

younger ones?

15. What age related problems do senior immigrants from the US or Canada have in Israeli society?
16. What are the difficulties of being an English speaker in Israel? What are your daily challenges of being an English speaker?

- Do you have children abroad?
 - Where do you live in Israel? Do you think that where you live and what you do all day affects your ability to acquire or be fluent in Hebrew?
 - Are you basically happy here? Are there specific things you are not happy about?
 - Do you intend to stay in Israel?
 - What is your biography in terms of learning languages?
 - Do you think it's more difficult for English speakers to learn another language than for speakers of other languages?
1. How is life in Israel for you without Hebrew or with limited amounts of Hebrew?
 2. What are the things you can't do now that you used to do before *aliyah*?
 3. What is considered a special effort in language for you that you need to bring special energies for?
 4. How does society treat you not being a native Hebrew speaker? (types of reactions: inclusion/exclusion)
 5. How do/did you manage with limited levels of Hebrew?
 6. Do/did you feel a need to learn and acquire Hebrew?
 7. What are/were your strategies of going around Israel with limited levels of Hebrew?
 8. In which situations, if at all, do/did you feel included and/or excluded?
 9. Do you see yourself here as 'the other?' As (American, non-Israeli?)
 10. Do you feel any kind of language discrimination? Give examples of such situations.)
 11. Do you think being a speaker of English gives you special privileges? What are they?
 12. Would you like to know more Hebrew or other languages?
 13. What is your opinion about the *Ulpan* system? Is it useful? What role does it play in your life ... social?
 14. Do older immigrants have more difficulties acquiring Hebrew than

3. Despite the prevalence of the English language in Israel, do senior citizen English speaking North American new immigrants need more attention than other immigrants? Yes / No Comment:

F.

Answer the following by giving examples:

1. Give two examples of the age-related problems that affect the acquisition of Hebrew by senior immigrants:

a.

b.

2. Give examples of situations where you had difficulties because you did not know Hebrew and say how you functioned in those circumstances:

a.

b.

3. If assuming there are no opportunities to learn Hebrew formally, what suggestions do you have to increase the informal opportunities for senior citizen immigrants to function in Israeli society? Give two examples:

a.

b.

Appendix B: Interview Questions:

Background Questions:

- How old are you?
- Where did you come from?
- How long are you in Israel?
- Did you live in Israel before *Aliyah*?
- Why did you make *Aliyah*?
- Did you come alone or with a spouse? With children?

1. Speaking English in Israel is viewed positively by most. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Senior North American immigrants are not treated well if they don't speak Hebrew well. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Senior North American immigrants should view Hebrew as an important language. 1 2 3 4 5
4. It is not important that my children raise theirs in English 1 2 3 4 5
5. My home language is not important to me. 1 2 3 4 5
6. It is important that the media and public services use other languages besides Hebrew. 1 2 3 4 5
7. English is a threat to Israeli culture 1 2 3 4 5
8. Senior North American immigrants who do not speak Hebrew should make an effort and learn the language. 1 2 3 4 5
9. Immigrants should not be allowed to maintain English. 1 2 3 4 5

E.

Answer the following: Circle the correct answer Yes/No and add your comments

1. Can senior citizen English speaking North American new immigrants acquire Hebrew? Yes / No

How different is learning Hebrew at an older age for senior citizens?

Comment:

2. Do senior citizen English speaking North American new immigrants need more help in acquiring Hebrew than younger ones? Yes / No

Comment:

A.

1. Gender: F/M
2. Age:
3. Country of Birth:
4. What year did you immigrate to Israel?
From where? City:
How old were you at that time?
5. What is the main reason that you immigrated to Israel?
6. Education: How many years of schooling did you have?
7. Where do you live now (place of residence)
8. Current employment Retired? Yes/No
Your employment in your previous country (what kind of work did you do?)
9. What was your first language:
10. Which other languages do you speak? How often are they used and in which contexts do you use them?
11. Which language(s) do you use at home currently?
12. Which languages, including your own, are important to speak?
a. at home b. outside

B.

Please rate the difficulty you have in doing the following in each language according to the following scale:

1 2 3 4 5

not at all very well

	Hebrew	English	Other
1. Write a formal letter			
2. Write a note to a friend			
3. Fill out a form			
4. Participate in a formal conversation			
5. Understand a simple conversation			

of immigrants from the U.S. Future research might include a comparison to English speakers from other countries. Another possibility would be to conduct a qualitative study of senior English speaking immigrants' language acquisition difficulties as compared to various immigrant groups who speak other power languages such as French and Russian.

Recommendations

The author recommends using the findings to heighten awareness of the people behind the language, and hence to make an argument in support of wider inclusive policy for services and rights of senior English speaking immigrants from the US in Israel. It is hoped that studies such as the present one can be applied to help empower senior immigrants in other multilingual situations where they encounter second language acquisition difficulties and acceptance into their societies.

Appendix: Questionnaire and Interview Questions

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Tel Aviv University
The Jaime and Joan Constantiner
School of Education
Shalom,

Thank you for participating in this study. I am doing my M.A. thesis at Tel-Aviv University, Program of Language Education. My thesis is about the immigration of senior citizens from North America to Israel and how they fit into Israeli society.

This questionnaire is anonymous and is to be used for my research purposes only. It will not be shared with others and any information you give is for my personal use only. I promise you complete confidentiality. Your assistance is essential for the research. As such, please answer the following honestly. Please answer all of the following questions by either filling in the missing information or by circling the relevant answer.

are better off than other immigrant groups. Just because they speak the power language, English, does not mean that they are not in need of assistance in their adjustment to their new homeland. Their integration, social acceptance, and their special needs as seniors should be just as important as that of other immigrant groups.

One practical suggestion is that government offices, especially the Jewish Agency and the Absorption Agency (*Misrad Ha-Klita*), take the specific needs of all immigrant groups into consideration. Immigrants need to be given attention by these offices, but groups that have a power language should be treated as people in the context of immigration and not as language objects.⁵⁷

Conclusions and Future Research

Although they speak the power language, English, these senior immigrants can't rely on their English alone in their daily lives in Israel and in their dealings with agencies. In fact, their knowledge of English may be a hindrance to them rather than an asset. Older immigrants from any country, but especially from the U.S., are at a disadvantage not being in the workforce as they have less exposure to Hebrew. They came from a monolingual English only background and Israelis want to speak that desired language with them. Thus they have fewer opportunities to speak Hebrew.

Finally, it is much more difficult for older immigrants from the U.S. to speak Hebrew than for younger ones from the same background. Nonetheless, the dominant perception in Israeli society is that they are much better off financially than many others, and can thus glide effortlessly through daily life. It is hoped that this study will bring about a better understanding of the reality of this group of people.

A limitation of this study is that it is based on the self-reported observations of the participants themselves. It is possible that a more objective assessment of the participants' Hebrew ability would have resulted in different conclusions. Another limitation is that this research was confined to study

and it takes many years of residing in the country to achieve. Finally, the results confirm that senior English speaking immigrants from the U.S. are a diverse group, as there was no agreement among them on various topics dealing with Hebrew and English in Israel.

There was almost total agreement in the qualitative analysis that senior English speaking immigrants from the U.S. can acquire Hebrew. However, it is more difficult for them to do so due to age-related issues. It is a slower process, but one that most agree should be undertaken. The implications of these findings show that these immigrants are highly dependent on society to help them in this process. They do not have the contexts of socialization or a place to meet Hebrew speakers, as do younger immigrants who are still a part of the workforce.

There were complaints in the interviews by the participants about the difficulty of speaking on the telephone without a realistic English option. In those cases the seniors have to ask for help, mainly from their spouses or their children. Also, translation into English of important medical information is lacking. The implications of these issues show that there is a need to heighten the awareness of the public to the needs of these immigrants as to having the option of information translated into their language.

Marginalization, exclusion

Though English is a power language and most Israelis have a command of the language, many of the participants expressed their feelings of exclusion when they are in the company of Israelis who won't accommodate them and speak to them in English. Some of the seniors, who felt that they could communicate in Hebrew, were spoken to in English because the speakers thought they were "helping" them. This left them feeling marginalized. They desire is to be part of Israeli society, but many feel frustrated as they are viewed as American even when they speak Hebrew. It is true that demographically, immigration to Israel from the U.S. and Canada of seniors is smaller than immigration from some other countries. However, they are an immigrant group and they deserve to be seen as one. There needs to be not only a genuine interest in the welfare of these immigrants but also a dramatic shift in the perception by Israelis that these immigrants

medically in understanding and making themselves understood with doctors. Though desiring to be independent, they are dependent on family members or friends to translate for them. Other age related problems pertained to learning a language, such as memory problems.

Q: Have you experienced language discrimination?

A: Even at concerts, the explanations are only in Hebrew. Also that many businesses and medical groups don't have an English option on their phones and if they do, when you get to talk to the person on the other side, it is only in Hebrew.

Q: Have you felt excluded from Israeli society?

A: Feelings of exclusion when in the company of Israelis and they talk in Hebrew even though they know that the senior's Hebrew vocabulary is limited.

6. Discussion

Difficulty in acquiring Hebrew

The goal of the study was to examine the situation of senior English speaking immigrants from the U.S. in Israel, from the point of view of their language acquisition experiences and their daily experiences of life in Israel having limited levels of Hebrew. By focusing on this population, this study attempted to expose the specific difficulties these seniors have in acquiring the language as they navigate their lives in a Hebrew-speaking environment. From the findings we see that it is more difficult for older senior English speaking immigrants from the U.S. to acquire Hebrew than for the younger ones among them. Their difficulties include writing a formal letter, writing a note to a friend, filling out a form, participating in a formal or in a simple conversation, understanding news on the radio, reading a book, talking on the phone, using the language at home, or understanding a lecture in Hebrew. The findings also confirmed the hypotheses that Hebrew speaking ability is affected by length of residence in the country. Thus, using Hebrew in the bank or other agencies and in stores; using the language with the handyman, or while talking to doctors; understanding public speeches in Hebrew; communicating in Hebrew with immediate family, with relatives and with grandchildren is very difficult

every day; you would be surprised what sinks in."

A man, aged 75 answered: "KEEP TRYING. Speak Hebrew to pets that are never critical when mistakes are made."

The general results of the interviews are as follows:

Q: Is it more difficult for older senior English speaking North American immigrants to acquire Hebrew than younger ones from the same background?

A: Older immigrants with no Hebrew at all have much more trouble acquiring Hebrew than younger ones.

Q: Is it more difficult for English speakers to acquire Hebrew than for speakers of other languages?

A: The difficulty stems from the fact that Israelis want to speak English with them. Another aspect is that many Americans have never acquired a second language before.

Q: How do you go about your daily life in Israel on limited levels of Hebrew?

A: If I'm not understood, I either don't do it at that moment or ask for it in English.

Q: What can't you do now that you could before your *Aliyah*?

A: Difficulty in talking on the telephone comfortably, and in talking on the phone when there's no option for English.

Q: Do you need to have extra energy in situations dealing with language?

A: It's a daily battle to go out into the society and assert one's Hebrew.

Q: How effective was the *Ulpan*?

A: It helps you gain vocabulary but it does not help you in speaking Hebrew.

Q: Do you feel that knowledge of English is a privilege in Israel?

A: Mixed responses. Some felt it is a hindrance and not a help, while others felt it opens doors.

Q: What age-related difficulties do you have in Israeli society?

A: English speaking immigrants from America have age related problems

cellphone general service."

Part F of the questionnaire consists of 3 questions:

1. Give two examples of the age-related problems that affect the acquisition of Hebrew by senior immigrants.

A man, aged 64 gave these examples: "Loss of memory and hearing is prevalent in seniors"; "lack of places to practice speaking Hebrew, due to non-working." A woman, aged 72 gave these examples: "More repetition is required"; "Short concentration spells".

2. Give examples of situations where you had difficulties because you did not know Hebrew and say how you functioned in those circumstances:

A woman, aged 64 wrote: "When we arrived I did not know the names of various foods, such as cheeses when shopping so I found it difficult to tell the clerk what I wanted. I overcame it by using my hands, making animal sounds i.e. baa baa for goat cheese and I asked other customers in the store." "I had trouble with the money on the buses and the drivers spoke very quickly. I overcame this by giving the driver a 20 shekel bill and let him give me the change."

A woman, aged 72 wrote: "On telephones when trying to get doctors' appointments and messages are left on a computer – no opportunity to ask questions etc. Had to turn to my children to make appointments for me as I call on them when official letters or forms arrive in the post." "Communicating with medical aid officials in respect of needing supplementary medical assistance, again had to call on my children's assistance. Also with computer problems. With every intention of being independent of my children I find them indispensable in aiding me with these hassles."

One woman, aged 78 wrote: "Not understanding lectures or written directions." "Bills – almost impossible."

3. Assuming there are no opportunities to learn Hebrew formally, what suggestions do you have to increase the informal opportunities for senior immigrants to function in Israeli society? Give two examples.

A woman aged 64 wrote: "I would encourage them to volunteer thus coming in contact with Hebrew speakers and if possible to take Hebrew lessons before making aliyah." "Watch Hebrew TV for a few hours

Part D: General attitudes towards Hebrew/English

There were no significant results in the questionnaire. While some answered that they agreed completely that senior North American immigrants should view Hebrew as an important language, and that those who do not speak Hebrew should make an effort and learn the language, there were others who did not agree with this. While most agreed that speaking English in Israel is viewed positively by most, there were others who disagreed with this.

A woman aged 78 said, "I think English speakers are less willing to learn (Hebrew). They think everyone should speak English. I found as a language teacher I had to convince my students of the importance of learning a foreign language."

Part E of the questionnaire consists of 3 questions:

1. Can senior English speaking North American new immigrants acquire Hebrew (yes – no)? How different is learning Hebrew at an older age for senior citizens?

Answers: Yes = 32; No = 1. Comments:

A woman aged 76 wrote that "it's a slower process but can and should be done." A man, aged 75 wrote that "it varies by individual. Generally, learning anything new, including Hebrew, becomes significantly more difficult as one ages."

2. Do senior English speaking North American new immigrants need more help in acquiring Hebrew than younger ones?

Answers: Yes=27 No=2 N/A= 3 Both= 1. Comments:

A woman, aged 64 wrote that "many of us have not been in school for many years and it is difficult for some to remember."

A woman, aged 64 wrote that "younger new immigrants usually are working and therefore find it easier to learn and use Hebrew."

3. Despite the prevalence of the English language in Israel, do senior English speaking North American new immigrants need more attention than other immigrants?

Answers: Yes=13 No=17 N/A=2 Both=1. Comments:

A woman, aged 78 wrote they need more attention because Russian is available very easily everywhere while English is not, i.e. phones,

using Hebrew in his/her daily lives, a one-way anova was conducted. Table 2 presents this information. The results were as follows:

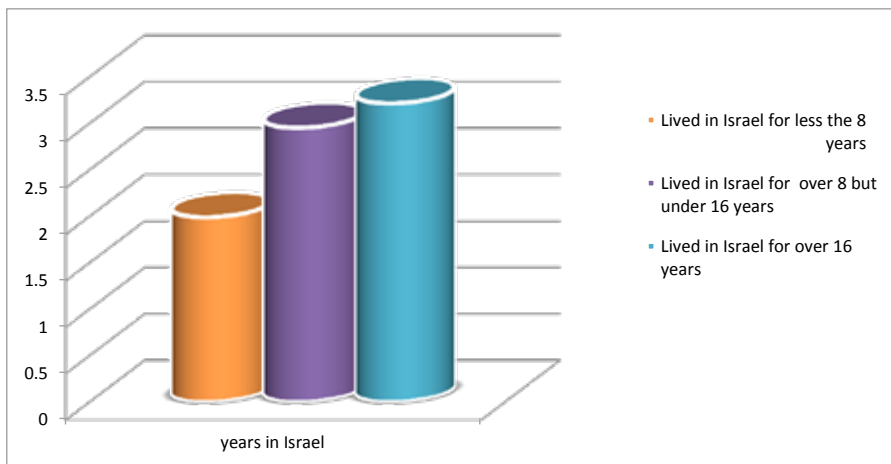
$$F(2,30)=4.132, p<0.05$$

Table 2: One-way anova in language ability

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.00	14	1.99	.98
2.00	8	2.95	1.16
3.00	11	3.21	1.23
Total	33	2.63	1.22

The difference is found between group 1 and group 3. In order to gain further insight as to the source of the difference, a Scheffe Post Hoc test was conducted, as seen in Figure 1. Those immigrants who have lived in Israel for over 18 years have better abilities in speaking Hebrew than residents of fewer years.

Figure 1: Hebrew ability increases along with years of residence in Israel



A woman, aged 68, said that "the more you live here the more comfortable you learn certain words and certain things. I believe that there's nothing wrong with understanding as much as you can to feel more acclimated."

5. Results

Descriptive statistics from the questionnaire

Part B: General language proficiency and functionality in Hebrew:

In order to understand the correlation between age and the difficulty in acquiring Hebrew, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The results were as follows:

$$r(31) = .294, p < 0.05$$

This means that the older the person is, the harder it is for him/her to acquire the language. To further examine this question, the means and standard deviations were computed for the language difficulty items. Table 1 presents this information. The 33 seniors who answered the questionnaires were divided into 3 equal groups of 11 participants each: Total: $n=11 \times 3=33$. Group 1 consists of the oldest seniors, group 2 the middle and group 3 the youngest.

Table1: Means and standard deviation in language difficulty:

Age Group	Mean	S.D.	N
1.00 (77-87)	2.55	1.43	11
2.00 (69-76)	2.18	.91	11
3.00 (59-67)	1.73	.91	11

A woman, aged 59, commented on this issue in her interview: "It's very difficult for the older immigrant to function effectively in Hebrew. I've known some younger people that have settled in quite well and have made the transition with language. But for the older person it's much more difficult."

Spoken Hebrew proficiency in everyday social situations based on Part C of the questionnaire:

In order to examine the relationship between the number of years that the new immigrant is in Israel and how it affects his/her language ability in

Israeli society; on instances of language discrimination and on how they are treated by immigrant agencies along with describing specific episodes of their experiences. The interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour in duration.

Data Collection

The researcher put an advertisement on three internet sites asking for the Anglo population of Israel for a response. The name of the ad was: "Questionnaire for over 60 year old new immigrants from the U.S. and Canada." The ad explained that a student at Tel-Aviv University's School of Education, Program of Language Education, English, is doing an M.A. thesis on the adjustment of senior new immigrants from the US or Canada, to life in Israel. The ad went on to explain the scope of the study. The criterion that was needed was that the person be 60 years old or older, or has come to Israel to retire. Respondents were given the student's email address and were told they would receive a questionnaire to fill out and then return via email. Participants were informed that the questionnaire was anonymous and they would be guaranteed full confidentiality and any information that they give is for research purposes only. The questionnaire was four pages long and was constructed in English which was the dominant language for the participants. The data was collected from January 2012 to June 2012. Twenty-four participants answered these ads. The remaining nine questionnaires were filled out by participants who heard about the study and suggested other names for participation in the study.

The data was analyzed using the SPSS statistical package. Quotes from the interviews were added to support the statistical findings.

Data was also collected from the 10 semi-structured interviews that occurred between January, 2012 and July, 2012. Some of the interviews took place in the participants' homes where the interviews were recorded on an MP3, while others were done in interviews on the computer using Pamela for Skype, and an MP3 for backup. Participants reported episodes of their experiences as senior English speaking North American new immigrants. Relevant pictures and records were viewed.

home and understanding a lecture in the language.

Linguistic Ability (Hebrew or English):

Participants were asked to respond to the following 8 items, ranging from 1 ('with difficulty') to 5 ('very well'): what is their current ability to use Hebrew/English in the bank or other official agencies, to use the language in stores, with the handyman, to talk to doctors, to hear public speeches, with their families, with extended family-relatives, and with their grandchildren if they have any.

Opinion (degree of consent with the following statements):

Participants were to state their opinions about the following 9 sentences, between 1 ('you disagree completely with the sentence') and 5 ('you agree completely with it'): speaking English is viewed positively by most; senior North American immigrants are not treated well if they don't speak Hebrew well; senior North American immigrants should view Hebrew as an important language; it is not important for my children to raise theirs in English; my home language is not important to me; it is important that the media and public services use other languages besides Hebrew; English is a threat to Israeli culture; senior North American immigrants who do not speak Hebrew should make an effort and learn the language and immigrants should not be allowed to maintain English.

Qualitative Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interviews began with background biographical questions about the participants lives. They responded to questions about their age, where they came from, how long they are in Israel, why they made aliya, if they came alone or with other family members such as a spouse or with children, if they have children living abroad, if they intend to stay in Israel and if they are basically happy in Israel. Interviewees were asked about their linguistic background, including not only which languages he/she had learned but also description of success or failure experienced in learning those languages. All of this led to questions about the immigrants' perceptions of how they manage their daily lives on limited levels of Hebrew, on inclusion or marginalization in

Quantitative Analysis

The 33 participants in the questionnaire were divided into three equal groups by age. Each group consisted of 11 participants. Group 1 started at 59 years of age and ended at 67 years of age. Group 2 started at 69 years of age and ended at 76 years of age. Group 3 consisted of those aged 77 years of age and ended at 87 years of age.

The following is a review of the Independent Variables:

Age:

The youngest participant was 59 years old and the oldest was 87 years old at the time that they completed the questionnaire.

Years in Israel:

Part A, Item #4 requested that the participant write their age at the time they immigrated and the year in which they immigrated to Israel. This variable indicated the number of years the participant had been living in Israel.

Country of origin:

All of the participants were new immigrants from the U.S. with the exception of 2 participants who immigrated from Canada, 2 from England and 2 from South Africa.

The following is a review of the Dependent Variables. All consist of a Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Language Difficulty:

Participants were asked to rate the language difficulties they have in Hebrew, English and any other languages that they know, from 1 ('not at all') to 5 ('very well'). They were asked to respond to the following ten items concerning their language difficulty in: writing a formal letter, writing a note to a friend, filling out a form, participating in a formal conversation, understanding a simple conversation, understanding news on the radio, reading a book, talking on the phone, using the language at

in Hebrew, English and other language(s) that they know, to discuss their feelings of inclusiveness or marginalization in Israeli society due to age and language difficulties, and to explore the importance the North American immigrants give to languages – especially Hebrew and English. The questionnaire consists of 6 parts:

A: Background questions such as age, gender, country of birth, year of immigration, current residence, educational background, and languages they speak.

B: Participants grade, on a Likert Scale from 1 to 5, the level of difficulty they have in Hebrew, English or other languages in writing a letter, filling out a form, understanding a phone conversation and the like.

C: Participants rate their ability, (from 1 to 5), in Hebrew or English in a bank, store, with a handyman, with extended family, and the like.

D: Participants were asked to rate, (from 1 to 5), their level of agreement as to their views on senior North American's treatment in Israel, if English is a threat to Israeli culture, if they should make the effort to learn Hebrew, and the like.

E: Participants were asked to answer three questions with Yes or No and to comment on their answers. The questions dealt with senior North American immigrants' ability to learn Hebrew, whether they need more help in acquiring Hebrew than younger immigrants and whether they need more attention than other immigrants who speak other languages.

F: Participants were asked to answer 3 questions by giving examples. The questions were: give 2 examples of age-related problems that affect seniors from acquiring Hebrew, give examples of situations where they had difficulties because of lack of Hebrew, and offer suggestions for enhancing informal opportunities for senior immigrants to function in Israeli society.

The questionnaire was developed according to the research design, which consisted of three independent variables and three dependent variables. The independent variables were: present age, years in Israel, and the place the participant came from. The dependent variables were ability, language difficulty and opinion.

proficiency in speaking Hebrew?

3. How important is knowledge of Hebrew to the elderly North American immigrants?

The Qualitative:

This study seeks to document, evaluate and categorize the specific experiences that the immigrants go through daily in terms of their relationship to adaptation in Israel.

4. The Design

The Sample

The sample consists of a quantitative and a qualitative analysis. A questionnaire was used as the instrument in the quantitative analysis. The elements of the questionnaire were broken down and explained and the dependent and independent variables were described. The qualitative analysis included semi-structured interviews. The questions that were used in the interviews were then listed and perused. The chapter ends with an explanation of how the data was collected for the questionnaire and for the interviews.

Forty-three senior former North American immigrants to Israel participated in the study in total. Thirty-three of them responded to the questionnaire and ten others were interviewed. All of them immigrated to Israel from the United States or Canada as adults and all of them are English speakers. Most of them are retired and did not work in Israel. At the time of the study, the youngest participant was 59 years old and the oldest was 87 years old. All are highly educated and the majority of them hold graduate degrees. Participants were located via word-of-mouth and through ads put on the Anglo internet sites such as Tanglo (Tel-Aviv), Janglo (Jerusalem) and Hanglo (Haifa).

Instruments

A questionnaire in English asks participants to self-report on their background and their writing, reading, speaking, and listening abilities

are perceived as privileged, powerful and whose home language (L1) is viewed as a high demand commodity.⁵⁶ In contrast, however, our findings showed that the English speaking immigrants faced language discrimination, marginalization and exclusion from Israeli society, and that they were ignored to an extent by the agencies that help new immigrants. The present study deals with consideration of the contribution that senior immigrants from the US who are retirees can make to Israeli society if they receive the attention and assistance that they deserve. Though they speak English, the powerful international language, it does not seem to help them enough in their daily lives. They come to Israel speaking a language that is considered powerful and prestigious in this day and age – a world language which is viewed as the main lingua franca, and a global language. This study now attempts to understand these immigrants' attitudes towards the new society they immigrated to and their perceptions of their host society. It also examines issues of identity that rise from the fact that these immigrants are not taking part in the workforce any longer, have limited levels of Hebrew or face language discrimination while dealing with the bureaucracy. Participants were asked the following: Can senior English speaking North American new immigrants acquire Hebrew and if so, how different is learning Hebrew at an older age? Other questions: Do they feel they need more attention than immigrants who speak other languages? When facing situations where they have difficulties because they don't know Hebrew, how do they function in those circumstances? In interviews, other participants were asked to relate episodes where they felt excluded from the society, and where they experienced language discrimination. These issues translated into three research questions:

Research Questions: within the old age category, the following questions are raised:

The Quantitative:

1. Is it more difficult for older senior English speaking North American immigrants to acquire Hebrew than younger senior immigrants from the same background?
2. How does length of residence in Israel affect the new immigrant's

מ' בלושטיין וא' שוהמי, "האם דוברי לשון עוצמתית זקוקים להעצמה?", הד האולפן החדש 99 (2102), עמ' 001. 56

adult lacks the opportunities to "language," perhaps due to social isolation, cognitive loss may occur.⁴⁹

3. The Study

Rationale

As noted in the literature review, older adult migrants are a unique group that has been given less attention in research studies on international migration than younger age groups, as they are not generally seen as being "active participants" in their new countries worldwide. Research is lacking on how these adults adjust to their new surroundings, their social adjustment after retirement in a new country, and their age-related difficulties in their use of a new language in their everyday lives while undergoing the physical and psychological difficulties of resettlement.⁵⁰ The social integration and migration literature has not adequately analyzed the immigration and integration of elderly people in Israel, in particular.⁵¹

Immigration of seniors is a phenomenon that is taking place in many countries, despite the fact that immigration at an elderly age is a risk factor for the well-being of the immigrant.⁵² It is also considered to be more difficult for this age group than for other age groups due to their "accumulated losses in physical cognitive and social resources."⁵³ Immigration involves major changes in social and cultural surroundings,⁵⁴ and is particularly stressful for older immigrants because they may be homesick for their home country and because they experience a sensation close to bereavement for all that they've left behind that was meaningful to them. This includes the loss of home and social networks.⁵⁵

In a previous study, we found that English speaking immigrants to Israel

49 Swain, p. 5-6.

50 Remennick, p. 154.

51 Amit and Litwin, p. 89.

52 H. Chow, Growing Old in Canada: Physical and Psychological Well-being among Elderly Chinese Immigrants," *Ethnicity & Health* 15(1) (2010), p. 68.

53 Carmel and Lazar, p. 31

54 Chow, p. 68.

55 Remennick, p. 154.

successfully into Israeli society.⁴³ On the one hand, older immigrants may be positively inclined to acquiring the language, but on the other hand have less exposure to the language because they are no longer in the workforce.⁴⁴ Now we will look at how age affects second language learning.

Age and Second Language Acquisition

Age is the variable most frequently excluded in analysis of second language acquisition among immigrants. Cognitive decline in later life that is age related might have an effect on second language proficiency. Studies have shown that around 15% of older adults (people over the age of 70) have mild cognitive impairment.⁴⁵ Thus younger adult immigrants may be more proficient in second language acquisition than older adults. On the other hand, some aspects of language proficiency are positively associated with age, such as vocabulary. This is most likely due to the accumulation over time of "exposure and experience".⁴⁶ Can older adult immigrants learn a second language? Ehrman and Oxford found that motivation and self-confidence in subjects over the age of 60 were second in importance after cognitive skills. Health factors and overall well-being are important in senior's language learning.⁴⁷

Second language attrition, or the decline of acquired second-language skills among older adults, can be due to fewer opportunities to use the language upon retirement. Different life-course stages and chronological age may be associated with opportunities and reasons to maintain, to improve proficiency or to speak the second language.⁴⁸ Swain uses the term "languaging" to refer to ways we produce language. This is evident in how we focus attention, plan, organize and solve problems. When an older

43 B. R. Chiswick, "Hebrew Language Usage: Determinants and effects on earnings among immigrants in Israel", *Journal of Population Economics* 11(2) 1998, pp. 253-271.

44 Gillian Stevens "The age-length-onset problem in research on second language acquisition among immigrants", *Language Learning* 56(4) (2006), pp. 671-692.

45 Merrill Swain, "Cognitive and Effective Enhancement Among Older Adults: The role of languaging." paper presented at the ALAA/ALANZ conference, Canberra, Australia, December, 2011, p. 4.

46 Stevens, p. 683.

47 Hubenthal, p. 105-107.

48 Stevens, p. 684.

aspect of pre-Zionist Palestine.³⁸ Monolingualism persisted and became dominant as the new generation of *sabras* spoke Hebrew only. For the first three decades of statehood, it was understood that immigrants would be absorbed into Israeli culture by leaving their former cultures behind. This included Hebraicizing their names and compelling them to attain a new identity. The allowance for multiculturalism and multilingualism came later on (in the late 1980's) in part due to the large immigration from the F.S.U. and Ethiopia.³⁹

Literacy and language acquisition play a role in creating and sustaining a national identity. The normative expectation is that immigrants will acquire Hebrew and function on a daily basis in that language.⁴⁰ Today, despite the presence of English on the street and its status in the educational system, Hebrew knowledge is essential in most aspects of daily life, so for those immigrants who struggle to learn the language, Hebrew is the language of 'the others.'⁴¹ To that extent, language has the potential of becoming an "exclusionary mechanism" that constructs, determines and preserves the "boundaries of the collective."⁴² The status of Hebrew as the main national language of Israel had a strong effect on immigrants in general, but specifically on English speaking immigrants in Israel.

Hebrew for English Speaking North Americans

Since English is a highly valued international language and a *lingua franca* in many countries, including Israel, English speaking immigrants have less incentive than any other immigrants to acquire Hebrew language skills. Among those who learned Hebrew before their immigration, only a minority actually used Hebrew regularly before arrival in Israel, either as their first language, their religious language, or as a second language. Israel tries hard through its *Ulpan* system to help new immigrants learn from scratch or improve their Hebrew. By learning Hebrew, new immigrants improve their marketability in the Israeli workplace and integrate more

38 Rabkin, 131.

39 Esther Schely-Newman, "Constructing Literate Israelis: A critical analysis of adult literary texts," *Israel Studies* 15(2) (2010), p. 199.

40 Schely-Newman, p. 197.

41 Elana Shohamy, "Reinterpreting Globalization in Multilingual Contexts", *International Multilingual Research Journal* 1(2) (2007), pp. 127-133.

42 Schely-Newman, p. 197.

and voluntary organizations, as well as the Internet.

Now let's review in brief the status of Hebrew in Israel in historical perspective, which will offer a framework for raising the issue of Hebrew for the English speaking senior from the US.

The Hebrew Language, Past and Present

From the end of the nineteenth century, the use of the Hebrew language was central to the ideology of the Zionist movement in Palestine. Hebrew was to become the common language of the "new Hebrew Man," as opposed to the Diaspora Jew. Over the century preceding the appearance of Zionism, Hebrew gradually broke away from being the language of the Torah and the prayer book (*lashon ha-kodesh*) to become a modern language whose origins were in Biblical Hebrew and whose ideology was tied to the history and the Land of Israel.³² The Zionist pioneers from Russia who arrived in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century and beyond were instrumental in pushing for Hebrew usage on a daily basis. Their efforts came to fruition when the British recognized Hebrew as one of the three official languages of Palestine in 1923.³³

Along with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Zionist leaders succeeded in creating a linguistic revolution³⁴ and the "ethno-nationalization" of Hebrew escalated.³⁵ During the 1950's new immigrants were given intensive instruction in Hebrew in *ulpanim*, which focused on oral proficiency.³⁶ Sociolinguists believed that linguistic homogeneity would unite the people to help build the nation.³⁷ This nation would use modern Hebrew, not Yiddish which was synonymous with the Diaspora. There was a disdain at that time of the multicultural and multilingual

32 Yakov.M. Rabkin, "Language and Nationalism: Modern Hebrew in the Zionist project", *Holy Land Studies* 9(2) (2010), pp. 129-145; W. Safran, "Language and nation building in Israel: Hebrew and its rivals", *Nation and Nationalism* 1(1) 2005, pp. 43-63

33 Rabkin, 132

34 Ben-Rafael (2000), 177.

35 Rabkin, 130.

36 Ben-Rafael (2000), 178.

37 T. Ricento, "Historical and Theoretical Perspectives in Language Policy and Planning," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4(2) (2000), pp. 196-213.

which was 1.5% of the population. Most of them live in the center of the country. Many choose to live in Jerusalem, but others settle in Petach Tikva, Kfar Saba, and Ranana. Their presence is felt in the settlements of Judea and Samaria and in Beit Shemesh.²⁷ The approximately 7,500 American immigrants who arrived in Israel between 1948 and 1967 came to build the country. From 1967 till 1973, about 30,000 immigrants arrived. They arrived for various reasons, but about half of them were religiously motivated to come. Since the Yom Kippur War, around 60,000 more immigrants came.²⁸ In the last decade, 30,000 additional immigrants have been North American. North America contains the largest Jewish Diaspora and so for Israel it has the largest pool of potential immigrants in the world.²⁹ Those American Jews who immigrate to Israel are individuals who would rank high on any Jewish identity index. There is an increase in Orthodox immigrants who have high levels of Jewish education.³⁰

Some North American immigrants do not attempt to acculturate into the society but live submerged in an American or 'Anglo-Saxon' subculture. In some of the cities mentioned above there are communities of English-speaking immigrants who communicate and interact only amongst themselves. This behavior is more typical of older American immigrants. Yet this is not necessarily out of choice. Some are frustrated at not being able to communicate in Hebrew because of their low level of Hebrew proficiency and by their inability to learn the language at this stage of their lives.³¹ This indicates the need for social networks that function as support groups. Such networks are a crucial aid in the immigrants' adjustment period in the new country. In addition to social and emotional support, networks can aid the new immigrant in gathering information regarding immigrants' rights and opportunities. The three main avenues for information are friends or relatives, government agencies and institutions

27 Avi Kay, "Citizen Rights in Flux: The Influence of American Immigrants to Israel on Modes of Political Activism", *Jewish Political Studies Review* 11(1-2) (1999), pp. 1-2.

28 Kay, p. 2.

29 K. Amit and I. Riss, "The role of social networks in the immigration decision-making process: The case of North American immigration to Israel", *Immigrants & Minorities* 25(3) (1999), pp. 290-313.

30 Rebhun and Waxman, pp. 66-82.

31 Chaim. I. Waxman, *American Aliya: Portrait of an Innovative Migration Movement*, Detroit, 1989, pp. 140-141.

and is the language that is most in demand.²¹

Over the past several years, Hebrew has increasingly accepted loan words from English. Words such as "overdraft," "check-in," "homeless," "action," among many others, are now part of the Hebrew vocabulary. Chains of American stores and restaurants in Israel carry English names. Some parents select names for their children that sound appropriate to both languages such as "Tom," "Lee," and "Ben."²² Israeli parents want their children to know English above all other languages.²³ The media is involved in the widespread use of English in Israel. In 1990, the number of periodicals and newspapers published in English equaled that of all other languages combined except for Hebrew. Television programming has gone from using English mainly in educational television, to using English as a major language of entertainment.²⁴

Another interesting trend is the visibility of English in public spaces. English is found mostly in bilingual Hebrew-English items among Jews and in bilingual Arabic-English items among non-Israeli Palestinians in East Jerusalem.²⁵ Many stores use English to promote their businesses. English is also widely used in government signs, on road signs, street names, on the inscriptions on government buildings such as ministries, hospitals, universities, municipalities, schools, transportation stations and public parks.²⁶

English-speaking Immigrants in Israel

One of the smallest immigrant groups in Israel is comprised of people who emigrated from the United States. In 1999 their number was about 85,000,

21 Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel, Policy, Ideology and Practice* Bristol, 1999, pp. 185-6; 262-7.

22 U. Rebhun. & C. I. Waxman, "The 'Americanization' of Israel: A Demographic, Cultural and Political Evolution", *Israel Studies* 5(1) (2000), pp. 66-82.

23 Ben-Rafael (2000), 176.

24 Bernard Spolsky, "English in Israel After Independence", *Post-Imperial English Status Change in Former British American Colonies, 1940-1990*, J.A. Fishman, A.W. Conrad and A. Rubal-Lopez eds., Berlin and New York, 1996, pp. 546-547.

25 Ben-Rafael, et. al, (2006), 22-23.

26 R. Landry and R. Y. Bourhis, "Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study", *Journal of Language & Social Psychology* 16(1) (1997), pp. 23-49.

English as their home language (L1) and 375 million speakers of English as a second language (L2). There were 750 million speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL speakers) at that time.¹⁶

It isn't easy for anyone to learn a second language, but for Americans it is more difficult because for the most part they aren't surrounded by people who speak a different language. According to the thinking of most Americans, bilingualism is related to immigrants, and to the uneducated.¹⁷ In addition, due to the global image of English it is difficult to convey the importance of knowing foreign languages. The trend at universities throughout the United States is to cut resources allocated to foreign language courses. Since English is so widespread, most universities prefer to devote their resources to teaching students skills that will prepare them for the competitive world marketplace, rather than to language instructions.¹⁸

Status and attitudes toward English and Hebrew in Israel

During the time of the British Mandate in Israel (1922-1948), English was one of three official languages, alongside Hebrew and Arabic. When the State of Israel was created in 1948, English lost its official language status. However, English usage is so widespread in Israel today that it can't be thought of as a foreign language, but as a second or additional language.¹⁹ English is compulsory in elementary and high schools, is a requirement for admission to universities, and is the language of academia. Many higher status jobs demand a high level of English proficiency and this trend is growing.²⁰ English is the dominant foreign language that is used to break down barriers in communication with the world outside Israel's borders,

16 David Graddol, *The Future of English? A Guide to Forecasting the Popularity of the English Language in the 21st Century*, The British Council, U.K., 1997, p. 11.

17 Catherine Snow and Kenji Hakuta, "The Costs of Monolingualism", *Language Loyalties*, J. Crawford (ed.), Chicago, 1992, pp. 390, 394.

18 Paul Cohen, "The Rise and Fall of the American Linguistic Empire", *Dissent* 59(4) (2012), pp. 17-22.

19 Eliezer Ben-Rafael et.al., "Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction of the Public Space", *International Journal of Multilingualism* (2006), p. 12.

20 Eliezer Ben-Rafael, "Language in a Pluralistic Society: A Sociological Paradigm of bilingualism: English, French, Yiddish, and Arabic in Israel", *Language Communication in Israel: Studies of Israeli Society*, H. Herzog and E. Ben-Rafael, eds. New Brunswick, 2000, pp. 175-207.

that is covered in the "absorption basket" given to all new immigrants by the State.

2. Literature

English as a power language

Today English is an international, global language, a lingua franca, and a national language.¹⁰ In the decades after World War II, the impact of US popular goods and Hollywood were felt in many parts of the world. Through the manifestation of linguistic globalization, we live in a familiar universe where restaurants, road signs, stores and global corporations are the same in different countries and are in English.¹¹ Global English has brought the information age to mass audiences through email, internet and mass media.¹² In many countries in Africa and in South-East Asia, where diverse languages are used, English acts as the lingua franca, the language that inhabitants have in common.¹³ Finally, aside from the global spread of English, there are the national or local languages which are used as a way of self-description.¹⁴

On the other hand, the number of people in the world who speak English as a first language has sharply declined, and this challenges traditional importance of the native speaker.¹⁵ There is a shift in countries where English is a second language which is manifested by middle-class families who speak English as their home language. In recent decades English is spoken as a first language (L1) outside the countries where English has been the native (or only) language. In 1997, there were 375 million speakers of

10 Nicos C. Sifakis and Areti-Maria Sougari, "Facing the Globalisation Challenge in the Realm of English Language Teaching," *Language and Education* 17(1) 2003, pp. 61-2.

11 Kinsley Bolton, "World Englishes and Linguistic Landscapes," *World Englishes* 31(1) (2012), p. 30.

12 Michael A. K. Halliday, "Written Language, Standard Language, Global Language," *World Englishes* 22(4) (2003), p. 416.

13 David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 3.

14 Joshua Fishman, "The New Linguistic World Order," *Foreign Policy* (1999) 1, pp. 26-40.

15 David Graddol, "The Decline of the Native Speaker" in Graddol, David/Meinhof, Ulrike (eds.), *English in a Changing World*, AILA Review 13, pp. 57-68.

special situation.

Israel, due to 1950 Law of Return, has an open door policy which grants citizenship to new immigrants immediately upon arrival, plus "financial aid, health insurance and other social benefits."⁴ This is a considerable aid to senior new immigrants from North America. Nonetheless, the main method of acculturation into Israeli society is being proficient in Hebrew.⁵ Just how much these seniors desire to and are able to learn Hebrew will be examined. Most senior English-speaking North American Jewish immigrants have scant knowledge of Hebrew when they immigrate to Israel.⁶ Most of them come from monolingual backgrounds, where English was the exclusive language that they heard and used.

Only a minority of the immigrants used Hebrew while living in the U.S. or Canada.⁷ From the moment they arrive in Israel, they're surrounded by Hebrew and have to deal with authorities and agencies, though they have only limited levels of proficiency in that language. Success in a second language (L2) can be enhanced by the immigrants' attitude toward Hebrew. Do they allow Hebrew usage into their daily lives? Many adults aren't motivated to use the language and their environment doesn't support them in the effort.⁸ On the other hand, some new senior immigrants attend *Ulpan*, Hebrew classes that are available for new immigrants. They are entitled to 500 hours of instruction, during which they are taught to read and write approximately 4,000 basic words and learn about Israeli culture and society.⁹ Some continue to learn in *Ulpan* even after the initial period

Journal of Cross Cultural Gerontology (2009), pp. 24, 87.

- 4 Sara Carmel and Alon Lazar, "Health and Well-Being among Elderly Persons in Israel: The Role of Social Class and Immigration Status", *Ethnicity and Health* 3 (1/2) (1998), p. 31.
- 5 Karin Amit and Howard Litwin, "The Subjective Well-Being of Immigrants Aged 50 and Older in Israel," *Social Indicators Resources* 98(1) (2010), p. 89.
- 6 Jack Wertheimer, "The Truth About American Jews and Israel", *Commentary* 127(6) (2009), p. 43.
- 7 Wertheimer, 43.
- 8 Kathy Piehl, "Can Adults Learn a second Language? Research Findings and Personal Experience," *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, Lifelong Learning* 78(1) (2011), pp. 33-37.
- 9 Iris Geva-May, "On Impacts of Comparative Policy Analysis: Immigration to Israel – What other countries can learn," *International Migration* 38 (1) (2000), p. 16.

Do senior-citizen speakers of a power language need to be empowered?

The case of senior English-speaking immigrants to Israel

Meira Blustein

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the phenomenon of senior English speaking North American immigrants as they attempt to integrate into Israeli society. At present this group is passed over by migration researchers who are more interested in younger age groups.¹ Studies that do focus on older immigrants tend to concentrate on specific domains, such as hospitals or nursing homes. This discussion seeks to understand these immigrants' attitudes towards acquiring a new language and adapting to a new culture as a senior, outside of hospitals or nursing homes.

According to the literature, immigrants of this age group have difficulties with age-related problems in acquiring the Hebrew language, and with their emotional well-being while experiencing the pressures of becoming a member of a new society. They have made a move away from the familiar and have cut ties made over a lifetime. During the time of adaptation and resettlement, they have to build a social network.² Compounded with this is the fact that many seniors are more entrenched in their ways than younger individuals and find it more difficult to adjust to a new and unfamiliar culture.³ The goal of the present study is to document this very unique and

- 1 Larissa Remennick, "Retired and Making a Fresh Start: Older Russian immigrants discuss their adjustment in Israel," *International Migration* 41(5) (2003), pp. 153-4.
- 2 Michael Roskin and Jeffrey L. Edleson, "The Emotional Health of English Speaking Immigrants to Israel," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* (1983), p. 156.
- 3 Ruth Katz, "Intergenerational family relations and life satisfaction among three elderly population groups in transition in the Israeli multi-cultural society",