.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The major theoretical implications of the findings presented in this dissertation can be summed up as follows: the sociolinguistic and ethnographic analysis of empirical data on Israeli feminist language use yielded valuable, and I would even argue crucial, information about the way that speakers use grammatical elements to convey both semantic and social meaning. Furthermore, to dismiss or separate out the linguistic behavior of speakers who are consciously motivated to engage in innovative uses of language from the behavior of speakers whose innovative or unconventional use of linguistic elements appears more “unconscious” or “spontaneous” is to miss an opportunity to examine how these

two phenomena might be related on a cognitive level as well as what a comparison of them might tell use about language as a social semiotic system. The specific findings of my analysis can be roughly divided into four major points or conclusions.

The first major conclusion is that speakers are generally members of multiple communities of practice and the norms or values of all or some of those communities are available and possibly active in any given sociolinguistic interaction. The social meaning of inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation with respect to the use of a particular set of linguistic variables can thus more accurately be accounted for by using the concept of indexicality (Ochs 1992) in combination with more traditional methods of quantitative and qualitative sociolinguistic analysis. In the analysis of my informants' use of different variants to express the "same" semantic content, I demonstrated that the relative indexical value of different forms had implications for the linguistic choices of my speakers and how they rationalized those choices in metalinguistic commentary. Na'ama's behavior in city council, Merav's dilemma over what word to use for reference to her spouse, the conflict over language use on the voicemail message of the Israel Women's Network, and the overall inter-speaker and inter-speaker variation observed throughout the data set index these women's membership in the feminist community but they also give us important information about the norms and values of the multiple communities within which these women negotiate their social identities. By examining the variability of indexical meaning in the different communities of practice, we have a more



complete picture of the different and often conflicting communal norms that condition linguistic variation. The theory of indexicality gives us more resources for explaining, rather than just describing, how speakers make use of their linguistic repertoires when negotiating issues of identity and ideological stance, particularly when applied to the analysis of language use in multi-layered societies with a prescribed standard variety. This method also allows us to incorporate into our analyses the theoretical position that language use is a social act not a reflection of a social reality and that speakers must use language to accomplish specific tasks, only one of which is the performance of a social identity.

The second major theoretical point that is substantiated by the findings in this dissertation concerns the importance of considering language typology when developing models to explain how grammatical forms function at different levels of social meaning. For example, the existing models used to describe the relationship between grammatical gender forms and markedness cannot fully account for the complex and interactive nature of this relationship, because they were primarily based on the analysis of uses of the English language. My analysis of both conventional and feminist Israeli practices for the use of grammatical gender to convey referential and social indexical meaning demonstrates that the ideological level of meaning interacts with the formal structure of semantic hierarchies, such that the referential scope of both MASCULINE and FEMININE gendered forms are limited through habitual practices of use. The habitual association of both nominal and predicate forms

with a specific gender category creates more opportunities for linking the categories themselves with socio-cultural concepts of gender and gender distinction.

In one of the many stories that Na'ama told me about her "struggles" with language use in governmental institutions, she analyzed the reluctance to change from the MASCULINE to the FEMININE plural predicate on the automated message alerting callers that the phone operators, all women, were busy 'taking care' of previous calls. We may look at this story as an example of feminist hyperbole. Surely, Na'ama knew that the plural form of the predicate "taking care of" was interpreted to represent all the workers at the municipality, not simply the phone operators.<sup>108</sup> Her actions indicate that Na'ama understood this fight to be about the relationship between the gender of these workers and their status within the municipality. The change in language use was on one level a symbolic gesture of respect towards the female operators, whose job was one of the worst and lowest paid in the institution. However, it was also a means of raising their consciousness about the relevance of their gender to their treatment as workers. Na'ama claimed that her tactic was successful and the telephone workers became more active in arguing on their own behalf for better working conditions.

Her metalinguistic analysis of this incident pointed to the way cultural concepts of masculine and feminine work constrained the range of possible meanings of the predicate *letapel* 'to take care of.' In the FEMININE plural form,

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<sup>108</sup> Indeed, the first line of resistance she met was the administrators response that most of the workers at the municipality were male, which Na'ama pointed out was not in fact true.

the predicate could *pixitut kavod* ‘lower the respect’ of callers for the municipality because it would associate the institution with women’s ways of “taking care.” The MASCULINE plural, by covert contrast, (covert rather than overt since there was no FEMININE form with which to contrast) signals masculine ways of “taking care” (i.e. professional business). Despite the reluctance of the municipal administrators, she succeeded in having the language changed and reported that the change in language was so salient to that “every third” caller asked the telephone operators what was going on with the language. Na’ama summed up the implications of this story in the following comment:

You really get into some of these people saying *ma ze anu metaplot*. It’s unique, it’s unique. And what is this *pixitut kavod*? Why did the people the higher in the echelons feel that the word *metaplot* is much less eh worthy than *metaplim*? *metaplot bema metaplot bekaki bepipi bezəkeinim bexitulim, aval metaplim ze metaplim beba'ayot shel ha'iriya*. But what does this *iriya* do? Garbage and sewage and water and lighting and *bediyuk kaki vepepi* and all that *bediyuk* that’s what we do.<sup>109</sup>

You really get into some of these people saying *what is this we are taking care* [in the FEMININE]. It’s unique, it’s unique. And what is this “lowering of respect”? Why did the people the higher in the echelons feel that the word “take care of [in the FEMININE]” is much less eh worthy than “take care of [in the MASCULINE]”? [FEMININE] takes care of what? [FEMININE/feminine] takes care of shit and pee and old people and diapers, but [MASCULINE/masculine] taking care of, this is taking care of the problems of the municipality.

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<sup>109</sup> Na’ama was fluent in English and code-switched several times throughout our conversation. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to examine the meaning of her code-switching behavior. However, I would suggest that Na’ama’s close relationship with several American feminists, my identity as a native English speaker and American feminist, and her desire to index a strong pan-national feminist stance are factors that most likely contributed to this aspect of her linguistic behavior.

But what does this municipality do? Garbage and sewage and water and lighting and exactly shit and pee and all that. Exactly that's what we do.

We may look at this story as an example of feminist hyperbole. Surely, Na'ama knew that the plural form of the predicate "taking care of" was interpreted to represent all the workers at the municipality, not simply the phone operators.<sup>110</sup> Na'ama's explanation of the incident was that she understood this fight to be about the relationship between the gender of these workers and their status within the municipality. Her analysis of the municipalities reluctance to change the language and the salience it apparently had the callers to the municiplaity points to the way that social gender distinctions become linked to the referential meanings of any grammatical form that is marked for gender. The combination of the morphological structure of Hebrew and its binary system of gender classification seem to make the connections between social, biological, and grammatical categories more "real" for speakers. The change in language use was on one level a symbolic gesture of respect towards the female operators, whose job was one of the worst and lowest paid in the institution. However, on another level it was a means of raising the consciousness of both the public and the municipality about the relevance of gender in the context of workers rights. Na'ama claimed that her tactic was successful and the telephone workers became more active in arguing on their own behalf for better working conditions.

Variation in language typology has significant implications for the way that grammatical forms become habitually linked to semantic and social indexical

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<sup>110</sup> Indeed, the first line of resistance she met was the administrators response that most of the workers at the municipality were male, which Na'ama pointed out was not in fact true.

meaning. The analysis of feminist and conventional uses of CIH, as well as speakers' metalinguistic rationalizations of these practices, illuminates the relationship between the different grammatical and social meanings indexed by the use of linguistic forms in specific contexts in a way that the analysis of English discourse cannot. Models that posit a universal system of relationships between grammatical, notional, and social systems of classification based on the way the system of grammatical gender works in standard American English ignore the value of comparative linguistic analysis for strengthening the explanatory power of such models and create a misleading picture of the relationships between markedness, gender classification, and plurality as types of grammatical categories.

Additionally, theoretical models that posit the MASCULINE as the underlying and universally unmarked grammatical category can only account for the generic use of FEMININE forms by describing them as socially conditioned exceptions. The relationship between the grammatical categories of gender and markedness is significantly effected by practices of use and socio-cultural concepts of normative masculine and feminine social behavior. All generic forms are unmarked because of their association with culturally or socially conditioned relationships between the linguistic form and the typical representative of the class of individuals represented by the linguistic element. Thus, just as *axot* 'nurse' has a FEMININE generic form because speakers' real life experiences, in Israel (and in the United States), reify the association of nursing with feminine roles in the medical profession, so too *rofe* 'doctor' has a MASCULINE generic

form because the association is reified by speakers' real life experiences in Israeli society (and likewise in the United States). Theoretical models that insist on positioning the MASCULINE as the unmarked grammatical category ignore the possibility that its unmarked status may be an artifact of the socio-cultural conditions of language use. Theories that seek to describe the function of gender as a system of noun classification and more generally the relationships between the meanings of different grammatical categories must find ways to account for these facts.

The limitations of existing models for describing variability of the meaning of grammatical categories is also related to the ideological privilege that linguistic theories grant to “unconscious” linguistic variation over “conscious” or overtly ideologically motivated variation and lead us to my third theoretical conclusion. Throughout this dissertation, I argued that the innovations of feminist Hebrew are a cultural phenomenon related to feminist women's efforts to negotiate a coherent social identity in the context of a male-dominated social hierarchy. Israeli women who engage in feminist social-change work use language to express alternatives to the social indexical meanings that are associated, overtly and covertly, with conventional uses of MIH. It seems overly simplistic to state that innovative feminist linguistic behavior and feminist social-change work are mutually supportive socio-cultural processes. However, for me, the statement implies a set of intertwined ideological and practical stances on the relationship between language (both structure and use), gender (as social and

linguistic referential categories), consciousness, and the socio-cultural construction of “reality.”

Feminist language practices and metalinguistic analysis of sociolinguistic behaviors allow us to see how these relationships work or at least why prescriptive uses of the MASCULINE as generic have licensed sexist meanings and continue to do so. Israeli feminist linguistic behavior is inherently linked to feminist consciousness and the development of a feminist gender identity, which I believe entails liberating oneself from sexist ideologies that posit masculine = subject/self and feminine = object/other. These ideological associations are naturalized by practices of language use that erase the sexist contexts within which they are produced. Feminist language practices unerase the sexist context and “denaturalize” the symbolic relationships between the MASCULINE/FEMININE binary distinction and the other binary sets such as subject/object, self/other, agent/recipient that are metaphorically and categorically linked to the meanings of the gender based grammatical systems of noun classification. By using language in unconventional ways the feminists in my study expose or raise to the level of consciousness these submerged relationships, thus making more apparent or clearer the variety of meanings, both grammatical and social, that are associated with the linguistic category of gender. Furthermore, the sociolinguistic and semiotic processes related to feminist language use are the same as those that condition other behaviors that linguistic theory “naturalizes.” The ideology of a distinction between “natural” processes of language variation and “ideologically motivated” processes prevents us from

seeing the similarities and thus developing a more comprehensive description of the relationship between identity, world-view, and language use. The analysis of ideologically motivated language practices gives us important insight into the semiotic and cognitive processes by which grammatical forms or elements become linked to specific social indexical and semantic meanings.

Within feminist communities, the phrase “consciousness raising” has been used over the past thirty-five years to refer to the process by which women become aware, conscious, of the cultural ideologies and practices that collude to prescribe specific social roles to males and females in society. I would argue that the meaning of the phrase “consciousness raising” is quite literal and that feminist innovative practices are social acts that raise to the level of consciousness the processes by language (use) reproduces social inequalities. There are several examples through my data, both metalinguistic and behavioral, that point to the way that innovative uses of language make salient the habitual and covert associations between MASCULINE as unmarked and masculine as normative human. They denaturalize naturalized behaviors.

Osnat’s pedagogical use of feminist Hebrew in university classes was a particularly concrete example of how feminist language use practices are consciousness raising acts. She reported that each year when she began her practice of using FEMININE forms to address classes of mixed gender, she encountered different types of resistance. She guided her students through several extreme examples of the way men and the male perspectives are privileged by conventional practices of language use.



ani omeret lahem yoshev kahal shel nashim vegever exad betoxo,  
vetsarix ledaber eleihen bezaxar. ma ze omer? ma ze omer? ze omer  
shelo meshane im yesh elef o aseret alafim nashim, mi shekove'a et  
hamin shel hakolektiv ze hazaxar hayaxid shenimtsa sham. ze omer  
shekvodo shel hazaxar ha'exad haze shakul keneged kvoday shel ein  
sof nashim shetihiyena sham. ein dover ivrit shelo yavin et ze miyad.  
klomar she'i efshar lehavin et ze axeret, ze pashut kax.

I say to them, an audience of women sits with one man in its midst and one must speak to them in the MASCULINE. What does this mean? What does this mean? It means that it does not matter if there are one thousand or ten thousand women, the one who determines the gender of the collective is the single male that is there. This says that the honor of this single male is equal to the honor of an infinity of women that would be there. There is not a Hebrew speaker that would not understand this immediately. That is to say, it is not possible to understand it differently, it is simply so.

Osnat claimed that in light of this example no Hebrew speaker would be able to ignore the connection between sexist, or male-centric, practices of language use and a male-dominated system of legal and social Israeli institutions. Indeed, the reactions of her students to her practice of using FEMININE plurals to address the mixed gendered audience included discomfort, on the part of males and females, with the inverted relationships between the collective and the social gender categories. I believe her metalinguistic explanation of the social meaning of the MIH prescribed rules for gender agreement is not a comment about the language itself but rather a sophisticated feminist analysis of the underlying metaphorical relationships between language structure, language use, and the construction of social reality.

Benjamin Whorf, in his essays on “Language, Thought and Reality,” stated that there were two types of categories in language, overt and covert. The meanings of overt categories, phenotypes, are more readily accessible to speakers upon reflection. However, according to his theory, speakers are generally unaware of the meanings of covert categories, cryptotypes, and their relationships to the meanings of overt categories.

A covert concept like a covert gender is as definable and in its way as definite as a verbal concept like ‘female’ or feminine, but is of a very different kind; it is not the analogue of a word but of a rapport-system, and awareness of it has an intuitive quality; we say that it is sensed rather than comprehended. (1956, 69-79)

Using Whorf’s language, we can see that the cryptotype of Hebrew gender is its relationship to the covert category of markedness. Thus, this is the meaning that is primarily “sensed” rather than comprehended. I believe the data analyzed in this dissertation demonstrate that for feminists, the cryptotype of markedness and its relationship to the phenotype of referential gender is keenly sensed and comprehended. Furthermore, this relationship and its meanings have clearly visible consequences for the flexibility of cultures to recognize the social reality of gender identities, sexualities, and social behaviors that are not succinctly represented by “naturalized” communal practices. The cultural phenomenon of feminist ideology raises to the level of consciousness the “submerged state” of these types of relationships. Feminism is the “pronounced consciousness” that gives speakers access to a clearer understanding of the phenotype of gender. Feminist language use is the social practice that provides one means of exorcising

the hold of the habitual association between gender and markedness that contributes to the reproduction of sexist social practices.

We find similar innovative practices of language use with respect to the use of grammatical gender and the expression of gender identity in the gay community of Israel and elsewhere. Certainly in the feminist context there is an ideological stance regarding gender inequality that informs and conditions language use of some members of the community. In my dissertation, I argue (a) that we should expect this type of linguistic innovation in the feminist community and in the queer community because members of these communities are using their linguistic (or sociolinguistic) repertoire to enact their social identities which include aspects that are not necessarily indexed by conventional practices of language use in the contemporary Israeli context and (b) that the innovative uses of language are also a reflection of an alternative conceptualization of gender as a system of social classification. Thus, their linguistic innovation is not simply an ideological statement; it is also evidence of how speakers use their resources to express meaning and identity in language. In my data, I have found evidence of both habitual and intentional uses of language by feminists. I used these data to argue that feminist (and by extension queer) innovative practices have more in common with “natural” or “unconscious” phenomena of language variation, such as those described in Tobin (2001), than the existing literature on language variation leads us to expect. Thus, the ideological distinction between “natural” or “unconscious” linguistic behavior and “ideologically” motivated linguistic

behavior hinders our continuing research on the relationship between language and the socio-cultural construction of reality.

It for these reasons that I believe research on ideologically motivated linguistic innovation has crucial implications for those who research language and language variation in speech communities or communities of practice with a prescribed standard variety of the communities' languages. As I stated in chapter two, most descriptive grammars of languages with standard varieties present the standard as the only variety. Subsequent theoretical discussions of the relationship between linguistic elements, grammatical categories, and speakers' use of these resources to convey referential and indexical meaning are thus shaped by the erasure of the socio-cultural contexts within which the standard variety is produced. (See Irvine and Gal (2000) for a discussion of how linguistic research is susceptible to the same processes that "plague" native speakers ideological rationalizations of their language.) The legacy of Whorf's writings has been a focused exploration of the ways that linguistic and anthropological researchers could learn more about the manner in which language shapes and is shaped by cultural phenomena. It is clear that social change movements such as feminism in which individuals "break" rules of normalized behavior because existing social practices (including practices of language use) do not allow them to express their sense of self are precisely the socio-cultural contexts that provide researchers with data on how meaning is associated with grammatical forms. The analysis of this rule breaking behavior helps to make visible for speaker and linguists alike some of the covert associations that otherwise we only "sense."

### 9.3 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

My research into Israeli feminist practices of language use raised several theoretical questions that were left unexplored in this dissertation. There are four issues I will discuss in this final section: (1) gender agreement errors in the use of CIH to refer to the social behavior of speakers with both animate and inanimate nouns; (2) my informants' discursive presentation of the relationship between the development of feminist consciousness and practices of language use; (3) the relationship between feminist practices of language use and innovative practices of language use found in other communities of practices engaged in social change work, (particularly the use of grammatical gender within LGBT communities); and (4) the innovative practices adopted by the women in my study might be used as typological examples of how speakers in other contexts deal with asymmetrical relationships between other grammatical categories.

Within the corpus of my data, I found several examples of agreement errors between nouns and coordinated pronominal and predicate forms. According to the rules of MIH, the gender agreement marked on pronouns and predicates (including both adjectives and verbs) must agree with the noun they modify. In chapters five and six, I presented examples of agreement errors in utterances where the nouns did not directly refer to animate referents but were related to the social actions of males and females. For example, in two different utterances my informants referred to the "majority" of a group of social actors. In these utterances, my informants used two of the nouns that refer to a "majority." Each noun is marked for gender: *rov* is MASCULINE and *marbit* is FEMININE.

The phonological shape of each noun determines its gender and, according to descriptions of the MIH system of noun classification, the gender of these nouns carries no semantic information. Nonetheless, I found that the use of these forms to refer to women as the majority of gender-neutral group of social actors, regardless of whether they used the FEMININE or MASCULINE noun for “majority,” resulted in agreement errors. I also found several examples of agreement errors between predicates and their implied referents. In chapters five and six, I presented some possible explanations for these errors related to issues of speech production and the salience of the social meaning of gender in particular utterances. (Recall my analysis of Neta’s variation between MASCULINE and FEMININE second-person impersonal pronouns in 6.3.) I believe the analysis of these types of agreement errors, from my data, as well as data collected from other segments of the Israeli native Hebrew-speaking population, might provide important insight into the relationship between grammatical and social systems of gender classification. Furthermore the finding of this research could contribute to developing an enhanced model of language as a cultural system of meaning making.

The second area of investigation raised by my data concerns the way speakers use language, particularly narrative, to enact an ideological stance and invest it with the power of “truth,” (i.e. the power to shape their sense of social “reality”). The focus of this dissertation was my speakers’ use of specific linguistic practices to enact a feminist identity. However, throughout the sociolinguistic interviews, all of my informants created narrative texts that

interwove themes of gender identity, feminist consciousness, and their experiences of language use. I am interested in combining methods of critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistic analysis to examine how these three themes emerge in my informants' narratives about feminism and language use. I believe an examination of this type would provide insights into the ways in which language use, identity construction, and ideological beliefs become intertwined and shape our experiences of "reality."

I also believe it would be fruitful to compare how shifts in ideological and personal concepts of social identity and the processes of social distinction are manifested in the language use practices and metalinguistic discourse of speakers from a variety of social change oriented communities of practice. In section 9.2 of this chapter, I argued that feminism can be understood as a cultural phenomenon that literally raises speakers' consciousness of embedded or, to use Whorf's term, submerged meanings of grammatical forms. Members of communities organized around movements for social change often use language in unconventional ways because the habitual associations between linguistic forms and social meanings erase their own sense of reality (or the reality they are working to create). It is likely that examining language use practices from a variety of ideologically defined communities can bring insight into the processes of both consciously and unconsciously motivated language variation and change. Members of these communities are often more conscious than other speakers of the ways that language use conveys and contributes to the reproduction of cultural belief systems, thus I believe a comparative study of this sort would further illuminate

the mutually constitutive nature of the relationship between language, thought, and the situated construction of “reality” within discreet and multi-layered communities of practice.

Finally, data on innovative practices from the feminist community could be used to predict the ways that speakers might use language to accommodate for other types of asymmetries that are encoded by linguistic categories. For example the use of singular and plural forms together, marked by the SLASH, is often used by speakers who want to index an awareness of some kind of multiplicity that is historically been represented as a singularity. Another example is the use of ‘and’ and ‘or’ together in American English legal documents, which illustrates how a language practices encode a whole system of legal distinctions that are relevant to those who sign contracts. In both contexts semanticists would likely argue that one grammatical form or category includes the other, the plurality should imply multiple singularities, and “or” should include “and;” nonetheless speakers develop elaborate explanations for why it is salient to use the SLASH convention in these contexts. The social motivation in these cases is similar to the motivation for the feminist use of the SLASH gender forms; the practice makes visible the ideological and social consequences of asymmetrical relationships that are prevalent in linguistic systems.

Additional research on these topics will contribute our growing understanding of the multiple ways that the formal structures of linguistic systems relate to other cultural phenomena, particularly those systems that humans use to create and negotiate socio-cultural distinctions. Questions first put forth by Boas,



Sapir, and Whorf remain central to our ongoing investigation of the relationship between language and culture. The rigidity of language is linked to oppositions that exist in the structure of language and the ways that grammatical elements are associated with specific meanings. At the same time, I think this dissertation and additional research in the areas outlined above, can illuminate the resourcefulness of speakers in adapting and changing aspects of their languages and language practices to meet their communicative needs. Investigating how speakers intentionally and unintentionally change language to accommodate to changes in ideology, communal practice, and socio-cultural contexts can ultimately help us to better understand the nature of language itself and what makes human language and human's use of language unique.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A: LEXICAL VARIABLES RELATED TO ISRAELI FEMINIST LANGUAGE PRACTICES

<b>MIH Hebrew lexical item</b>	<b>English gloss(es)</b>	<b>Feminist attitude</b>
ba'al	'husband/owner'	negatively ideologized
ben zug	'partner (male)'	positive/preferred
ish	'man/husband'	positive
yuvali or yuval sheli	'partner's name + first person possessive morpheme'	positive
shutaf	'partner'	postive
meshivon	'answering machine'	positive (new term created by HLA at request of IWN)
mazkira elektronit	'electric secretary/ answering machine'	negatively ideologized
mankal	acronym for 'general manager (M)'	neutral
mankalit	feminized acronym for 'general manager(F)'	positive
ben adam	'person/human' literally 'son of Adam'	mixed neutral and negative
bat adam	'person/human' literally 'daughter of Adam'	neutral

Table A1: Sample of conventional and feminist lexical variables

Each section of the above table (separated by double lines) presents the conventional MIH lexical item and the feminist alternatives. In column three of the table, I present information regarding the attitudes of my informants to the various terms. This table does not represent a comprehensive list, only a sample of those lexical items that occurred in my informants' speech or metalinguistic discourse.

**APPENDIX B: GENDER AGREEMENT ON “DROPPED-SUBJECT” PREDICATES**

Subject	Total #plural tokens	# of FEMININE plural tokens	Total # singular tokens	# of FEMININE singular tokens
Dafna	6 plural	0 plural	0 singular	0 singular
Edit	10 plural	0 plural	1 singular	0 singular
Einat	16 plural	0 plural	5 singular	0 singular
Eti	14 plural	0 plural	4 singular	0 singular
Iris	15 plural	0 plural	4 singular	0 singular
Meital	9 plural	0 plural	3 singular	0 singular
Merav	10 plural	0 plural	3 singular	0 singular
Michal	4 plural	0 plural	1 singular	0 singular
Na’ama	11 plural	0 plural	4 singular	0 singular
Neta	7 plural	0 plural	1 singular	0 singular
Nitsan	14 plural	0 plural	2 singular	0 singular
Nurit	3 plural	0 plural	6 singular	0 singular
Ofra	7 plural	0 plural	2 singular	0 singular
Ora	14 plural	0 plural	4 singular	1 singular
Osnat	12 plural	0 plural	6 singular	1 singular

Table A2: Quantitative data on research subjects’ use grammatical gender agreement on “dropped-subject” predicates

The table above presents the data on my informants’ use of grammatical gender agreement on predicates with dropped impersonal or generic subjects. I did not include these in the analysis of other generic forms because the utterances in which they occurred did not always clarify whether the subjects of these predicates were previously mentioned agents or impersonal and somewhat abstracted agents, such as “the people” in the statement “here the people say ...”. In conversational Hebrew, speakers will often drop the pronominal agent because the information can be conveyed through agreement markers on the predicates. However, in the present tense only gender and number is conveyed, not person. The data presented above are tokens of gender marked present tense predicates that lacked overt subjects. Although the utterances in which they

occurred and the contexts of use did not allow for a clear identification of the agents of these predicates, I felt it was important to account for the use of gender on these forms. I have included these data in the dissertation because they demonstrate a practice of using MASCULINE predicate forms to co-occur with “dropped-subject” predicates.

The two occurrences of the FEMININE form in this syntactic context stand out as exceptions. Ora used the FEMININE singular predicate *roa* ‘see’ as an active verb and it appeared immediately after several uses of the same predicate in that form with the overt second-person pronoun as the impersonal. As such, we can probably assume that Ora had simply dropped the pronominal element in this case but intended it to be the impersonal second-person with the same referent(s) as the preceding uses.

In Osnat’s utterance, the predicate that appeared in the singular FEMININE form was *yexola* ‘can’ as the model verb preceding the predicate *limtso* ‘to find.’ The context of the utterance was her description of efforts to change the publishing standards for Hebrew academic journals and to allow for alternation between MASCULINE and FEMININE as generics. Osnat’s use of the FEMININE predicate with no overt subject occurred in a larger utterance the topic of which was the use of generics in Israeli academic journals.

ze lo kol hama<sup>1</sup>amarim kaxa ve<sup>1</sup>et hakol **yexola limtso**,  
 that no all the articles such and D.O. all can(F,S) to find,  
 Not all the articles are this way and one can find everything

In the larger utterance within which the variable appears, there were no other uses of the FEMININE second-person impersonal or other FEMININE generic agents. It is possible to interpret her usage as a direct address to her female interlocutor or as an impersonal generic. If her usage is interpreted as a FEMININE generic there are a few ways to gloss it: (1) “not all the articles are as such, and one can find it all;” (2) “not all the articles are as such and you can find it all;” or (3) “not all the articles are as such and all can be

found.” If we were to substitute the predicate *efshar* for *yexola* then there would be no need for an overt subject at all. The predicate *efshar* only appears in this aspect as the default MASCULINE singular in the present tense.

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## Vita

Andrea Michele Jacobs was born on November 25, 1968 in Wilmington, Delaware. The daughter of Barbara R. Jacobs and Robert Jacobs, she attended Brandeis University in Waltham, MA and was graduated magna cum laude with Bachelor of Arts with honors in English and American Literature in May 1990. Ms. Jacobs entered the department of Linguistic at the University of Texas at Austin in August 1991. She was awarded the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics, December 1993; her MA thesis was titled: *Grammatical gender and cultural ideology: Jewish women and their attitudes towards the language of traditional texts*. Between October 1993 and August 1994, Andrea lived in Israel, where she attended an intensive Hebrew language program, tutored Ethiopian immigrant children in the basic Hebrew language and math skills, and served as the research assistant on educational issues at the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews. In 1995, she was awarded a research fellowship by the Social Sciences Research Council. She spent the years of 1996, 1997, and 1998 living Jerusalem and working with different organizations in the Israeli feminist community. From January 1997 until June 1998, Andrea was also the Israeli coordinator of a college semester abroad program on peace and conflict resolution issues within Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian societies, sponsored by the School for International for Training in Brattleboro, VT. Ms. Jacobs served as the assistant director of *Kolot*, the center for Jewish women and gender studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, PA between March of 1999 and August of 2000.

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This dissertation was typed by the author, Andrea M. Jacobs.