Language and Conflict in East Jerusalem: Arab Teachers' Perspectives on Learning Hebrew

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Abstract

This study examines East Jerusalem teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward acquiring and communicating in Hebrew as a second language. The context of the study is a complex education system dominated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. East Jerusalem's education system is divided between schools supervised by Israel's Ministry of Education and those supervised by its Palestinian Authority counterpart. Israel's Ministry of Education requires that teachers in its East Jerusalem public schools learn basic Hebrew language and communication at an Israeli institute of higher education. This research seeks to examine a sampling of East Jerusalem teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward acquiring Hebrew as a second language and communicating in it with the majority Jewish society. Study participants, all Arab teachers from East Jerusalem who had studied Hebrew at an Israeli college, were asked about their command and usage of Hebrew in several open-ended questions provided on a structured questionnaire that offered the respondents the ability to elaborate on their thoughts. The responses were subsequently assessed qualitatively. The study found that the participants' willingness to learn Hebrew for daily communication purposes was motivated primarily by instrumental and pragmatic considerations. According to the findings, the participants' communication in Hebrew was accompanied by feelings that in the process of acquiring and using the language, they were jeopardizing their sense of Palestinian identity as Palestinian citizens under Israeli rule. These perceptions arose in the context of the precarious status of East Jerusalem. The finding that national identification appears to impede second language acquisition has important implications for national language policy in similar regions.

Keywords: Arab second-language teacher, East Jerusalem, Hebrew, language education

Over recent years, there has been a growing interest in learning Hebrew among the Arab population of East Jerusalem. While Israel governs there, that part of the city remains predominantly Arab-speaking. In this context, the present study, that examines the perceptions of Arab teachers in East Jerusalem about learning and communicating in Hebrew, differs from studies conducted on the acquisition of Hebrew as a second language in Israel. The study focuses on the unique citizenship status of Arabs living in East Jerusalem as well as on the fact that two adversarial nations, Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), compete for control over the education system in that part of the city (Mar'i & Buchweitz, 2021).

The Arab residents of East Jerusalem are a sub-community of the larger Arab minority in Israel, but with a distinct status. Unlike other Arab communities in Israel, they are not full-fledged citizens. However, they do have permanent Israeli residency status, meaning they can vote in local elections, receive the same social security and health benefits as Israeli citizens, and may work throughout Israel. They may also apply for Israeli citizenship under certain conditions, among which is demonstrating a basic knowledge of Hebrew (Ghanim, 2017).

As noted, East Jerusalem's education system is divided between institutions supervised by Israel's Ministry of Education and those supervised by the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education. The Israeli Ministry of Education requires teachers in those schools in the East Jerusalem public school system it controls to complete Hebrew studies at an Israeli academic institution. Two competing motivations drive the East Jerusalem Arab population: a desire to participate in the Israeli economy on the one hand and a sense of not belonging to/or hostility toward Israeli society on the other (Koren & Abrahami, 2017).

The present study contributes to the knowledge regarding how minorities in conflict with the hegemonic culture perceive the issue of national languages. It focuses particularly on the acquisition of the hegemonic language by a minority that does not identify with that hegemonic power. In places divided into majorities and minorities along national, ethnic, and indigenous lines, educational provision generally and language education provision particularly tends to favor majority groups (Dunbar, 2001; May, 2017). In these contexts, minorities are apt to be required to learn the language and adapt to the culture of the majority (Ben-David, 2017).

Israel's Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality's Education Board (*Manhi*) for the Arab sector are responsible for the educational infrastructure in East Jerusalem. This infrastructure is based on three tracks, each representing a different type of school with different targets in terms of Hebrew language acquisition (Alayan, 2021). The first track involves Ministry of Education-recognized schools under Jerusalem Municipality supervision that teach the Israeli curriculum, representing a minority of schools (8%). They have Hebrew lessons four to five days a week starting in the third grade and prepare high school students for the Israeli matriculation exam (*te'udat begrut*). Most of the teachers, administrators, and supervisors at these schools are Israeli Arabs. Unlike the PA's curriculum, this program prepares students to access the Israeli higher education system and job market.

The second track consists of recognized but unofficial schools which are private schools formally acknowledged by the state but act without the Israeli Ministry of Education's supervision. They are run mainly by Arab non-profit organizations under the PA that teach the Palestinian Authority's curriculum along with only part of the Israeli program. Students ultimately take the Jordanian-Palestinian matriculation exam (*tawjihi*), as is the norm in the West Bank and Gaza (Yair & Alayan, 2009). These institutions comprise 47% of the schools in East Jerusalem. The number of students in these schools has increased by a factor of almost 14

over the last decade. Of those studying in schools studying the PA's curriculum, 92% receive only a basic level of Hebrew language instruction (State Comptroller, 2019).

In the third track are private schools run by churches, Muslim charity (*waqf*) organizations, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They comprise 35% of the schools in the East city. Funded by a variety of bodies, these schools educate around 20,000 Palestinian students in East Jerusalem, approximately one-quarter of the total. They generally teach very little Hebrew and prepare students for the *tawjihi*, with only two of them teaching the Hebrew curriculum in preparation for the *te'udat begrut* (Alayan, 2021).

In light of this background, studying teachers' attitudes can make a vital contribution to understanding how national language policy affects second language (L2) educators' teaching, applying theories of L2 acquisition that regard the level of social integration as key to determining how successfully learners achieve command of the language (Schumann, 2012). Furthermore, analyzing teachers' perceptions can also enhance policy development, given their significant experience and knowledge of the complexities of language policy and practice (Levy-Gazenfrantz & Shapira-Lischinsky, 2017, p. 232).

Literature Review

Hebrew is the principal medium for conducting public life in Jerusalem, with access to public services, government institutions, employment, healthcare, higher education, and recreational facilities reserved mostly for Hebrew speakers. The level of Hebrew-language skills among East Jerusalem residents is low, even though they acknowledge that proficiency in Hebrew is essential (Alayan, 2019). Provision of Hebrew teaching in East Jerusalem schools is scarce, due mainly to the paucity of professional Hebrew teachers willing to work in East Jerusalem, and educators report that only 17% of their students can converse in Hebrew at a high level (Ratner et al., 2019).

East Jerusalem residents' use of Hebrew tends to be limited to necessary communication with governmental and administrative services. Lehrs (2012) found that 31% of East Jerusalem Arabs surveyed reported understanding Hebrew at a good-to-very good level, 39% at a low-to-medium level, and 30% not at all; 37% reported using Hebrew in their workplace and 64% attested to finding completing forms and writing official letters in Hebrew difficult. However, 83% of those surveyed responded that they would like their children to acquire proficiency in Hebrew, confirming the findings of Hasson (2015) and Stern (2015) that, despite the low level of command of Hebrew, motivation to learn the language is high.

Several studies have demonstrated that Arabic speakers in Israel attribute great importance to proficiency in Hebrew because of its many social and economic advantages (Abu Asbanh et al., 2011; Amara & Mar'i, 2002, Atily, 2004, p. 342; Ministry of Education, 2015). Ilaiyan and Abu Hussain's (2012) study of attitudes of Arab students in East Jerusalem toward Hebrew found positive perceptions toward the study of Hebrew as a second language and a willingness to communicate in the language outside of the classroom. Some of the parents encouraged their children's Hebrew language studies, due largely to the instrumental-pragmatic advantages the language offers for their children's future (Ilaiyan, 2012).

A low level of fluency in Hebrew impedes access to jobs and social rights in Israel (Bassul, 2016). With poor fluency in Hebrew also affecting the level of jobs obtainable, it is not

uncommon for otherwise experienced and well-qualified individuals to work as waiters or cleaners, for example, only because their level of Hebrew is inadequate (Jaber, 2020). Fluency in Hebrew is more common among young men than among young women and among young men than among older adults of both sexes (Ronen, 2018). Young Arabs in Jerusalem have a higher level of Hebrew proficiency than adults due to their more frequent contact with Hebrew speakers in their daily lives. They also enjoy a greater likelihood of access to expedited courses at private institutions and dedicated Hebrew-language schools (*ulpanim;* sing., *ulpan*) (Ha'aretz, 2013).

In recent years, many *ulpanim* have opened in Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods and the number of attendees has grown significantly, although their high cost is a limiting factor (Ha'aretz, 2016: 6). A key motivation for acquiring the Hebrew language and studying the Israeli curriculum is that both are prerequisites for obtaining the Israeli matriculation certificate (*bagrut*) recognized by Israeli institutes of higher education (Alayan, 2017).

Government and municipal authorities have identified the extent of demand, and the former's program for East Jerusalem includes a large budget for encouraging the study of Hebrew. The Government Decision 3790 of May 2018 aims to reduce socioeconomic disparities and boost economic development in East Jerusalem, and a large part of the budget allocated for it is earmarked for Hebrew language instruction (Lavi et al., 2018).

As already indicated, most East Jerusalem students follow the PA-mandated curriculum. The main reason for this can be attributed to the political conflict and the parental fear that students will acquire knowledge that might undermine their Palestinian identity (Ronen, 2020). Social and cultural factors also influence willingness to learn an L2 when the second language is perceived as a threat to the learners' identity, while motivation and positive perceptions toward the second language contribute significantly to its acquisition (Ushida, 2005).

The cultural and political distance between minority groups and the target-language-speaking population influences language learning: the greater the divide, the lower the L2 acquisition success rate (Bechor, 1992). Peoples living under foreign regimes tend to seek to preserve their mother tongue because it represents an important locus of their identity (Obeidat, 2005; Taylor, 1994). While these factors clearly have a powerful influence among East Jerusalem Arabs in the context of Hebrew acquisition, the economic advantages of learning Hebrew complicate decision-making (Lavi et al., 2018). As Schumann contends, learners from socially and psychologically alienated groups find it harder to acquire an L2 but employ specific strategies and techniques to bridge the social and psychological divide (Schumann, 2013).

Having stated that, a significant percentage of the Arab population studies the Israeli curriculum, despite receiving threats from political elements in the community (Ronen, 2018). According to a 2017 Jerusalem Municipality survey, 48% of East Jerusalem students' parents would prefer their children to study the Israeli curriculum. Nevertheless, some in the Arab community still see the Israeli curriculum as a political threat and, following the 2017 survey, a Muslim ruling (fatwa) was issued that the Israeli curriculum must not be taught in East Jerusalem (Yelon, 2017).

Masry-Harzallah et al. (2011) point out that many students in East Jerusalem learn Hebrew as a third or fourth language, after Arabic, English, and French or German (2011, p. 92). It is not surprising, then, that the overall proficiency in Hebrew in East Jerusalem is generally at so low a level that many East Jerusalemites cannot work in the western part of the city or even hold a

basic conversation in the language. Despite the need for Hebrew-language education, as noted above, there is a shortage of qualified Hebrew teachers working in East Jerusalem (State Comptroller, 2018) as well as a lack of suitable textbooks. Many Hebrew teachers in East Jerusalem schools are untrained non-professionals and the few Hebrew textbooks available are primarily designed for Jewish immigrants and contain overtly unpalatable political messages for Palestinian students.

East Jerusalemite high school graduates who pursue higher education studies tend to attend Al-Quds University, universities in the West Bank, or academic institutions in other Arab countries because they find it difficult to get accepted into Israeli universities, even with an Israeli *bagrut*. After completing their studies, several still find it hard to enter the Israeli job market as doing so often requires obtaining further credentials that are officially recognized in Israel. Numerous individuals therefore invest significant financial resources in spending one year or more learning Hebrew and attaining their *bagrut* in the Hebrew University's or other privately-run preparatory programs in East Jerusalem to be able to enter Israeli academic institutions (Hasson, 2015).

The Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality allot students in Palestinian school programs only a relatively reduced budget, whereas those studying in Israeli school programs are allotted a priority budget, as well as a development budget. These measures are designed to encourage them to switch to the Israeli programs (Ronen, 2018). According to the 2018 government program "Reducing Social Gaps and Economic Development in East Jerusalem," more than 43% of the Israeli government budgeting allotted to education in East Jerusalem (approximately NIS 193m out of NIS 445m) is contingent upon pupils switching to study the Israeli curriculum (Ir Amim, 2020). As a result, East Jerusalem pupils studying the Palestinian curriculum are thus particularly challenged by the language barrier.

Methodology

The study adopts a primarily qualitative and interpretative, rather than quantitative statistical approach. The analysis relies partially on the researchers' intuitions with the goal of obtaining insights that may lead to a wider understanding of the relevant issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This type of research encourages creativity within the analytical process, while recognizing the relevant limitations. The analysis is inherently limited by the context in which it is conducted. The choice to employ the interpretative approach (Spector-Mersel, 2011) stems from a focus on issues that include a narrative aspect and that are subjects of political and social contention.

The study was conducted with 29 teachers, all residents of East Jerusalem who had participated in a "Hebrew language and expression" course at an Arab college in Israel's central region. They were recruited using the convenience sampling method. Of the 33 people who received questionnaires, four did not respond, leaving 29 respondents. The participants taught various subjects at East Jerusalem schools, from primary- to high-school level. The overwhelming majority of the 33 people to whom questionnaires were distributed were women (91 per cent) and those who responded were women only. The average age of the participants was 31.78 (SD = 5.86). One (4%) was employed by the Israeli Ministry of Education, 4 (23%) by the Jerusalem Municipality, 3 (14%) by the PA, and the remaining 11 (59%) by private institutions. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 4 to 25.

The participants' proficiency in Hebrew was generally basic, consisting of letter recognition and familiarity with a few words. Most found it difficult to construct a simple sentence or

conduct a short conversation in Hebrew. As Ilaiyan (2012, 219) elucidates, the Israeli-Palestinian political divide hinders third language acquisition. The participants had previously learned Hebrew in the following institutions: public schools under the supervision of the Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education, where few hours are dedicated to teaching Hebrew learning, and instruction levels are rudimentary; private institutions in East Jerusalem, at the "first steps toward Hebrew acquisition" level; elective courses at Palestinian universities and colleges; and through informal channels resulting from work or other contact with Jewish Israelis in West Jerusalem.

The open-ended questionnaire was composed in Arabic by the authors and distributed at the end of the 2018-2019 school year after the teachers had completed their Hebrew course. The 10 questions (see Appendix) addressed key aspects of the teachers' willingness or lack thereof to acquire Hebrew, their perceptions on the issues involved, and the factors that have an influence on their studies. The questionnaire was based on a previous one designed for a May 2018 study by Israel's National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (RAMA). The RAMA study included an attitude survey distributed to educators (Ratner et al., 2019, pp. 20–27) in the wake of a government decision to reduce socioeconomic disparities and enhance economic development in East Jerusalem that emphasized promoting teaching Hebrew there as one of its four key goals. The design of the current study's questionnaire also drew on the authors' cumulative experience in Hebrew language and literature teaching and was devised after in-depth consultation with two qualitative research experts to ensure the validity of the methods and findings.

The questionnaire was distributed with the college's permission and participants were assured that their privacy and anonymity would be protected and that they could opt out of answering any part of the questionnaire at any point without explanation. The respondents were given 90 minutes to complete the survey, which was considered sufficient time for experienced teachers. No word limit was imposed, and everyone was encouraged to freely write down their thoughts.

The data was transcribed by the authors and inspected for reliable transcription by a qualitative research expert and a quantitative research expert. The coding of the data and the identification of valid themes were determined in conjunction with the qualitative and quantitative experts.

Analysis of the answers identified four themes for the data processing stage: the contexts in which Hebrew language acquisition occurred (Q1, Q2, Q6); the involvement of the Israeli Ministry of Education in the Hebrew instruction process (Q3, Q8); the benefit of learning Hebrew based on instrumental considerations (Q4, Q5); the political and identity aspects of Hebrew acquisition (Q7, Q9, Q10).

Results

Hebrew Acquisition Contexts

Only half of the teachers in the study had studied Hebrew before enrolling at the college. Addressing the contribution of language institutions to Hebrew acquisition (Q6), the respondents frequently responded that it was minimal, with answers including: "Most institutions serve commercial and economic goals"; "What matters is the money, not the teaching"; and "They do not focus on teaching and stay at the basic level of learning the alphabet." Some respondents complained that a significant portion of the instruction had limited

practical value: As one respondent put it, “I can read a text in Hebrew, but I cannot conduct a short conversation.”

A few mentioned that they were exposed to and/or had acquired Hebrew through working with and/or other contact with Jewish speakers of the language and that they, therefore, did not feel the need to study Hebrew in the college. These respondents either learn Hebrew at the *ulpanim* for immigrants in West Jerusalem in order to get accepted into Israeli higher education institutions or do voluntary service where they learn Hebrew at *ulpanim* specifically established to help young people in East Jerusalem participate in academic and professional arenas (Piotrkowski, 2013).

A few participants referred to the positive contribution made by the institutions, with comments including: “They teach very well and it depends on the degree of willingness and motivation of the learner to invest in acquiring the language”; “The instruction is at a very high level and helps the applicants enter Israeli colleges and universities and work in the Israeli job market”; and “There are a few reputable institutes in the city that have Jewish teachers.” Some of these respondents also noted, however, that the institutions were expensive, and that the government should provide free Hebrew courses.

Responses among participants who had not studied Hebrew previously (see Q1), representative responses included: “I went to a private school where there were no Hebrew lessons”; “I do not have the time to learn Hebrew at a private institute”; and “My parents do not care about me learning the language.” One teacher remarked that she “does not like learning Hebrew.”

Israeli Education Ministry Involvement in Hebrew Instruction

Reasons cited for why the Ministry is interested in teaching the language (Q3) included: “To strengthen Hebrew education and weaken the status of the Arabic language in the city”; “To foster contact between the two peoples”; “To give Hebrew the status of exclusive, official language in institutions run by the Ministry of Education and make it a given [requirement]”; and “To prepare learners for participation in the Israeli job market.” Some also acknowledged that Hebrew is a basic requirement for obtaining public sector jobs in Israel.

A significant number of respondents maintained that the Israeli Ministry of Education claimed to be supportive of Hebrew acquisition, but in practice, did little to encourage it, given the lack of teachers and time and other resources devoted to it. Prominent explanations for why this may be the case included: “So that the residents of East Jerusalem do not learn their social rights”; “To deepen the discrimination between Jews and Arabs in the city”; “So that the Jerusalem Arabs can’t stand up to the enemy”; and “To implement the policy of marginalizing Arab schools.”

Only a few respondents expressed satisfaction with the professional level of Hebrew teachers in East Jerusalem schools and their nationality (Q8). The overwhelming majority were unequivocally dissatisfied in this regard. Frequent responses included claims that East Jerusalem teachers were “not proficient in Hebrew,” “can hardly read or write,” and “spend most of their time teaching the alphabet.” Arab Israeli teachers, most of whom are students at academic institutions in Jerusalem, were seen as “having proficiency in Hebrew, but lacking pedagogical knowledge” or “having a hard time controlling the students and teaching the course material.” The following responses are also noteworthy: “The passing grade in Hebrew is 50”; “The tests focus on knowledge of the alphabet and a few vocabulary words”; and “They pass

everyone so that they do not have a 'fail' on their grade card". Likewise, most respondents who had studied Hebrew at school claimed that the lesson content was repetitive, mostly focused on the alphabet, and did not help them learn the language properly.

Instrumental Benefits of Learning Hebrew

Most respondents maintained that Hebrew use had been imposed on residents of East Jerusalem (Q4) following Israeli authorities' seizure of control of the area in 1967 and the ensuing transfer of responsibility for municipal services to the Jerusalem Municipality. They also cited their dependence on the Israeli economy as contributing to their need for Hebrew. Participants emphasized the importance of Hebrew in daily life: "Knowing Hebrew gives me more opportunities to work in government facilities in Israel as well as private institutions"; "Knowing Hebrew makes it easier for Arabs in East Jerusalem to know their rights and obligations"; "Hebrew gives me the ability to fill out forms"; "Hebrew helps me manage my personal affairs, read letters, talk to Hebrew-speaking officials, etc."; "Knowing Hebrew helps me get service at the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, Social Security, etc."; and "Hebrew helps me communicate with Jews in the public sphere." A few atypical participants presented different reasons for learning Hebrew: "According to Islam you must learn the language of your enemy"; and "Knowing Hebrew arms me with tools that make it possible for me to deal with the enemy and understand him." One teacher claimed that "under the current conditions, they can't force their curriculum on us. The Israelis want to integrate East Jerusalem into Israeli society, but discrimination in terms of services prevents this from happening."

The fragile security situation in East Jerusalem, the Israeli West Bank barrier, and the Israeli security checkpoints contribute to the feeling of constant fear and affect the residents' self-confidence (Q5). A large part of respondents gave serious weight to the link between the language and the security situation, as evidenced by the following examples: "Knowing Hebrew boosts your confidence when you are at a checkpoint or you see soldiers walking around the Old City alleys"; "Proficiency in Hebrew gives me the strength and the courage to defend myself, so I won't find myself mute, embarrassed, and tense when facing a Jew"; "Knowing Hebrew breaks down the barrier of fear toward the other"; "The checkpoint is a big problem for young people, so I am studying Hebrew because of the security situation in order to communicate with the military or the border police at checkpoints"; and "Knowing Hebrew gives me inner confidence for when I go to the Jewish neighborhood to take care of personal matters." Only a few respondents saw the matter in a different light: "Fear and confidence are psychological matters, but it is important to learn the language"; "We live in Jerusalem together, the fear is created by security incidents"; and "The kids are scared of the soldiers anyway".

Political and Identity-Related Aspects of Hebrew Acquisition

To examine the influence language had on learners' sense of identity, both directly and indirectly, this study elicited participants' perceptions by having them compare themselves to West Bank Palestinian Arabs (Q7). Most respondents agreed that there is a fundamental difference in the perception of Hebrew between the two groups: "In the West Bank, they disregard the language due to their nationalist outlook, because they are under the occupation, and we, the Jerusalemites, are less so"; "Some of the young people in East Jerusalem are proficient in Hebrew and proud of it, whereas in the West Bank being proficient in Hebrew is seen as collaborationism and giving up your Palestinian nationality"; "In East Jerusalem, Hebrew is a necessary part of reality and, in the West Bank, it is considered the language of the enemy that is not required"; "In East Jerusalem people know more Hebrew than the West Bank

due to the economic and political realities"; and "In East Jerusalem, knowing Hebrew is necessary to know your social rights while, in the West Bank, Hebrew helps them get work in Israel." A small minority of teachers perceived no difference between the two populations, one teacher emphasizing that: "the two groups are equally interested in learning Hebrew so they can know the enemy from up close".

The participants were also asked to assess how being offered full Israeli citizenship, like that of Israeli Arabs, might affect their attitude toward the Hebrew language (Q9). The majority of respondents answered that they were willing to learn Hebrew regardless of citizenship issues, for reasons including: "Knowing the enemy's language"; "We are under occupation and want to know what the enemy thinks of us"; "To broaden my education"; "To communicate with the other, like people do in English"; and "It is an important local language and you cannot communicate with the Jews without it." A few participants expressed a willingness to learn Hebrew for the sake of citizenship, citing the following reasons: "It makes it easier for me to integrate into life in the State of Israel"; "I am willing to invest in learning the language and make contact with the Jews, which contributes to proficiency"; and "It is an opportunity to be proficient in the language and to meet Jews." On the other hand, about a quarter of the participants noted that they would refuse Israeli citizenship under all circumstances for the following reasons: "I am unwilling to give up my Palestinian identity"; "Hebrew is the language of occupation, and acquiring it is for the sake of resistance"; and "If I had citizenship, it would have a negative effect on me."

The participants were also asked to express their opinion about whether learning Hebrew impairs their national identity (Q10). Most participants responded that it did not weaken or impair their Palestinian identity, as evidenced in the following examples: "Hebrew is the colonial language designated for conducting the lives of citizens and distancing them from the Palestinian people"; "We are under exploitation and oppression because of the Israeli occupation and the language is part of that system"; "Better proficiency in Hebrew is not an indication of giving up Palestinian nationality"; and "Proficiency in Hebrew was designed to hurt the city of Al-Quds and weaken the Arabic language from the start, and I am aware of it." Only a few teachers felt that learning Hebrew could undermine their identity, as evidenced in the following examples: "Knowing Hebrew at a higher level may bolster Israelization"; and "It might affect young people more, in that they will worry about their own personal welfare and drift away from the Palestinian people."

Discussion

Respondents' answers indicate that improving the level of Hebrew-language instruction would boost the motivation for Hebrew acquisition among students. It should be noted that the Israel Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality subsidize tuition for Hebrew programs only partially, if at all. As a result, East Jerusalem Arabs without the means to obtain Hebrew-language instruction have no choice but to deal with a language barrier. They do not speak Hebrew with those around them and some, viewing it as the language of the enemy, prefer to study English instead.

Instrumental considerations, rather than integration, play a significant role in acquiring the language of "the other", especially for a minority (Ben-David, 2017; Dubiner, 2012). Most study participants agreed that acquiring Hebrew is valuable in a social space in which it is the dominant language. The motivation to learn Hebrew is, therefore, driven by pragmatic

considerations, such as being able to communicate with authorities, obtain state services, and enter the Israeli labor force and study in academic institutions in Israel.

Whether driven by instrumental or integrative motivation, the degree of language acquisition has social implications, as it serves as the first step toward integration into a society and its culture (Gardner, 2000; Macintyre et al., 2003). One of the respondents observed that Hebrew was a bridge toward better familiarity with Jewish culture and that learning a new language and being exposed to the culture of the other expands the learner's personal knowledge. Others, however, refrained from addressing cultural elements due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which prevents the learners from accepting the Other and assimilating their culture; similarly, Israeli Hebrew speakers are reluctant to learning Arabic (Elazari-Halevy, 2009). Still other respondents saw Hebrew acquisition as a religious duty since Islam obliges worshippers to know the language of those with whom they come into contact.

A significant percentage of respondents said that while Hebrew is useful for communicating with Israeli Jews, they still considered it the language of the enemy and forced upon them by the occupation. Some teachers therefore prefer not to pursue their Hebrew studies too far as proficiency in Hebrew is viewed by some as damaging to Palestinian nationalism and a step toward Israeli citizenship. Ostensibly, the complex political reality around them, their ambiguous civic-political status, the divisions between Palestinian and Israeli educational institutions in the education system, and discrimination against citizens of East Jerusalem all reinforce their Palestinian identity; they see themselves as part of West Bank Palestinian society and committed to the Palestinian nationalist ambition (Yair & Ilaiayn, 2009). The Hebrew language is perceived by some of the respondents as part of the occupation and hostilities between the communities impede the building of trust and relationships. Consequently, East Jerusalem's Arabs are disinclined to follow the process of Israelization that some Arab citizens of Israel more undergone, which has included increased levels of Hebrew learning and the adoption of aspects of Israeli culture (Amara & Mar'i, 2002; Mar'i, 2013).

Conclusion

The study found that while there is an inclination among Arabs in East Jerusalem to learn Hebrew, the decision to do so stems predominantly from instrumental considerations to enhance practical communication and economic advancement. In contrast, there is a national-identity-related resistance in this community to normalizing relations with Israel, making identification with the Palestinian nationalist cause an inhibiting factor in Hebrew-language acquisition. The study likewise shows how knowledge of Hebrew facilitates unmediated communication with institutions and individuals in Israel that could eventually lead to a change of attitude toward Hebrew speakers as a whole.

The limitations of the study includes it being a preliminary one and that the 29 respondents participating in the survey may not constitute a representative sample. Follow-up studies using systematic sampling of all the Palestinian teachers in East Jerusalem would, therefore, be useful in order to evaluate how representative the findings here are and to assess any other factors involved. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study is a significant starting point for further research on the influence of national language policy on second-language teachers and on those engaged in teaching languages other than their native tongue.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

Question 1: Why have you not studied Hebrew until now? (If you have, please skip to the next question).
Question 2: Have you studied Hebrew before? In what context and at what level?
Question 3: In your opinion, is the Israeli Ministry of Education interested in teaching the Arabs in East Jerusalem Hebrew? Why?
Question 4: What do you think about the following statement: "Hebrew has been imposed on the Arabs in East Jerusalem as a means of handling routine practical matters."
Question 5: Do you agree with the claim that teaching Hebrew to children in East Jerusalem bolsters their confidence and makes them less afraid when they see Jews or encounter them?
Question 6: There are private Hebrew language schools in East Jerusalem. Do these institutions contribute to Hebrew language acquisition and fluency?
Question 7: In your opinion, are there differences in perceptions and attitudes toward the Hebrew language among Arabs in East Jerusalem and Arabs in the West Bank? Why?
Question 8: Are you happy with the level of Hebrew teachers at the schools in East Jerusalem? What are these teachers' nationalities? Who funds them?
Question 9: If you were given full citizenship, like the Israeli Arabs, would you change your mind about the Hebrew language? Why?
Question 10: How has Hebrew acquisition affected your national identity?