Languages in Jewish Communities, Past and Present

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Part II: Jewish Language Varieties in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Part III: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives

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A Research Agenda for Comparative Jewish Linguistic Studies

1 Introduction

Over the past 80 years, several scholars have called for comparative research on Jewish language varieties.[1] In a 1937 Yiddish article about Judezmo (Judeo-Spanish), Solomon Birnbaum dreamt of creating "a new field of linguistics, a Jewish sociology of language based on comparison of all Jewish languages" (1937: 195). In 1973, Max Weinreich suggested a "systematic research program" (2008[1973]: 54) on language use in various Jewish communities and presented such research in his magnum opus about Yiddish. And in 1981, David Gold (1981) proposed Jewish intralinguistics as a field of study and, along with Leonard Prager, offered some of this analysis in the short-lived journal *Jewish Language Review* (1981–1987) and other publications. In this chapter, we present a research agenda for the comparative linguistic study of Jewish communities, building on Birnbaum's, Weinreich's, Gold's, and others' suggestions, on the relatively small amount of comparative research that has been done, and on the language descriptions in this book. We survey past scholarship, discuss preliminaries for comparative study, propose some research questions, and offer reasons why this type of analysis is important.

2 Previous scholarship

The phenomenon of Jewish language varieties came to scholarly attention in the early 20th century as Jewish communal leaders debated the comparative merits of Hebrew and Yiddish as group languages (Loewe 1911; Mieses 1915).[2] In the mid-20th century, Yiddishists spearheaded comparative research on Jewish language varieties (Birnbaum 1937, 1971, 1979; Efroykin 1951; Weinreich 1954, 2008[1973]) and set much of the agenda for the field. The late 1970s and the 1980s saw a slew of edited volumes that dealt with multiple Jewish language varieties (Fishman 1981, 1985, 1987; Gold 1989; Paper 1978; Rabin et al. 1979), two journals (Bar-Asher 1984ff and Gold and Prager 1981–1987), and progress toward a

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1 We thank David Bunis for his helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this chapter.
2 For a more detailed treatment of the points in this section, see Benor 2015. See Sunshine 1995 for a description of the early history of the field.

theoretical understanding of Jewish language varieties based on comparative analysis (Fishman 1981; Gold 1981; Rabin 1981; and, especially, Wexler 1981a). In more recent decades, the tradition of edited volumes and journals about multiple Jewish language varieties has continued (e.g., Alvarez-Péreyre and Baumgarten 2003; Baumgarten and Kessler-Mesguich 1996; Benor and Sadan 2011; Kahn and Rubin 2016; Tirosh-Becker and Benor 2013ff; Wexler 2006).

In addition, several articles and books have dealt with Jewish language varieties as a phenomenon. Themes discussed in this comparative and theoretical literature include sociology of language (Benor and Sadan 2011; Fishman 1981, 1985, 1987; Myhill 2004; Spolsky 2014), common features (Bar-Asher 2002; Bunis 2009; Weinreich 1954, 2008[1973]), and typology (Alvarez-Péreyre and Baumgarten 2003; Benor 2008; Chetrit 2007; Gold and Prager 1981–1987; Hary 2009; Hary and Wein 2013; Sephiha 1972; Weinreich 1954, 2008[1973]; Wexler 1981a). Several articles and volumes have treated the Hebrew-Aramaic component comparatively (Aslanov 2010; Bunis 1981, 2005a, 2013; Mayer Modena 1986; Morag 1992; Morag, Bar-Asher, and Mayer-Modena 1999; Szulmajster-Celnikier and Varol 1994; Tedghi 1995). A few works have begun to analyze similarities and differences between the language varieties of Jews and other religious and ethnic groups (Fishman 1987; Hary and Wein 2013; Myhill 2009; Stillman 1991; Wein and Hary 2014; Wexler 1974, 1980, 1986).

3 Research questions

Based on this scholarship and our own research interests, we offer a number of research questions for the field of comparative Jewish linguistic studies. When we discuss a "Jewish community," we generally refer to large-scale groupings based on location and language use, like (Judeo-) Georgian-speaking Jews in Georgia, (Jewish) Spanish-speaking Jews in Latin America, and (Judeo-) Arabic-speaking Jews in Yemen. Similar analysis could be done on a smaller scale, such as on Maghrebi-origin Jews versus mustaʿaribīn speaking Egyptian Judeo-Arabic in Cairo (Hary 2017), Syrian-origin versus Eastern European-origin Jews speaking Jewish Latin-American Spanish in Mexico City (Dean-Olmsted and Skura, this volume), or Reform versus Orthodox Jews speaking Jewish English in the United States (Benor, this volume). An even more fine-grained analysis can compare individual speakers, texts, or utterances.

According to our understanding of Jewish linguistic distinctiveness (Benor 2008; Hary 2009), analysis generally focuses on a comparison of a Jewish language variety with its non-Jewish correlate. In the case of coterritorial Jewish

language varieties (Benor 2008), like Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, and Jewish Swedish, the non-Jewish correlate is a language variety spoken by non-Jewish neighbors of the Jewish community under analysis (e.g., 13th-century Judeo-French compared to 13th-century French). In the case of post-coterritorial language varieties like Judezmo and Yiddish, the non-Jewish correlate is the language variety spoken by non-Jewish neighbors of the Jewish community when the Jewish language variety initially developed (medieval varieties of Spanish and German), and there is potentially an additional adstratum of influence from their new coterritorial language varieties (primarily Balkan and Slavic languages, but also Arabic in North Africa), beyond the distinctive features discussed below.

3.1 Sociolinguistic correlations

Our first research question involves a comparison of linguistic distinctiveness in Jewish language varieties, in line with the sociology of language, common features, and typology discussions cited above. As Benor (2008) explains, distinctiveness has multiple aspects. Each Jewish community (or speaker, text, or utterance), might be characterized with regard to each of the following:

1. Hebrew/Aramaic influence:
   To what extent does each community use loanwords and other influences from Hebrew/Aramaic, including those encountered in traditional texts and those transmitted through spoken language?
2. Hebrew script:
   To what extent are non-Hebrew texts in the community written in Hebrew characters and with orthographic conventions influenced by Hebrew-Aramaic texts?
3. Substratal influence:
   To what extent is the language variety influenced by a different language variety spoken by ancestors of (some of) the current community members (including immigrants to the current land)?
4. Archaisms:
   To what extent do Jews maintain more conservative forms of the language? In other words, to what extent have Jews not participated in language changes of local non-Jews?
5. Migrated dialectalism (Hary 2009: 22–23):
   To what extent do disparate Jewish communities within the language territory speak more like each other than their non-Jewish neighbors? To what extent are features from one region used in a different region?

6. Israeli Hebrew influence:
    For communities in the 20th century or later, to what extent do they use loan-words and other influences from Israeli Hebrew?
7. Other features and structural difference:
    Aside from these features, to what extent do Jews differ from their non-Jewish neighbors in phonology, morphosyntax, prosody, and/or discourse? To what extent do these differences exist on a structural versus superficial level?
8. Crossing religious/communal boundaries (Hary 2009: 16–19):
    To what extent does the local non-Jewish population (or a subgroup thereof) acquire features that began as distinctive Jewish characteristics?
9. Overall distinctiveness:
    Based on this list, we can characterize overall distinctness: Where is each Jewish community located on a continuum of Jewish linguistic distinctiveness in comparison to the language of local non-Jews (Benor 2008), also known as the "Jewish linguistic spectrum" (Hary 2009: 5–27, 2011)?

Once we answer these questions for multiple Jewish communities, we can then conduct variationist sociolinguistic analysis, asking how these linguistic variables correlate with several social variables:

1. Openness of society
2. Demographic integration of Jews
3. Textual authority and religiosity
4. Literacy levels in the local standardized language
5. Political Zionism (20th century and later)
6. Time from immigration or language shift
7. Internal migration

We have some hypotheses about how these correlations might play out. We expect that several of the linguistic features listed above – archaisms, other features and structural difference, Hebrew script, and overall distinctness – will correlate inversely with two of the social dimensions: openness of society and demographic integration. Communities in more open societies that are more integrated with their non-Jewish neighbors will likely have fewer distinctive features and structural differences in comparison to the writings and speech of non-Jews. Such a correlation could also be extended to broader hypotheses regarding historical era. For example, compared to the Middle Ages, 21st-century Jewish communities tend to live in more open societies and to be more integrated, and therefore their language varieties tend to be more similar to those of their non-Jewish neighbors. Of course, there are exceptions to this, such as 21st-century Hasidic Jews in the U.S., Belgium, and elsewhere who maintain Yiddish, and medieval French Jews, whose writing suggests that their language did not differ structurally from that of their non-Jewish neighbors.

We expect that communities that are more religiously oriented and those with greater textual authority – that is, ones that revere biblical and rabbinic literature and use it in their everyday lives – will have more influence from textual Hebrew and Aramaic. We also expect that, within a given community, speakers and writers who are more oriented toward biblical and rabbinic literature will use more Hebrew/Aramaic influences. They will also vary according to audience, topic, and setting. We see an instance of variation within a given community and according to topic in Bunis' (2013) analysis of 16th-century Yiddish. Anshl Leyvi's Commentary on *Pirkei Avot* (a section of the Mishna) includes many Hebrew loanwords, while Elijah Levita's epic chivalric romance *Bovo Bukh* includes few. Here are two of the sample quotes Bunis analyzes (transliterated):

> Anshl Leyvi's Commentary on *Pirkei Avot*:
> Un' nit man zol mern fil tsu reydn mit den vayber, afile mit zaynem éyginen vayb habn unzer khakhomim gizágt. Mikolsheken un' toyznt mol véniger mit andern vayber. Un' azó habn gizágt khakhomim zi[khroynem] li[vrokhe] 'Al tsayt das der mensh mert fil tsu reydn mit vayber, er iz goyrem roe tsu zikh zelbert, un' far shtert di toyre, un' zayn sof iz das er nidert in das gehenem.'
>
> [One should not speak much with women, even with one's own wife, our sages said. *A fortiori*, and a thousand times less so, with other women. And so the sages, of blessed memory, said: 'Whenever a man speaks much with women, he brings harm to himself and spoils the Torah, and his end is that he will descend to Hell.'] (Bunis 2013: 33)

> Elijah Levita's *Bovo Bukh*:
> Un do er nun keyn feyl mit hit / do tsukh er zeyn shvert ous der sheydn / do lofn zi mit anander in di vit / un shlog of anander mit fröudn / ei einer fun dem andern zeyn lebn rit/ der not shveys ran fun im beydn / Pelukan shtreyt mit groysm shturem / un Bovo vant zikh az eyn lint vurem.
>
> [And when he had no more arrows / he drew his sword from its sheath. / They hurled themselves at one another in battle / and hit one another with glee / until one of the two saved his life. / The sweat from the effort ran from both of them. / Pelukan did combat with great fury / and Bovo fought on like a dragon.] (Bunis 2013: 34)

We see evidence of religiosity correlating with textual Hebrew/Aramaic influence in contemporary Jewish English-speaking communities. As Figure 1 demonstrates, those who identify as Orthodox (including Modern Orthodox and Black Hat) are more likely to report using words like *davka* ('particularly, specifically, even, just to be contrary') than those who identify as Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, or no denomination (data in Figures 1 and 2 is from a survey of over 20,000 American Jews who speak English natively; see details in Benor 2011 and Benor and Cohen 2011). This word is common in rabbinic literature, as well as in Yiddish and Israeli Hebrew. Influences from all three of these source languages tend to be more common among Orthodox Jews in the United States.

Another hypothesis is that Jews' literacy levels in the local standardized language will correlate inversely with Hebrew orthography. Jewish communities that
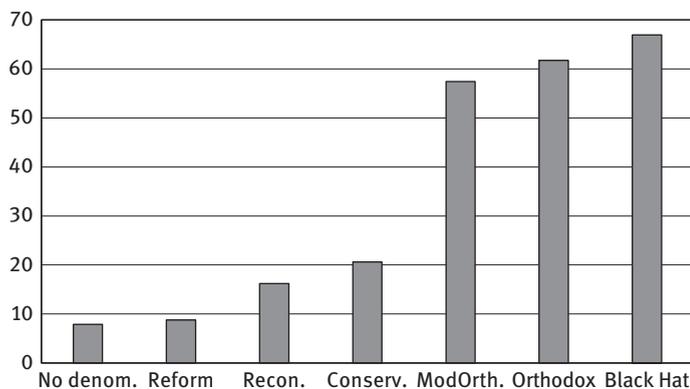
Figure 1: Survey data on % reported use of *davka* among American Jews according to denomination.

live in societies with high literacy levels in the local language will be more likely to write their language varieties in local alphabets. For example, in medieval and late medieval Cairo, Rabbinic Jews' local literacy levels seem to have been lower than those of Karaite Jews there. Consequently, we see that Karaite Jews used Arabic characters in their Judeo-Arabic literature much more frequently than Rabbinic Jews (Hary and Wein 2013: 90, n. 13, 91 and the references there).[3] Contemporary Jewish communities are mostly located in societies where literacy is widespread. Therefore, most (but not all) contemporary Jewish language varieties are written in local alphabets, and Hebrew words are sometimes inserted in Hebrew letters. Judezmo in interwar Saloniki and Yiddish in the United States today are striking counterexamples.

When comparing contemporary communities, we expect that political Zionism will correlate with Israeli Hebrew influence. In communities where many people visit and study in Israel and even make *aliyah* (move to Israel), we expect to see more loanwords and other features from Israeli Hebrew. This is the case among Swedish Jews, who started incorporating Israeli Hebrew loanwords in the 1930s and continue to use them – in evolving ways – today (Klagsbrun Lebenswerd, this volume). In American Orthodox communities, an Israeli click hesitation marker and then-clause "so" (on analogy with Israeli Hebrew *az*, e.g., "If you want to hear it, <u>so</u> you'll have to listen carefully") are common, especially among people who have spent time in Israel and people who spend time with them (Benor, this volume, 2012). Many loanwords in Jewish English are borrowed

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3 There are other reasons for the Karaites's choice of script. For example, scholars have argued that the choice of Arabic script was a subtle protest against the Rabbinic authority which was clearly associated with the Hebrew script (ibid.).
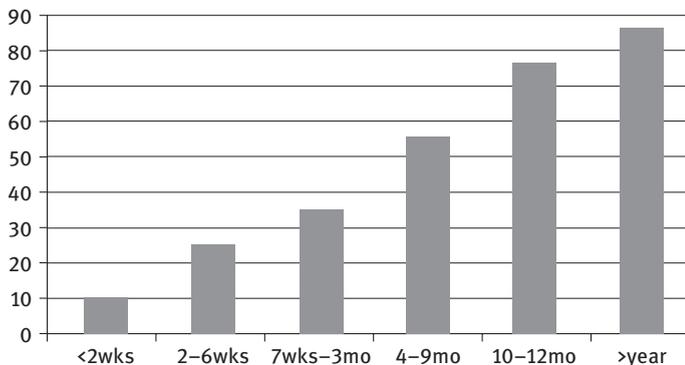
Figure 2: Survey data on the reported use of *balagan* among American Jews according to how much time respondent had spent in Israel.

from Israeli Hebrew, such as *boker tov* (good morning), *bəvakasha* (please), and *bəteavon* (bon appetit). Among American Jews, the word *balagan* (mess, disorder) correlates with time spent in Israel. For example, those who have spent more time in Israel are more likely to report using *balagan* (Figure 2).

Another social variable is time from immigration or language shift: how long the community has been using the language variety it currently uses. In a community that recently immigrated to the current land and/or recently acquired the current language, we expect to see more substratal influence than in a community that has been in its location and using its language for many generations. Substratal influence is what Weinreich (2008[1973]) and Bunis (1981) refer to as "previous Jewish language." For example, in Ottoman Judezmo, centuries removed from substratal contact, we see only a few influences from the substrata of Judeo-Greek (e.g., *meldar* 'to study/read Torah') and Judeo-Arabic (e.g., *al-had* 'Sunday'). But in early 21st-century Jewish English, which is only a few generations removed from the mass wave of Yiddish-speaking immigration, there are hundreds of loan-words and many grammatical features from Yiddish (e.g., *goyish* 'non-Jewish-like', *grager* 'Purim noisemaker', *gornisht* 'nothing', and *give over* 'convey', on analogy with Yiddish *ibergebn*). In general, younger Jews are less likely than older Jews to use Yiddish influences, but in the religious domain, we also see the opposite trend: Younger people are more likely than older people to use words like *shul* and *bentsh* and grammatical influences like *by* (Benor, this volume).

Another hypothesis is that archaisms will correlate with time from immigration or language shift. The more time that has elapsed since the community shifted to its current language or migrated to a location far from its original coterritorial language variety, the more we will find archaic features in relation to the non-Jewish correlate. Archaic features may also correlate inversely with openness of society and

demographic integration. In other words, Jewish communities in less open societies that are not integrated well with their non-Jewish surroundings would likely have more archaic features. This is the case in the chapters in the current volume, as those describing contemporary language varieties, like Jewish Latin American Spanish and Jewish Swedish, are less likely to report archaisms. These communities have more recently immigrated to new language territories and acquired new languages, and they are more integrated into their surrounding societies.

We expect post-coterritorial Jewish language varieties to exhibit the most archaic features. Following the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, they maintained their Judeo-Spanish language in various locations, especially in the Ottoman Empire. Since they were distant from their original territory and had limited contact with it, their language variety developed relatively independently from peninsular Spanish and preserved archaic features. An example is the word-initial Latin /f/, which was maintained in some varieties of Judezmo, including in Bosnia, e.g., *fazer* 'to do/make' and *fondo* 'deep (masc. sg.)' in the writings of Bosnian-born Clarisse Nicoïdski (Balbuena 2009: 288–289), but dropped in other varieties of Judezmo and in Spanish, e.g,. *azer* and *ondo*. Furthermore, Judezmo has preserved the Old Spanish phonemes /š/ and /dž/, now both realized as /x/ in modern Spanish (see Bunis, this volume, and Schwarzwald, this volume).

Coterritorial Jewish language varieties also exhibit archaisms. Sermoneta (1976) noted that Judeo-Italian was 100 or 150 years behind Italian in its linguistic characteristics. This may stem from Jewish communities being segregated from their Christian neighbors and therefore not being exposed to their linguistic changes (see Ryzhik, this volume). In Egyptian Judeo-Arabic (Cairene) the verbal pattern /fuʿul/ survived, as opposed to /fiʿil/, which replaced it in the modern Egyptian dialect. Thus, we encounter in Egyptian Judeo-Arabic /xuluṣ/ 'was redeemed' and /kutru/ 'they multiplied' as opposed to the standard Egyptian dialect /xiliṣ/ and /kitru/, respectively. In addition, the interrogative pronouns /ēš/ 'what', /lēš/ 'why', and /kēf/ 'how' of Cairene Judeo-Arabic have survived in sentence-initial position, in contrast to the situation in the standard dialect, where other pronouns, /ēh/ 'what', /lēh/ 'why', and /ezzāy/ 'how' appear at the end of the sentence. Note also that Cairene Judeo-Arabic interrogative pronouns appear in Levant Arabic and may represent migrated dialectalism as well (see below). Furthermore, the demonstrative pronoun /de/ 'this (masc.)', an older Cairene form, survived among Jews through the 20th century (see Hary on Judeo-Arabic, this volume).

Jewish Malayalam also possesses archaic forms, the most striking of which is the dative ending /-ikkŭ/, instead of /-ŭ/, for nouns and pronouns ending in /-an/, e.g., /jīvanikkŭ/ 'for life' (instead of /jīvanŭ/) and /avanikkŭ/ 'for him

(third person singular with dative ending)' (instead of /avanŭ/) (Gamliel 2009, this volume). See also archaic features discussed in Jewish Neo-Aramaic (Khan, this volume), Judeo-Tat (Shalem, this volume), and Yiddish (Beider, this volume, and Fleischer, this volume).

The final social variable is internal migration. The more members of a community have migrated within the current language territory, the more we would expect *migrated dialectalism*: regional dialectal characteristics from one region found in another (Hary 2009: 22–23; see also Birnbaum 1979: 12; Blondheim 1925: lxxxvi–vii; Shachmon 2017; Weinreich 2008: A38, A121–22, A533, A584, 708, and many other places; Wexler 1981a: 103–104, 106, especially n. 12). Migrated dialectalism can be found in many languages in various historical periods. It is especially common in Jewish language varieties due to many historical migrations, as well as past and present connections among far-flung Jewish communities. This phenomenon can "move" between the written and spoken forms of language varieties. Some examples include verb forms or a typical vowel shift from Morocco found in Cairene Judeo-Arabic, Baghdadi plural demonstrative pronoun forms found in Cairene Judeo-Arabic, a plural article from Southern Italy used by Jews all over Italy in Judeo-Italian, New York phonological variants used by Jews around the United States in Jewish English, and phonemic alternation between /l/ and /t/ associated with North Malabar used by Jews in Kochin, India, hundreds of kilometers to the south, in Jewish Malayalam (Gamliel, this volume). Another instance of this phenomenon is Jewish varieties of Neo-Aramaic in towns around Kurdistan resembling each other more than the language of their non-Jewish neighbors (Khan, this volume).

We have hypothesized several correlations between social and linguistic variables in Jewish language varieties, based in a tradition of variationist sociolinguistics. By applying these analytic methods to large-scale comparative analysis of Jewish communities in different times and places, we will gain a better understanding of Jewish linguistic distinctiveness, Jewish history, and religious and ethnic language variation.

3.2 Hebrew/Aramaic influences

Now we turn to more in-depth analysis of particular aspects of Jewish language varieties. There are several comparative questions that can be asked about their Hebrew and Aramaic influences. Collectively, these influences are often referred to as a "component," but we prefer to think of them in a less unified way. The most common type of Hebrew/Aramaic influence is loanwords; other types include orthographic practices, morphological blends, and the transfer of syntactic structures from calque translation traditions into the vernacular.

One question we might ask: Which concepts are referred to with Hebrew and Aramaic words? Not surprisingly, most Jewish communities use Hebrew and Aramaic words to refer to Jewish religious concepts, such as holidays, ritual foods, lifecycle events, prohibitions, and halachic (Jewish legal) concepts. A surprising exception is 'synagogue', which is referred to with non-Hebrew/Aramaic words in several Jewish language varieties (see analysis in Wexler 1981b). Similarly, in many verbatim or literal translations of sacred Hebrew/Aramaic texts, translators/interpreters/editors avoided even common Hebrew/Aramaic loanwords; for example, in many of these translations, the Judeo-Arabic *šarḥan* translates Hebrew תורה 'Hebrew Bible, Jewish law' into שריעה /šarīʻa/, which means 'Muslim law' in standard Arabic (however, Judeo-Arabic תורה /tōra/ and טורה /tora/, /ṭōra/ also exist).

Non-Jews and their holidays and religious figures are often referred to with Hebrew and Aramaic words, in part as a way of maintaining secrecy. As Table 1 demonstrates, sometimes Jewish religious and non-Jewish concepts are referred to with one Hebrew-origin word in multiple Jewish language varieties (adapted to local pronunciation traditions), as in שבת, and sometimes each language variety uses a different Hebrew-origin word for the same concept, as for evening prayers and Jewish holiday.

Table 1: Hebrew and Aramaic words for concepts related to Jewish religion and to non-Jews in five Jewish language varieties.

	Jewish religion			Non-Jews		
	'Sabbath'	**'evening prayers'**	**'Jewish holiday'**	**'non-Jewish holiday'**	**'non-Jew'**	**'Jesus'**
Egyptian Judeo-Arabic	שבת/שבאת/סבת shabbát/sabt	מעריב maariv/f	מועד moʻēd	---	ערל ʻarel, 'Christian'	---
Judeo-Italian	שבת shabáth	השכיבנו ashkivenu	מועד monged	חגא xagá	ערל ngarel	אותו il udó
Judezmo	שבת shabát	ערבית arvit	מועד mwed	חגא hagá	ערל arel	אותו האיש oto aísh
Yiddish	שבת shábes	מעריב mayriv	יום־טוב yontev	חגא khóge	ערל, גוי orl, goy	אותו האיש, תלוי oyse (ho) ísh, tole
Jewish English	שבת shábes, shabát	מעריב, ערבית maariv, mayriv, arvit	יום־טוב, חג yontif, chag	---	גוי goy	---

Another semantic domain of Hebrew and Aramaic influence is euphemism, especially referring to body parts, death, elimination, and sex. Examples include Judeo-Arabic *bit-kabud* 'house of honor, toilet', *maym qṭənnim* 'small water, urine', and *bet a-ḥayyim* 'house of life, cemetery' (Henshke, this volume); Judeo-Greek *rouchoth* 'airs, farts', *rimoním* 'pomegranates, breasts', and *tachath* 'under, rear end' (Krivoruchko 2001); and Judeo-Italian *beridde* 'circumcision, penis' and *macomme* 'place, toilet' (Ryzhik, this volume). In languages in general, people often discuss unpleasant or taboo topics in more pleasant – or euphemistic – ways, including using a positive word but implying the opposite meaning or using a word from a foreign language. This tradition is found in the Bible, when 'curse' is referred to as 'blessing', and continues in rabbinic literature, with the concept of *leshon sagi nahor*, 'euphemism, lit. language of great light', a phrase used ironically to refer to a blind person. Many of the euphemistic Hebrew-origin words used in Jewish language varieties stem from rabbinic literature and are found in multiple Jewish communities. When analyzing euphemism comparatively in Jewish language varieties, we might ask to what extent each variety uses Hebrew/Aramaic words for taboo referents, and we might determine the common sources for such words, perhaps including specific rabbinic texts that deal with taboo concepts or mutual influence among Jewish language varieties.

A slightly different way of conducting comparative analysis of Jewish language varieties' Hebrew and Aramaic influences is by determining which Hebrew words are used in many Jewish language varieties. That leads to the question of origin: How do Hebrew and Aramaic words come to be used in Jewish language varieties, through speakers' contact with texts or through their contact with other language varieties, including a substratum? Any analysis of a Hebrew or Aramaic word should determine whether it has a biblical or rabbinic source, and one might analyze the phonology, morphology, and semantics of the word to determine the likelihood of influence from other language varieties. For example, based on pronunciation norms and plural markers, we know that many of the Hebrew and Aramaic loanwords in Jewish English are heavily influenced by Yiddish and/or Israeli Hebrew (Benor, this volume). However, even if we suspect the influence of a non-textual source, we might ultimately find influence from the texts themselves. For example, variants of the Yiddish-origin word *yortsayt* 'anniversary of a death' are found in many language varieties, including several varieties of Judeo-Arabic, Jewish Dutch, Judezmo, Judeo-Italian, Judeo-Tadjik, and Judeo-Tat. One might assume that Yiddish speakers spread this word to so many locales around the world, but it is more likely that it traveled through Hebrew rabbinic literature. The word apparently first appeared in *Sefer Minhagim* in Amsterdam in 1635, written as יארצייט. If it was borrowed from speakers,

one might expect similar pronunciations (with local variants). But the diverse pronunciations, including *yarsyat*, *yar sayat*, and, in Judeo-Arabic-speaking communities, *yarṣayt* (with the emphatic ṣ reflecting the grapheme צ), suggest that speakers were determining the pronunciation based on the writing in the rabbinic Hebrew text.

This type of analysis leads us to a related question: Which texts are the most common sources for Hebrew and Aramaic loanwords? Prayers and blessings most frequently recited in Jewish religious life? Biblical passages chanted annually in synagogues? Rabbinic literature studied by elite scholars? Such quantitative analysis may give us insight into the process of borrowing and the importance of various texts in various Jewish communities.

Next, we turn to the integration of Hebrew and Aramaic words. How are they incorporated phonologically? Do they use the local inventory of phonemes and local phonological processes? How do they render Hebrew phonemes and phonological processes that are not available in the non-Jewish language variety? Do they use any phonemes that their non-Jewish neighbors do not? If so, are these phonemes also used in words that are not from Hebrew/Aramaic? Users of Egyptian Judeo-Arabic employ the phoneme /p/ and alternate it with /b/, whereas the phonemic inventory of the non-Jews around them does not include the phoneme /p/. The use of /p/ among Egyptian Judeo-Arabic speakers and writers is usually in words borrowed from Hebrew: /purīm/ (also /burīm/ 'Purim'), /il-pilaġšīm/ 'the concubines', and more (Hary 2017: 22).

There are also several questions regarding morphosyntactic integration. Do nouns' plural morphemes come from Hebrew, from the target language, both on different occasions, or both sequentially in the same word? For example, when Egyptian Judeo-Arabic adds the plural morpheme to the noun ערל /ʿarel/ 'Christian man', it can use either a Hebrew morpheme as in ערלים /ʿarelim/ or an Arabic morpheme, as in עארליין /ʿariliyīn/ (Hary 2016b). A particularly rich research question is how Hebrew-origin verbs are integrated into the local language: directly or periphrastically. Another aspect to this line of inquiry is whether the source of the verbal borrowing is a verb or another part of speech, such as an agentive noun. If the source is a Hebrew verb, what form is borrowed, masculine singular present-tense or a different form?

In Semitic languages, Hebrew-origin verbs tend to be integrated directly through incorporation of the verbal root, as the morphological system of the target language (Judeo-Arabic, Jewish Neo-Aramaic) is similar to that of the origin language (Hebrew). For example, in Egyptian Judeo-Arabic we find אתבהלו /itbahalu/ 'they were overwhelmed' (Hebrew root בהל) and אתזכה /itzaka/ '(he) gained' (Hebrew root זכה, although see Hary 2017: 29–30, especially n. 66); in Palestinian Judeo-Arabic (Peki'in), the Hebrew root אתת 'signal' is used in an Arabic

verbal pattern, /biʾáttit/ '(he) sends signals'. Direct integration also happens in some non-Semitic languages, such as Judeo-Italian /gannavi/ 'she steals', from the Hebrew root גנב 'steal'. In some cases, Hebrew-origin nouns are used as the basis for verb formation, e.g., Judezmo שוחאדאר /shohadear/ 'to bribe', from the Hebrew-origin noun שחד 'bribe', and Jewish English /to be bar mitzvahed/ 'have a coming of age ceremony', from בר מצוה. Another strategy is periphrastic integration, such as Jewish Malayalam /śālomāyi/ 'died', from /śālom/ שלום 'peace' + /āyi/ 'to be' (past of /āk-/); Judeo-Tat /monuħo birɛ/ 'to die', from /mənuḥāh/ מנוחה 'rest' + /birɛ/ 'to be'; and Yiddish /maskim zayn/ 'agree', from /maskim/ מסכים 'agree' and /zayn/ 'to be'.

A phenomenon that exists in several Jewish language varieties is doublets, also known as etymologically multilingual tautological compounds (Zuckermann 2003; see also Mayer Modena 1986 and Tedghi 1995). Here are some examples:

> Eastern Yiddish: *mayim akhroynim vaser* 'hand washing after meal'
> Jewish English: *cholov yisroel milk* 'milk prepared by Jews'
> Jewish Neo-Aramaic: *gintid gan-ʾeden* 'Garden of Eden'
> Judeo-Arabic (Morocco): *bisimha-wilfirha* 'with much delight'
> Judeo-Arabic (Sefrou): *helluf-hazir* 'pig'
> Judeo-Italian: *boni maʾasim tovim* 'good deeds'
> Judezmo: *prove ani* 'very poor'
> Southwestern Yiddish: *e güte simetouve* 'good sign'

When speakers use doublets like these, they might be intending to emphasize the words, or they might not realize they are using Hebrew and non-Hebrew words with the same meaning. When analyzing doublets, we might ask which types of words/phrases tend to be doubled, whether such doublets are more common among speakers with limited knowledge of Hebrew/Aramaic, and whether there is a metalinguistic discourse about doublets as incorrect or unusual.

Another phenomenon found in several Jewish language varieties is coined Hebraisms, words that use Hebrew lexical material but do not exist in the textual tradition. Examples include Jewish English *bat mitzvah* ('girls' coming of age ceremony'), Judezmo *baʾal aftacha* ('optimist'), and Yiddish *khaleshn* ('to faint'). Such words demonstrate the productive relationship between Hebrew and the spoken language. We might analyze how such coinages are formed and which communities are more likely to create them.

So far, we have discussed only lexical influences from Hebrew and Aramaic. Now we turn to semantic and syntactic influence. Many Jewish communities have a tradition of calque (word-for-word, literal) translation of Hebrew and Aramaic texts using lexical material from the local language. Here is an example

from Ladino (the Judeo-Spanish translation tradition) with a comparison to the Spanish equivalent:

Hebrew original from *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers):

Kol	*Yisrael*	*yesh*	*la-hem*	*heleq*	*le'olam*	*ha-ba*
All	Israel	there-is	to-them	part	to-the-world	the-coming

Ladino:

Todo	*Yisrael*	*ay*	*a eyos*	*parte*	*a el mundo*	*el vinyén*
All	Israel	there-is	to them	part	to the world	the coming

Spanish:

Todo	*Israel*	*tiene*	*parte*	*en el*	*mundo*	*venidero*
All	Israel	has	part	in the	world	coming

(Source: Bunis 2009)

Based on the English glosses, readers can see that the Ladino translation emulates the words and word order of the Hebrew original, rendering a sentence that is ungrammatical in Spanish but acceptable calque language in Ladino.

The tradition of calque translations leads to another research question: To what extent are such calque phrases found in the spoken language variety? Some examples from Jewish English include "the world to come"– עולם הבא; and "may her memory be for a blessing" – זכרונה לברכה. In Egyptian Judeo-Arabic, it is almost obligatory to mark the definite direct object with /ilā/ in written texts on analogy with Hebrew את. For example, כולנו עארפֿין אלה אל שריעה 'all of us are learned in the Torah', translating כולנו יודעים את התורה from the Passover *Haggadah* (Hary 2017: 30). This feature may have also penetrated spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic, but this question is still debated.

Another aspect of Hebrew/Aramaic influence is script. Beyond the question of whether Hebrew script is used (see above), we can also analyze various script-related practices (see Daniels, this volume). A language variety might have developed different orthographic traditions, sometimes in different periods but sometimes even simultaneously. See, for example, the various orthographic traditions in Judeo-Arabic (Hary 2016a: 301–310, this volume); historical variation in Hebrew-letter Judezmo orthography (Bunis 2005b); and orthographic competition in Yiddish (Estraikh 1999; Hary 1992: 112–113). Analysis of such orthographic variation can shed light on political, literary, cultural, and religious trends (Hary and Wein 2013: 90–91). For example, we can analyze how Jews marked vowel sounds using available (consonantal) letters and/or other signs and whether they adopted various rabbinic writing conventions, such as word-final letter forms. We might expect communities with higher levels of textual authority to use orthography that aligns more closely with biblical and rabbinic literature. In short, Hebrew/Aramaic influence is potentially a very fruitful area for comparative analysis.

3.3 Ideologies, perceptions, and status

Another area for investigation is how speakers and non-speakers perceive Jewish language varieties. To what extent are they seen as separate languages in popular and academic discourse? Are their glottonyms based on their non-Jewish correlate (e.g., Ladino), their Jewishness (e.g., Judezmo), or a combination (e.g., Judeo-Spanish)? Who tends to use which glottonyms? To what extent are the language varieties stigmatized and/or referred to as deficient versions of their non-Jewish correlates (e.g., *zhargon*)? In what ways do attempts at corpus planning engage in *ausbau* and *einbau* – attempts to make Jewish language varieties less or more like various non-Jewish language varieties?

There has been much work on these issues with regard to specific language varieties, especially Yiddish (e.g., Assouline 2017; Fishman 1999; Gilman 1986; Glinert 1999) and Ladino (e.g., Brink-Danan 2011; Bunis 2005b, 2011, 2016). Comparative work on these issues has begun (e.g., Bunis 2008; Fishman 1985; Myhill 2004, 2009; Spolsky 2014), including the influence of ideologies about Yiddish on ideologies about other Jewish language varieties (e.g., Benor 2008; Bunis 2010; Fudeman 2010). But a systematic comparative analysis of multiple questions regarding ideologies, perceptions, and status remains a desideratum. Of course, ideology is implicit in all research, especially in theoretical arguments about what constitutes a Jewish language (variety), including this chapter. We have already seen some meta-analysis of ideology in academic research on Jewish language varieties (e.g., Frakes 1989; Fudeman 2010), reminding us that scholarship is influenced by the author's conceptions of language, identity, and community. We welcome further research on this issue, as well as on how scholarship affects public discourse on Jewish language use.

3.4 Crossing religious/communal boundaries

In various times and places, the language of a Jewish community has influenced the language of local non-Jews; Hary has called this "crossing religious boundaries," and we prefer to fine tune it to "crossing religious/communal boundaries" (Hary 2009: 16–19; also Hary and Wein 2013: 93–96). In the most minimal sense, this can happen through lexical influx in a professional subgroup: Sometimes Christian and Muslim craftsmen borrowed professional terminology from their Jewish colleagues in their respective trade jargons/argots (see, e.g., Fleischer, this volume). For example, Primo Levi has reported the adoption of Judeo-Italian elements in Northern Italy among Christian furriers (Levi 1984, Chapter 1). In Egypt, Christian and Muslim goldsmiths still use an argot they think of as

"Hebrew" or "Jewish," including the word /šaʔʔāl/ 'a thief', which seems to derive from Aramaic /šqal/ 'take' (Rosenbaum 2002). There are also reports from early modern Saloniki, where non-Jews, especially those who worked in the city's harbor, employed Judezmo as their professional language variety, because Jews were such a large percentage of the population and heavily involved in trade surrounding the port.

At times, the lexical influx from Jewish language varieties reached the entire non-Jewish language community, or a large percentage of it. This is the case in contemporary American English, which includes many Yiddish-origin lexemes, such as *shmooze* 'chat, network' (< Yiddish *shmuesn*) and *klutz* 'clumsy person' (< Yiddish *klots*) (Benor, this volume). These transferred loan words, used more by people who live in cities with large Jewish populations, are likely due to Jewish integration into American society and the preponderance of Jews in popular culture and media. However, this is not only a modern phenomenon. There are examples of Hebrew and Aramaic loanwords that entered Christian German language varieties in the Rhine valley via Yiddish, many of which date back to the Middle Ages and are still used today, e.g., *Schmiere stehen* 'to keep a lookout', from Hebrew [šmira] 'guard'; *Ganove* 'thief', from Hebrew [ganav] 'thief' (Reershemius 2006). Similarly, Llanito (or Yanito), a mixture of Andalusian Spanish and British English varieties, spoken by the majority of Gibraltarians, includes many Hebrew lexemes as well as other influences from Haketia, a Judeo-Spanish variety spoken in Northern Morocco and the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (on Llanito, see https://www.ethnologue.com/country/gi/languages and Haller 2000).

More rarely, there was actual bilingualism cutting across religious lines. Muslims in some villages in Iran, such as Sede, used the Judeo-Persian variety employed by Jews in Isfahan and distinguished from the Persian used by Muslims there (Rabin 1979: 53, 56). In Ruthenia (today Western Ukraine), Christian nannies sometimes learned Yiddish and used it to communicate with the Jewish families they worked for. In some cases, they also taught Jewish children the Hebrew prayers. In addition, Hebrew blessings were widespread among the general Greek-Catholic (or Russian-Orthodox) population of the region (Hary 2009: 18, n. 27 and the references there).

As these examples demonstrate, crossing religious/communal boundaries correlates with openness of society and demographic integration of Jews into the local society. When Jews and non-Jews interact intensively in professional or domestic spheres, not only are Jewish language varieties influenced by non-Jewish language varieties, but the influence also goes in the opposite direction. By analyzing this phenomenon comparatively, we may increase our understanding of Jewish language varieties and the historical and contemporary relationships between Jews and their neighbors.

4 Why study Jewish language varieties comparatively?

The research questions discussed above are some of the many areas ripe for analysis in Jewish language varieties around the world and throughout history. Several of these aspects have been discussed in one, two, or multiple Jewish language varieties, but there has not yet been comprehensive and systematic comparative analysis. Taking such a global approach will help to answer old questions and pose new questions in Jewish studies, linguistics, and other fields. It will allow us to compare different locations and eras of Jewish history, exploring various patterns of engagement and insularity with respect to the broader society. It will also allow us to develop theories about language contact, including the influence of texts on spoken language (see Neuman's impressive 2009 treatment of this topic, including his notion of *schriftbund*). Finally, it will allow us to formulate theories about diaspora, ethnicity, migration, and religion that we can then test with other religious, ethnic, and minority groups, such as African Americans, Asian British, Iraqi Christians, the Deaf community, Canadian Hindus, Roma, and others.

How can the analysis of Jewish language varieties help us understand and analyze other religious and ethnic language varieties? Several scholars have already started to write about the linguistic similarities and differences between Jews and other religious and ethnic groups (e.g., Fishman 1987; Hary and Wein 2013; Myhill 2009; Stillman 1991; Wein and Hary 2014; Wexler 1980, 1986). On a broader scale, such research has been formalized in two fields: language and religion, sometimes called *religiolinguistics* (Hary and Wein 2013) (see, for example, Hary and Wein 2013; Omoniyi and Fishman 2006; Versteegh 2017; Wein and Hary 2014; Yaeger-Dror 2014, 2015) and language and ethnicity/race, sometimes called *ethnolinguistics* or *raciolinguistics* (see, for example, Alim, Rickford and Ball 2016; Fishman and García 2010; Fought 2006; Labov 1966).

One area for comparative analysis is script. Communities around the world use orthographic choices to represent their religious and literary affiliations. For example, predominantly Muslim communities use Arabic script for writing Aljamiado, (Muslim) Chinese, Jawi (Malay), Māppiḷḷa-Malayalam, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, and more. Similarly, the Cyrillic script of Serbian symbolizes the importance of the Eastern Orthodox Church in that community, whereas Croatian, although quite similar to Serbian, at least until the breakup of Yugoslavia (1989–1992), is written with Latin script, in line with the Roman Catholic background of most of its users (Hary 2009: 19–20 and the references there). Our comparative Jewish linguistic analysis leads us to several questions about script. In what situations do religious minorities use their own script? What happens to existing

orthographic traditions when a new religion spreads in a given territory or when a group migrates to a territory dominated by a different religion or orthographic tradition? Do communities adopt the new dominant script, keep their old script, or create hybrid forms? Answering such questions can shed light on language, religion, and ethnicity, as well as their intersections – religiolinguistics and ethnolinguistics. This is an important academic exercise that heads in an interesting direction: from minority fields (such as Jewish studies) to other minority fields (such as African American studies or Muslim studies), as well as to broader fields, such as sociolinguistics, language contact, and migration studies.

5 Practical considerations and next steps

A practical issue in conducting comparative analysis of Jewish language varieties is the requisite language skills. If one skims the bibliography below, it becomes clear that previous comparative Jewish linguistic scholarship has been written in five languages: English, French, German, Hebrew, and Yiddish. In addition, for each Jewish language variety there is a substantial body of literature in relevant languages, e.g., Spanish for Judezmo, Italian for Judeo-Italian, Russian for Judeo-Tat. (It is also interesting to find lacunae; for example, there are almost no studies of Judeo-Arabic in Arabic.) Of course, to conduct analysis on Jewish Neo-Aramaic, Judeo-Persian, Jewish Swedish, etc., requires knowledge of the language variety and its non-Jewish correlate. Because functional ability in a dozen or more languages is quite rare, comparative Jewish linguistic scholarship requires collaboration. Fortunately, our field has systems in place to facilitate this. Scholars can use the Jewish languages list (jewish-languages.org/ml/), to inquire about a phenomenon in multiple Jewish language varieties (e.g., doublets, how they refer to euphemism or non-Jewish holidays, and whether specific Hebrew words are used). The email list and the Jewish Language Research Website (jewish-languages.org) also enable scholars to easily find others who might be interested in collaborating.

In addition to the opportunities for collaboration, a number of published and online resources facilitate comparative research. If one wanted to conduct a comparative analysis of Hebrew/Aramaic words in multiple Jewish language varieties, one could use the many relevant dictionaries (Aprile 2012 for Judeo-Italian; Bunis 1993 for Judezmo; Glinert 1992 for Jewish English; Henshke 2007 for Tunisian Judeo-Arabic; Niborski 2012 for Yiddish; and Maman 2013 for several Jewish language varieties). In addition, other such dictionaries are in preparation, and there are online collaborative lexicons for Jewish English, Jewish French, Jewish Latin American Spanish, Jewish Russian, and Jewish Swedish

(jewish-languages.org). Ideally there would be one comprehensive database for Hebrew/Aramaic word use in all Jewish language varieties, searchable by Hebrew word, referent, and language variety, with information about phonological and morphosyntactic integration, phrases in which the word appears, sociolinguistic variation, and documentation. Another desideratum is a database of language use in all Jewish communities, emphasizing distinctive features and answering some of the questions discussed above. Furthermore, we can collaborate with scholars of other ethnic and religious communities to expand these comparative analyses. To make these ideas a reality, funding is needed, and scholars must be willing to share data and participate in virtual and in-person gatherings devoted to such research. We hope this book will inspire such collaboration and further the field of comparative Jewish linguistic studies on the one hand and comparative religiolinguistics and ethnolinguistics in general.

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