DISCOURSE—YES, GRAMMAR—NO

Influence of Arabic mother tongue on Arab students writing in Hebrew

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Abstract

Learning Hebrew among L1 Arabic speakers in East Jerusalem, Israel, has gained momentum, since being fluent in the language of the majority contributes to socioeconomic mobility and inclusion. One of the main challenges L2 learners face is writing, specifically expository and argumentative composition. Writing products of native speakers of Arabic (L1) in Hebrew (L2) reveal cross-linguistic influences, including language transfer from L1. This L1 interference is strengthened by the strong resemblance of these two Semitic languages, and is manifested in morphology, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and rhetorical structures.

In this study we examine changes in the expository-argumentative writing in Hebrew (L2) of Arabic speaking students who participated in an intensive Hebrew learning program. We used qualitative textual analysis based on 48 writing products [24 pre-, 24 post-tests]. Our research questions were: 1. What are the main characteristics of Arabic speaking students' writing in Hebrew? 2. What types of changes are evident in their writing samples after completing two years of Hebrew study?

In order to characterize their writing, study participants completed pre- and post-tests. Our findings suggest: (a) a strong interference of Arabic on writing in Hebrew in different language fields; (b) a noticeable improvement in some aspects of discourse, but much less in grammar, and in the lexicon, yielding mixed results.

Keywords: academic writing, second language acquisition, expository writing, interlanguage, Semitic languages, contrastive grammar

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Socio-Political background

Language is a dominant component in one's culture. The strong connection between identities and language has a crucial influence on one's attitude towards the language and its culture, and as a result, on language learning (Ben-Refael, Olshtain & Geijst, 1998; Dubiner, 2012).

The Palestinian and the Jewish national movements have been in conflict since the second half of the 19th century, a conflict that has intensified since the establishment of the State of Israel. This conflict is expressed, in part, through the languages of Hebrew and Arabic.

It therefore follows that the acquisition and learning of Hebrew by L1 Arabic speakers presents some unique difficulties and challenges. The attitude of Palestinians citizens of Israel (henceforward PCI[1], about 20% of Israel's population) towards Hebrew is complex and has changed over the years. Their motivations to learn it are varied, but for many it has now become instrumental – a means to realize practical and professional ambitions (Amara, 2006; Hauptman, Zamir, & Tal, 2010). It should be noted that Hebrew is the language of both the establishment and the majority in Israel, and is therefore of great importance to its Palestinians citizens. PCI see the mastery of Hebrew language as essential to their integration into academic institutions, workplaces, and Israeli society (Abu Bakr, 2012-2013, 2016; Winter, 1981; Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). Studies that examined PCI students' attitudes (Ilaiyan & Abu Hussein, 2012; Abed al-Rahman, 2013), indicate a positive attitude towards Hebrew. Students respect the language and seek to learn it until they reach a high level of linguistic proficiency. Amara (2002) presents the results of a study indicating very positive attitudes towards Hebrew and its study that go beyond being a language of communication for pragmatic purposes. Stavans and Narkis (2003), who studied the implementation of Language Policy in the Israeli Educational System, show that also the teachers in the Arab sector believe that teaching Hebrew to Arab students is highly important.

A questionnaire distributed to the population queried for the present study shows that these Arab students' attitudes towards Hebrew are positive, mainly due to instrumental considerations (Haskel-Shaham & Schlam-Salman, 2015).[2] Motivation and attitude are crucial to L2 learning, because they have an influence on the

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[1] In our paper, we use the term PCI to refer also to east Jerusalem Arabs, Palestinians who have Israeli residency status, but for the most part do not hold Israeli citizenship, and also differ in their command of Hebrew.

[2] Haskel-Shaham. & Schlam-Salman, J., Attitudes of teachers in Arab schools in East Jerusalem towards Hebrew and their sense of ability to master the language. International Online Conference - Hebrew as an additional language for diverse populations in Israel and around the world, May 2015.

extent of learners' involvement in studying the target language (Cook & Singleton, 2014).

Amara (2002) notes that Hebrew competence differs among PCI in various sociolinguistic divisions, for example, young versus old, and men versus women (in both cases, members of the first respective groups had higher levels of competency). He even claims that with just a few exceptions (that have not yet been examined), the greater the physical distance of an Arab community from a (Jewish) metropolis, the less Hebrew is used in everyday life. This has, of course, an impact on the teaching of Hebrew to heterogeneous groups.

As for living in Arab communities compared to living in mixed (Arab and Jewish) cities - no difference was found in attitudes towards Hebrew between Arabs living in these two environments (Attili, 1999). A study conducted among East Jerusalem Arabs also yielded similar results (Ilaiyan & Abu Hussein, 2012).

As for the attitude of the state—historically the teaching of Hebrew to PCI began shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and took many forms (Amara and Abed al-Rahman, 2002). The first teachers who taught Hebrew in Arab schools were Jews, but were gradually replaced by Arab teachers. Since 1977 most teachers teaching Hebrew to PCI are not Jewish: most teachers are Arabs who have attained academic and pedagogical education (Abed al-Rahman, 2013). However, in recent years there has been a trend to re-integrate Jewish teachers into the Arab sector.[3]

In 2010, the Ministry of Education published an updated curriculum for "Hebrew as a Second Language in Arabic-speaking Schools", intended for grades 3-12, and based on pedagogical principles of second language acquisition (L2). It adapted modern concepts of additional language instruction, with an emphasis on communication. As for Israel's language policy in general—Stavans and Narkiss (2003), in their study of typology of language policy, conclude that Israel's language policy combines characteristics of all 3 different types: homogeneous (a vast linguistic majority and marginal linguistic minorities), dyadic (countries divided into two or three ethnolinguistic groups) and mosaic (countries which contain a substantial number of constituent ethnic minorities).

Along with formal language instruction, there is an increase in informal learning of Hebrew through contact with Hebrew speakers in workplaces, commerce, and government ministries (Amara, 2002). As Hebrew is accessible to Arab adults in their everyday life, it is sometimes used interchangeably with Arabic in both speech and writing (Abu-Baker, 2016).

However, despite the many years of Hebrew learning and the exposure to Hebrew in everyday life, Arab students encounter many difficulties in learning the language in general and the written language in particular (Abu-Baker, 2005, 2012-

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[3] As evidenced by the Abraham Fund Initiative—a Jewish-Arab organization for social change and the promotion of integration and equality between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. For more information, see http://www.abrahamfund.org/65.

2013; Shehadeh, 1998). In general, it appears that the level achieved by the PCI by 12th grade falls significantly below average when compared to the linguistic achievement of minorities in Europe, according to Shatil (2008), who compares their level with that of various ethnic minorities in France[4].

1.2 Theoretical framework

There are several definitions for bilingualism or multilingualism. One that fits PCI students is being able to use a second language in a meaningful way for certain things (Cook & Singleton, 2014). A multilingual speaker participating in different communicative setting, might code-switch or code-mix consciously or unconsciously (Olshtain & Nissim-Amitai, 2004B).

Research suggests that there is a strong reliance on the L1 when learning a second language, especially in the beginning stages (Song, 2012). This creates an interlanguage that, among other features, is characterized by a copying of semantic and syntactic structures from the original language to the target language. In part, this is the result of a translation process that expresses thinking bound to the original language. Other features of interlanguage include overgeneralization and simplification of language, expressed in the speakers' choice of one basic form (basic version) to represent more than one meaning (for instance, use of the present form to represent all verb tenses). Simplification takes place in all branches of the language: morphology, syntax and vocabulary (Olshtain, 1997, 1998; Golan & Muchnik, 2012; Henkin, 2003; Selinker, 1972). The syntax is basic, using short expressions, unsubordinated structures, and the vocabulary is constructed mainly with nouns and a few verbs (usually unconjugated). Use of adjectives, conjunctions and prepositions increases over time. In an effort to ensure understanding, learners of an additional language tend towards verbosity, often through redundant word usage and repetition of the message. It is generally quite difficult to defossilize errors derived from L1, certainly for people who have acquired their L2 rather than have formally or consistently studied it. Years of learning and usage can reduce errors significantly.

The difficulties of language learners are more evident in the learning of writing, since writing is considered to be the most complex of the language skills. The cognitive resources required are numerous and need to be coordinated (Cummins, 2000; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hayes, 1996). Writing requires full command of linguistic and social-cultural skills that influence linguistic choices, as well as discourse capabilities and the strategic ability to compensate for linguistic deficits (Olshtain & Haskel-Shaham, 2012). Slobin (1996) argues that language patterns are acquired at an early age, and native speakers have difficulty developing

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[4] *Though he admits that the case of these minorities differs significantly from the case in Israel for many reasons– for instance, one major difference is that in France, in contrast to Israel, the minority and majority groups recognize one another's legitimacy, and have been living together for hundreds of years.*

linguistic sensitivities to another language. Grabe and Kaplan (1989) believe that linguistic and rhetorical conventions in the mother tongue have an impact on writing in a second language. Van Weijen and colleagues (2009) attest that L2 writers use their first language while writing in L2, mainly in the form of translating from L1 to L2. Findings from Zamel (1982, 1983) indicate that L2 writers use strategies similar to those used in L1. It seems safe to assume that successful writing in a second language depends on the writers' ability to apply L1 content, textual and strategic schematic knowledge to dealing with a writing task in a second language.

The ability to produce coherent, original, clear text in an organized rhetorical structure with developed logical ideas requires much experience (Manor, 2016). Moreover, writing in another language is actually a transition from writing according to the conventions of one culture to the conventions of writing in another. Specifically in our case, according to Margolin and Ezer (Margolin, 2015; Margolin & Ezer, 2013-2014) Arab discourse is composed of a combination of parallel lines loosely related to each other, while the Hebrew discourse is linear with clear connections[5]. It seems that when Arabic speakers write in Hebrew (L2), the rhetorical and linguistics conventions of their L1 penetrate their writing, and they write according to their linguistic and cultural schema in Arabic (Margolin, 2002; Margolin & Ezer, 2013-2014).

PCI students in Israel live in a multilingual context – they use spoken Arabic (a dialect) at home with family and friends, Modern Standard Arabic (fuṣḥa)[6] at school, and Hebrew in applying to authorities, for higher education or in any other interaction with Jewish citizens. Many of them might use English for processing information and for international communication. Obviously, this situation makes the process of language acquisition more complex (Brosh, 1996; Saiegh-Haddad, 2008). Multilingual speakers often tend to code-mix and code-switch, so PCI's texts might involve Arabic (spoken and fuṣḥa), Hebrew, and also English here and there (Olshtain & Nissim-Amitai, 2004A).

Another difficulty is the proximity between the two Semitic languages. They have many common traits: both are written from right to left, both use diacritic marks to indicate vowels. There are similarities in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. Most words in Arabic and Hebrew, especially verbs, are constructed from roots and patterns (Rabin, 1993). Because of the resemblance one might expect Arabic speakers to learn Hebrew easily, but it seems that they face many difficulties (Mustafa, 2011).

On top of all that, there is the national conflict between Jews and Arabs, referred to in our introduction. Amara (2002) notes that Arab youth are embarrassed when

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[5] For further reading, see Kaplan, R.B. (1988). Contrastive rhetoric and second language learning: Notes towards a theory of contrastive rhetoric. In Alan C. Purves (Ed.), Writing across languages and cultures (pp. 275-304). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publication.

[6] Standard or literary Arabic, used in writing and in formal speech situations, and is the same across all Arab countries.

confronted with the fact that unlike them, who are very interested in Hebrew language studies, young Jews do not show an affinity towards Arabic. Schumann (1986) claim that success in learning another language in a host community depends on the relationship between the learners and the target language and its culture, and the learners' beliefs towards them (Gabillon, 2005).

In light of the above, it can be understood that the process of learning writing for PCI students is quite a complicated mission. Many stumbling blocks stand in the way, not only in dealing with the most complex modality of language learning, but also the cultural and interlinguistic misgivings of Arabic speakers.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

This study aims to portray the significant learning process and outcomes undergone by a group of PCI students as part of a program to certify them as Hebrew teachers and to describe the changes that occurred during two years of intensive study.

Our research questions were: 1. What are the special characteristics of PCI writing in Hebrew and in what way did L1-Arabic influence the students' writing? 2. What are the main changes that occurred in the students' written language as a result of intensive learning over two years?

A description of the key phenomena and characterization of the problems will help construct a roadmap for coping with the difficulties and improving the programs for the advancement of Arab students towards a better command of written Hebrew.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Context of the study

As a result of the growing demand for learning Hebrew among PCI, an Academic College of Education, in cooperation with the Administration of Education in Jerusalem, formulated a curriculum for teaching Hebrew as an additional language for teachers who teach Arabic speakers in schools in East Jerusalem. These teachers already teach Hebrew in their elementary and secondary-school classes, even though they are not certified to do so. Until recently there was no Hebrew teaching at all in these schools, but once the principals decided to start teaching it, they had no professional teachers.

The program lasts six semesters (within 26-27 months). The curriculum consists of 20 courses emphasizing 3 dimensions of language learning: 1. Strengthening and fostering language skills in morphology, syntax and discourse; 2. Instilling theoretical knowledge of L2 Acquisition, Psycholinguistics and Bilingualism; 3. Didactics courses and practical training. Every student has to acquire 26 hours of academic courses and 6 hours of practical training in his/her class.

2.2 Participants and task given

48 Arab candidates from east Jerusalem and from Arab localities in Israel, arrived at the screening process at the College. They had to undertake a test, consisting of questions in morphology, syntax, reading comprehension and writing (the writing assignment was the pre-test for our research). 32 were accepted to the program, 2 left after a month for personal reasons, 3 more left during the first year. 27 completed their studies successfully. On the day of the post-test only 24 students participated.

The 24 students' ages ranged from 26-55; 3 students were male and 21 were female. They all have at least a B.A. (in various disciplines) and a teaching license. The subjects had been exposed to Hebrew (through learning and everyday life circumstances) for at least 19 years before the study. Table 1 presents more details on the participants.

The Hebrew proficiency level in of most of them corresponds with the "independent user" level of B2, with very few of them at the level of "proficient user", according to the criteria for proficiency levels of the CEFR (2016, 25).

Table 1. Gender, age, and years of Hebrew learning of participants

Criteria	Amount
Gender: Male	3
Female	21
Age: average	33
Under 32	11
Over 32	15
Years of Hebrew learning and exposure to Hebrew: average	24
Academic degree:	
MA	5
BA	21

The task they had to complete was to write an expository-argumentative text on raising children, under the following instruction: "The issue of raising children is controversial among parents and educators. Some say that it is best to accompany your children very closely and show them way, others believe it is better to give them freedom to chose their way, so they will know to get along in life from young age. Write an essay, and state your opinion and reasoning".

The text length required was about one page. All writing products were graded by the project's teachers. The assignment was given at the start of the study program and then again after two years.

2.3 *Research method*

In general, the method employed for this study was content analysis. More specifically, we made use of a text data method (Hyland, 2016).[7] Emphasis was placed not on the most general characteristics, but on a deeper and broader understanding the particular written products (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The aforementioned writing assignment was given to the subjects at the beginning of the program within the framework of the screening test. Under the same conditions as the first assignment, students were given the same assignment at the end of four semesters, after two years of intensive study of Hebrew

All three researchers analyzed and classified a total of 48 compositions (24 pre-course and 24 post-course), using the following process: first, we read all essays and determined which prominent linguistic phenomena stood out. Then we sorted the various phenomena according to the fields of language described below (see table 2., P. 9). The model for analyzing was consolidated in a joint discussion. We used an excel chart, divided according to the linguistic phenomena and students. Then, each researcher analyzed one third of the compositions (writing products), and then examined and categorized one half of the compositions of each of the other two colleagues. Disagreements were settled through discussion. We marked in the chart the number of recurrences of each phenomenon in the writing product of each student and then discussed our interpretations. At the end, we determined what was the frequency of each phenomenon in all products.

The pre-test enabled a description of the characteristics of the students' writing products, and the post-test enabled examination of changes that had taken place between the first and second versions—a developmental view.

3. FINDINGS

Below we describe the findings which present prominent phenomena in the various fields of language: discourse, grammar—syntax and spelling—and lexicon, as they appear in students' writings products. We will point out the main changes we traced in the writing products from day one to two years later.

Table 2 present the main categories we investigated.

[7] *Hyland's definition for the text data method: "Using texts as objects of study. Approaches which analyze texts see writing as an outcome of activity" (2016, p. 119).*

Table 2. Research categories

	Linguistic Domain	Category	Indicators
3.1	Discourse	3.1.1 *Text Length*	
		3.1.2 *Organization*	Opening component
			Concluding component
			Gradation of text
			Representation
3.2	Grammar	3.2.1 *Spelling and Pronunciation*	Spelling that represents phonological influence of L1 Arabic
			Diacritic marks
			Vowel marking
		3.2.2 *Syntax*	Asyndetic relative clause
			Particles: prepositions, direct object marker
3.3	Lexicon	3.3.1 *Vocabulary*	
		3.3.2 *Degree of formality – register*	Copula
			Relative pronoun
			Participle negation
			Adjectives (from a foreign language)
			Collocation

3.1 *Discourse*

The central ability of language acquirers, according to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), is the capacity of discourse in which the sociolinguistic ability is intertwined, meaning that the ability to select, sequence and arrange words, structures, and utterances in order to create a coherent text depends on interaction with sociolinguistic knowledge. It is important that language learners master the pragmatic aspects of discourse in the target language. Language learners tend to copy patterns from their mother tongue to the target language, such as polite expressions, ways to seek help, and more. It is reasonable to assume that in the first version, more instances of mother tongue discourse characteristics will be evident.

Reading and writing an expository text is more likely to be difficult to process compared to writing a narrative text. This is because of the complex structure of the expository text, as it is less defining than narrative text, which usually has a clear structure: background, main problem and its solution (Zabrucky & Moore, 2002). Moreover, expository texts are more distant from the everyday experiences of the readers, dealing with more global phenomena, with facts and abstract ideas (Saenz & Fuchs, 2002; Snow 2010). Additionally, we should bear in mind that narratives are written in a more everyday language, sometimes a spoken register, while expository texts use a specific lexicon, scientific or academic language, which is not common in everyday discourse (Fang et al., 2008; Snow, 2010). In the coming sections, we will examine a few aspects related to discourse.

3.1.1 Text length

Studies indicate that the volume of writing increases with age (Berman and Verhoeven, 2002). The length of a text is conditioned by lexical and grammatical competencies. This is why a proficient writer in L1 is not necessarily a proficient writer in L2. It depends on her/his control of that language. Some researchers attest to the positive correlation between L1 and L2 writing: proficient L1 writers tend to be good in L2 writing (Carson & Kuehn, 1992); others disagree—Aliakbar (2002) showed poor correlation between in L1 and L2 writing, and claimed that these are two different missions. Yet, Carson and Kuehn (1992), Grant and Ginther (2000), Sasaki (2000) and Zhang (2008) did conclude that proficient writers in L1 produced longer texts in L2 than novice or poor writers.

In our research we examined the text length at the beginning of the program (hereafter: version 1), and after four semesters (hereafter: version 2). Table 3 shows the results of text length in words and standard deviation.

Table 3. Paper length and SD (N=24)

	Min	*Max*	*M*	*SD*
Pre	30	217	100.75	46.32
Post	118	340	204.42	63.74
Length growth	18	207	103.67	47.06

The average length of the pre-test was 101 words - a limited text length with regard to the task requirement and expectation from adults (*SD* was 46.32). The shortest text contained only 30 words, while the longest was 217. Text length average doubled to 204 words (*SD* 63.74). The post texts were much longer, the shortest one was 118 words, while the longest was 340. The largest gap was 207 words (37 in the version 1 compared to 244 in version 2). The smallest gap was 18 words (107 words vs. 125 words). We found no evidence of decrease in text length.

It seems that language knowledge and knowledge about writing change through experience and growth, and it occurs not only in L2, but in L1 as well. (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006). This knowledge merges and overlap in the two languages (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013). Novice L2 writers who had little writing experience spend a lot of time formulating their ideas into L2 using their L1 to compensate for linguistic problems, while more proficient writers wrote more fluently with less compensatory problem-solving (Manchon, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2009), therefore their texts were longer.

3.1.2 Organizational structure of the text

Students were required to write an expository text presenting facts explaining ideas, and making arguments. Optimal expository text is characterized by a hierarchical structure at all levels, and is composed of logically connecting relationships, such as relations of cause, elaboration, antithesis, concession, etc. (Mann & Thompson, 1988; Meyer & Ray, 2011; Cohen, 2007).

In comparing the two versions, we found that the students better understood the requirements of the genre in the version 2. The differences between the versions were expressed in several aspects, about which we would like to elaborate further.

Opening component. The role of the opening element in the expository text is to present the subject and to lead readers to what is said in the body of the work. It is a point of reference in relation to which readers process the rest of the statements in the text. An unfocused introductory component creates a blurring of the issues under discussion (Wolpé, 1994; Kozminsky, 2006). In the version 2, the writers (79.16%, 19/24) tended to create a background at the beginning that enabled the reader to better understand the exact topic of the writing, while in version 1 less than 1/3 introduced the subject (29.16%, 7/24).

Examples[8]

> "My children are my life" This sentence summarizes the *feelings of each parent* towards his children ... Some parents claim ... Some parents see ... [Amal[9], version 2. Emphasis added by authors].
>
> The first person the child meets in his life is a mother and therefore he is strengthened by her and cries when she leaves him. [Amal, version 1].

In version 2 the writer begins with two general statements: *This sentence summarizes ... every parent*, in contrast to version 1, in which the writer describes a concrete event. Something similar happens in the following example:

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[8] Everything written under 'Examples' or in italics is an exact translation of the written essay. There are several quotation marks which are the writer's. Our discussions of the examples are found outside the numbering. As for transliteration, we added it only when dealing with separate words, but we did not transliterate complete sentences or paragraphs, in order not to overload our text with transliteration.

[9] All names are pseudonyms.

> Raising children is not easy and is a hard thing to cope with ... There are different opinions ... [Lamis, version 2].
>
> When a baby is born, he cannot know the world he is coming into. We together the parents begin to teach him the things he is allowed to do, and so he begins to differentiate ... [Lamis, version 1].

The two sentences that open the later versions are nominal clauses that characterize representational texts in Hebrew, as opposed to the opening sentences of the first two versions which are verbal sentences that characterize narrative writing.

Concluding component. The conclusion is an essential element of any expository text. It highlights the main ideas discussed in the text and emphasizes the main message (Efrati, Kaufman & Lidor, 2001; Wolpé, 1994).

In version 2, 67% (16/ 24) of the students tended to finish with a summative component in which they summarized or drew conclusions and made recommendations. There is often an explicit reference to this element using the marker "and finally" or “therefore” or the use of a special phrase at the end to leave an impression and make a mark. In version 1, on the other hand, most texts 83% (20/24) ended without any concluding element.

The following are examples of closing components in version 2:

> In *conclusion* I want to say that children are the most precious thing in our lives. We cannot give them freedom of action from the start. They want their parents and their help in everything they do in their lives [Haya].
>
> Raising children is a problematic issue affected by many factors ... Parents must decide in advance how to raise their children and not forget that it is a *single-edged sword* [Samira].

In both examples there is a general statement that refers to what is said in the text and a conclusion (*Parents need to*...). In addition, in the first example, there is a dialog marker to specify the rhetorical role of the linguistic component. In the second, there is a deliberate use of a (distorted) expression, in order to leave an impression on the readers.

Gradation in the text. Like the syntactic structure of the sentence, the text also has a logical-hierarchical structure (Azar, 1997). Proper expository text must meet the requirements of graduated information, so that a more informative argument will appear after a more general and less informative argument. This way the text concludes with the most informative claim with regard to the topic discussed (Giora, 1985; 1988).

In most writers’ second version there is an expression of logical-hierarchical text (75%, 18/24), built from the general to the specific, in accordance with what is expected in this genre of writing. In the first version most texts (67%, 16/24) are presented as a sequence of events (sometimes associatively), and thus the writing is similar to narrative one, not suitable here.

Examples:

> The subject of raising children *is controversial*. There are those who say that it is good to stick close to a child and others who think it is better to give him freedom of action. [Afnan, version 2].
>
> From my experience with the older girls, I stuck close to them all the time. I did not let them think alone or stand alone, counseling them until they grew up…and I saw later that it was not so good... [Afnan, version 1].

In the second version, the topic is further elaborated upon. The paragraph begins with a statement about *controversy* and later gives details - *Some say..., and there are others who believe*, whereas in the first version the text is organized in a sequence of time - characteristic of narrative writing.

Representation. Designating boundaries is an essential means of conducting interaction in written discourse. In the first versions, the texts were usually not broken into paragraphs or were divided erroneously in a way which did not facilitate distinguishing between conceptual units, and showed no awareness of the need to dedicate each paragraph to one main idea. In the second versions, on the other hand, there was a clearer expression of content boundaries with the use of paragraph divisions. We will demonstrate the change through Amal´s writing. Her first version is a single textual unit of about 150 words, showing no awareness of the need to deal with each theme in a separate paragraph. In the second version of 280 words, the text is divided into six distinct paragraphs, which correspond to six content units.

3.2 Grammar

We present here only some of the findings concerning grammar: various forms of spelling, pronunciation, and syntax. We do not demonstrate morphological findings, since there were no significant changes between the two versions.

3.2.1 Spelling and pronunciation

In our research we tried to treat the phenomena from a broader perspective, focusing not only the spelling mistakes, but also on the reasons for them.

Spelling that represents phonological influence of the mother tongue. Spelling reflects the relationship between phonology and the writing system. Orthography is not necessarily the verbalization of phonetics (Ravid, 2011). Acquiring spelling in L1 requires a deep understanding of the grapho-phonemic relationship. Saeigh-Haddad (2011) found out that native speakers of Arabic struggled with processing phonemes in written Arabic that were unfamiliar for them in their spoken dialect. One might assume that this difficulty would be aggravated when dealing with Hebrew. Examples for this we can see in switching between /b/ and /p/ *boné Aleichem* (building to you) instead of *poné Aleichem* (addressing you) (Abu-Bakar, 2016). Sometimes spelling mistakes "reflect problems of speakers of particular first language … which show the lack of a /p – b/ contrast in Arabic" (Cook & Singleton, 2014: 76).

As far as our students are concerned, even after two years of learning Hebrew in the program, we still found spelling indicative of the influence of L1 Arabic. We chose a representative case in which such a mistake leads to misinterpretation of the sentence: Standard Arabic does not include the consonant /g/ (except for the Egyptian variant). Its voiceless pair is /k/, so Arabs tend to write the words in Hebrew with K instead of G: *lehaškiaḥ* (to cause to forget) instead of *lehašgiaḥ* (to take care of, to keep an eye on). In this case it makes a different word-meaning: *Lehaškiaḥ 'al ha-hitnahaguyot šelo* [Samira]—should be: *lehašgiaḥ* (not "to make him forget about his conduct"—but "to keep an eye on his conduct").

Diacritic marks. Diacritic marks are part of the writing system in Arabic and Hebrew. However, Hebrew texts only use diacritics at the beginning of reading acquisition and in a few other specific cases, mainly in order to distinguish two words that otherwise are spelled the same. Arabic diacritics, however, must be marked. While in Arabic the diacritic mark distinguishes one letter from another, in Hebrew the diacritic mark differentiates between one pronunciation and another of the same letter, that is, they create a different consonant.

In an earlier article (Tamir, Haskel-Shaham & Klauss, 2016) we discussed this phenomenon (Henkin, 2003, also pointed out this phenomenon). and raised the hypothesis that it indicates L1 influence, and therefore is another unique example of interlanguage. Another hypothesis to explain this phenomenon is that because these students are also teachers of young children and must use diacritic marks in their teaching, they continue to do so in their own academic writing.

In the second versions, we still encountered many of these unnecessary diacritic marks, with no substantial decrease from the earlier version, for instance: *פַּעַם* (**p**a'am), *בְּחִירתי* (my **ch**oice), *כַּאשר* (**w**hen).

Vowel marking. Hebrew and Arabic vowels are indicated mostly by diacritic marks, usually above or below the letters. In the second versions, as in the first, we noticed that students tended to mark the vowels, for example: *אוֹתה* **O**tah (her). However, as mentioned earlier regarding diacritic marks, vowel marking is unnecessary past beginner level learning. We found a great deal of this unnecessary vowel marking in the first versions, and roughly the same amount in the second ones. Here are some more examples: *לוֹ* (for him), *תלוּיות* (are dependent on), *לִבּוֹ* (his heart), *אוֹתוֹ* (him).

3.2.2 Syntax

Grammatical knowledge such as word order and the system of articles is a necessity for communication in any language. The process of acquiring grammar in L2 is influenced by the grammatical system that already exists. The L1 and L2 grammars are always related (Cook & Singleton, 2014).

Hebrew and Arabic share certain common syntactic characteristics, but they also differ. As in the students' first versions, the second versions also show the transfer of syntactic structures from L1 to L2.

Asyndetic relative clauses. In Arabic, when the noun for which the relative clause refers to is indefinite, an asyndetic relative clause is required. In Hebrew, as a rule, a relative pronoun is needed. But even in the good essays in the second version, the typical Arabic syntactic structure of an asyndetic relative clause continued to appear without significant decrease, which created improbable and sometimes incomprehensible Hebrew, for example: *Yeš horim omrim; yeš horim ma'adifim* (should be: *Yeš horim* ***še****-omrim; yeš horim še-ma'adifim*) [Hiba] ("There are parents say; there are parents prefer"; should be: "there are parents *who* say; there are parents *who* prefer").

Particles: Prepositions and direct object marker. Some particles are naturally similar in Arabic and Hebrew, while some are different. In the first version, as well as in the second one we found different kinds of particle errors, which attest to a way of expression tied to Arabic syntax:

- As we know, *prepositions*[10] are a particularly difficult stumbling block in learning a foreign language. Here are some examples found in the second versions, reflecting the Arab preposition used with the analog verb: *Lasim lev '****al*** (should be: *le*) [Fatma] ("To pay attention *on*"; should be: "To pay attention *to*"). In Arabic: *dīr bālak '****ala*** *'ala* is analogous to *'al* in Hebrew, but Hebrew grammar requires here the use of another preposition (*le*). *Halakti leḥapes '****al*** (should be: *et*) *hamaḥberet šeli* [Ghada] ("I went looking on my notebook"; should be: "for my notebook"). In (colloquial Palestinian) Arabic: *dawwar '****ala***.
- In Hebrew, *the particle "et"* indicates the direct object. In the second version the students showed a better control of this direct object marker. On the other hand, it was interesting to note occasional redundant use of "*et*" which appeared in the second version (clearly indicating the phenomenon of hypercorrection): *Ha-kol hištanah*, *gam et ha-'arakim še-gadalnu 'aleihem* [Khatam] ("Everything changed, also the *values* with which we grew up"). *Values* is marked as direct object, though it is not in this sentence.

3.3 Lexicon

Acquisition of vocabulary in both L1 and L2 demands learning or 'special teaching'. The main difference between lexical acquisition in L1 and L2 is that in L2 the process interacts with the pre-existing lexical system of L1. In our case this process is more complex, since there is a great deal of affinity between Hebrew and Arabic in the lexicon, both because of their common origin and because of mutual influences throughout history.

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[10]A full panorama of preposition disruptions can be found in Abu Bakr (2005, pp. 17-37). Many other examples can be seen in Shehadeh (1998).

3.3.1 Vocabulary

In this area, as expected, Arabic L1 has considerable influence on the students' Hebrew writing. As in the first versions, the second versions continued to include many loan translations (calques) from Arabic. The most obvious example we encountered was: *Gil* (age) understood as 'generation'. This mistake is undoubtedly caused because of the Arabic analogous word *Jīl* which means generation. We will expand a bit on this example because it appeared in several essays. For example:

> ***Gil*** *he'atid* ("future *age*") [Hiba]
>
> *anaḥnu negadel* ***gil*** *meḥunak̲ baderek̲ haṭova be-yoter*. ***Gil*** *ba'al ḥofeš beḥira*… ("We will raise an educated *age* in the best way. An *age* with freedom of choice") [Hayfa].

In all three instances, the Hebrew word *gil* (age) is used in the meaning of its analogous Arab word, *jīl*, (generation) instead of the appropriate Hebrew, *dor*.

This example of false cognates can help shed light on the concept of a "vulnerable state" (Berman, 1990). For a person whose mother tongue is Arabic, *gil* in Hebrew is a classic example of a vulnerable state. It is analogous to its correlative word in Arabic, "*jīl*", from a linguistic and phonetic standpoint. The two words are also very close in meaning (*gil,* age = years of a person's life; *jīl,* generation = years of the life of a particular group). This is precisely the vulnerable state, i.e., a situation in which the learners expect similarity or identification between the two languages, and it is difficult for them to internalize the difference.

This kind of mistakes is the most difficult to eradicate. The most striking proof, apart from the fact that this error appeared several times, is that after we concluded our research we encountered an extraordinary fact. In a random search, we discovered a non-profit organization in Rahaṭ (a Bedouin city in the south of Israel) whose name is "*Gil He'atid*", or "Age of the Future", no less (!). This is how we saw the results of our research take shape in reality, beyond the boundaries of the classroom. There can be little doubt Arabic is the mother tongue of the person who chose the name of the organization.

The second versions continued to include loan translations of grammatical structures, for example: *Adam muskal*—intelligented' person (instead of *maskil*, intelligent). In Arabic, the parallel form of this adjective is not active, but rather passive, *muthaqqaf*.

3.3.2 Degree of formality of the text (register)

There is an assumption that the type of language people choose to use varies according to social and communicational circumstances, such as the relationship between the addresser and the addressee, the channel of communication, and the physical and cognitive framework of the discourse. The capacity to choose the level of language appropriate to the circumstance is part of the literate speaker's ability

and is expressed in their capacity to classify lexical items or grammatical rules according to their language level (Schlesinger, Ravid & Sarel, 1996).

In the second versions there was usually a more pronounced expression of the use of formal language compatible with the genre, in comparison with the first version, although this use was expressed mainly in function words and was less pronounced in the area of content words.

The Copula (uniting the subject and the predicate). The unit denoting the predicate in a nominal clause, the copula, can be expressed in Hebrew in several ways. One of the common ways is through a 3rd person pronoun such as *hu, hi* or *hem (he, she, or they)***.** In today's Hebrew, especially in written Hebrew, it is possible to find as copula words such as, *hino* (*it is* - for masculine) or *hinah* (*it is* - for feminine) or *mehavé* (*constitutes*). Such use is an elevation of style, because it appears in the Bible, (though in another function: as fortifier in order to stress the rhema).[11]

When we checked the first versions, we found that the copula indicating predication in a nominal clause was always a simple pronoun: *hu*, *hi*. In the second version, on the other hand, there were attempts to diversify the copula and to raise the language level through the use of alternatives (*hino, hina, mehavé*).
Examples:

> Nose gidul ha-yeladim hino nose ḥašuv be- ḥayenu [Salma] ("The subject of raising children is (*hino*) an important issue in our lives").
>
> Ha-yeladim šeli mehavim et ha-ḥayim šeli [Lamis] ("My children are (*mehavim*) my life").

Relative Pronoun še/ašer. The relative pronouns *še/ašer* are used as subordinating conjunctions in Hebrew and they stem from two different strata of the language. In their role as subordinators in Modern Hebrew they serve as stylistic alternatives to one another at the beginning of relative clauses (Schlesinger, 2000).

In the first versions we found that the relative pronoun was always *še*. In the second version, however, there were attempts to diversify the subordinator and use the more sophisticated form of *ašer*.

Examples:

> *That which* (*ašer*) will change the face of society ... an approach *which* (*ašer*) will contribute to children in later stages [Aḥlam].
>
> Capable children *who **(ašer)*** make their own decisions [Khatam].

Participle negation: lo/eyn. Hebrew is rich in forms of expressing negation. In classical Hebrew, present tense verbs are classed as nouns, and accordingly apply the negation of nouns. A sentence whose predicate is a noun is negated with ***eyn***, for example, *ha-kesef* eynenu *taḥlif le-ahava* or ***eyn*** *ha-kesef taḥlif le-ahava* [money is not

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[11] There are additional reasons for preferring a higher and more poetic register, but this is not the place to elaborate on them.

a substitute for love]. The same is true for a sentence whose predicate is a verb in the present tense: *hu **eyno** mevin* or ***eyn** hu mevin* [he does not understand].

In Modern Hebrew, however, negation in the present tense through the use of ***lo*** [no] is more natural to speakers, for example, *ani **lo** mevin* [I do not understand] (Schlesinger, 2000, Dubnov & Almagor-Ramon, 2009).

In the first versions we found that present tense negation was expressed exclusively through the use of **lo**. In the second versions, however, the more correct and formal alternative, *eyn*, was used: *hitgalu lanu basof še-**einam** mat'imim* [Samira] ("We discovered eventually that they were not suitable").

Adjectives borrowed from a foreign language. In the first versions we found only one word derived from a foreign word, the adjective *normali* [normal]. In the second versions, however, the number of foreign words increased: *heṭerogeni* [heterogeneous], *moderni* [modern], *spetsifi* [specific], *relevanṭi* [relevant], *efecṭivi* [effective].

Such adjectives are considered as a formal register when written or spoken by a native speaker of Arabic, since in Arabic all these adjectives have an alternative (For instance, *ḥadīth* is "modern", *mu'yyan* is "specific" etc.). Shehadeh (1998), as well, refers to the lack of foreign and "international" words as indicating a deficiency of the language.

Collocation. In the second versions we found collocations that characterize academic language:

> *dimuy 'atsmi* [self-image], *tḥušat mesugalut* [sense of efficacy]*, mesugalut 'atsmit* [self-efficacy], *tluy gil* [age-dependent] [Ghada].
>
> Verb phrases: *Hirba lehit'arev* [intervened a lot], *nikla'im lehorut* [fell into parenthood] [Hatem].
>
> Prepositional phrases: *Me'az u-mitamid* [always], *me'az u-me'olam* [always] [Fatma].

To conclude, an overall improvement was seen in the writing products of PCI students learning Hebrew. Most changes occurred in the features of discourse, while in grammar, the influence of L1 Arabic was still quite evident. Table 4 present the main results.

Table 4. Main results

Domain	Category	Indicators	Changes
Discourse	*Text Length*		Longer
	Organization	Opening component	More focused and playing its role: introducing the topic to the readers
		Concluding component	Exists playing its role: mentioning main ideas and messages, summative
		Gradation of text	More hierarchical structures
		Representation	Exists
Grammar	*Spelling and Pronunciation*	Spelling that represents phonological influence of L1 Arabic	Still influence of L1 Arabic: letters that represent Arabic pronunciation
		Diacritic marks	Some remains from Arabic diacritic marks
		Vowels marking	A little less, but still appearing
	Syntax	Asyndetic relative clause	Still influence of L1 Arabic: tyipical structure of asyndetic relative clause
		Particles: Prepositions, Direct object marker	Still influence of L1 Arabic: use of Arabic prepositions; inconsistency in the use of the DO marker
Lexicon	*Vocabulary*		Still influence of L1 Arabic: many loan translations
	Degree of formality – Register	Copula	Greater use of formal (biblical) copula
		Relative pronoun	more use of formal form
		Negation participle	more use of formal participles
		Adjectives (from a foreign language)	Much more use of these adjectives
		Collocation	Beginning of the use of collocations

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The students examined in this study were part of a large group of PCI interested in learning Hebrew in order to integrate into Israeli economic and social life, and to be able to teach it, thus their motivation was very high (Haskel-Shaham & Schlam-Salman, 2015).[12] Those who acquire a target language have a higher positive self-image and are less afraid than others of interacting with native speakers (Ben-Rafael, Olshtain & Geijst, 1998). Moreover, PCI students are trilingual in a way, because of the diglossia that exists in Arabic between the spoken and the written language. Research has shown that third language learners are more persistent and have a stronger metalinguistic awareness (Clyne, Hunt & Isaakidis, 2004).

4.1 Main conclusions

The phenomena presented in this paper testify to the strong influence of L1 Arabic on Hebrew writing even after two years of intensive Hebrew study. After examining the differences between the first and second versions, our main conclusion is that students showed increased independence on the road to mastering the target language mostly in different aspects of discourse: we saw all texts increased in length; the text's organizational structure contained more usage of opening and closing components and increased gradation in content formulation. In addition, the students improved their presentation in a manner appropriate to the genre. The students also adapted to the requirements of expository writing.

In contrast, in the field of grammar we saw a stronger grip of L1 Arabic on the students writing; in spelling, it was unnecessary diacritic punctuation; in syntax, it was mainly in the improper use of prepositions and of asyndetic relative clauses. Regarding lexicon, our findings were mixed: we observed an improvement with regard to the use of formal register, while in the vocabulary, loan translations did not vanish.

4.2 The difficulty of discarding the influence of Arabic mother tongue

According to Givón (1979) the process of language acquisition is expressed in the progression from the pragmatic pole to the syntactic pole of the target language. Each stage of acquiring a foreign language is an interlanguage. Some of the influences of the Arabic mother tongue are very difficult to discard, which cause considerable usage of interlanguage.

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[12] The more the motivation to learn Hebrew derives from integrative reasons, the more postive the attitude to learning. Haskel-Shaham and Schlam-Salman, J., Attitudes of teachers in Arab schools in East Jerusalem towards Hebrew and their sense of ability to master the language, International Online Conference - Hebrew as an additional language for diverse populations in Israel and around the world, May 2015.

Hebrew mistakes stemming from the use of the interlanguage used by Arab learners of Hebrew are described by Shatil (2008), Shehadeh (1998), and Abed al-Rahman (2013); the most detailed description is provided by Abu Bakr (2005). Henkin (1997), who also dealt with this topic, mentions that in the field of phonetics and phonology the influence of L1 is particularly strong, adding syntax to these areas, which is consistent with the findings described above. We noticed that interlanguage is especially pronounced when there is a "vulnerable state", e.g., when Hebrew and Arabic behave differently, where the learners expect them to act alike.

4.3 The contribution of the study

The contribution of the study is the description of the phenomena observed in the students' written Hebrew, especially in discourse—which has not been examined in Israel before.

The main contribution of the current paper is the initial conclusion that it might be easier to bring about an improvement in discourse than in grammar. Evidently, this conclusion should be further based on a larger scale study, involving other pairs of languages. Additionally, we describe in detail phenomena related to influence of Arabic L1 on writing in Hebrew L2. Finally, as Cook and Singleton (2014) declare: "SLA research often justifies itself in terms of the benefits it brings to the teaching of an additional language" (p. 121), the results of the research will help to construct a roadmap for coping with the difficulties and improving the programs for the advancement of Arab students towards better command of written Hebrew and can offer some ideas for those who teach around the world on the emphasis needed. The discourse of second-language learners is often explored to examine the pitfalls of different communication situations. There are those who call this branch "pedagogic discourse research", since the goal is to identify problems and ways of coping as part of the mediation between the instruction and the students dealing with problems of communication. A second language must be taught at all levels using the discourse approach (Olshtain & Haskel-Shaham, 2012).

A description of the most glaring deviations in the writing done by PCI students of Hebrew can help define ways for improving their writing in Hebrew. For example, loan translations in a student's writing requires a detailed discussion in each individual case within the instructional framework. The misuse of required prepositions stemming from the mother tongue emphasizes the need to teach verbs along with their required prepositions as lexical chunks (this holds true for any other pair of languages that uses prepositions).

4.4 Didactic recommendations

We recommend working with a Contrastive Grammar method to point out, emphasize, clarify and conceptualize (meta-linguistically) important differences between Hebrew and Arabic (e.g., in the case of asyndetic relative sentences). Abu Bakr (2005)

refers to a certain controversy around the effectiveness of contrastive grammar (or contrastive analysis) for teaching. In his opinion, this method, although it cannot solve all the problems, has a lot to offer, partly because of the possibility of predicting mistakes, because of the regularity maintained by the transfer from L1 to L2. In this context, Al-Khuli (1998) argues that the closer L1 and L2 are, the more likely this transfer will be positive and help the learner. The farther apart they are, the more likely the transfer will be negative and damaging to the learning.

In addition, and even prior to presenting the differences, the similarity between Hebrew and Arabic must be clearly presented, especially for the purpose of eradicating spelling mistakes that can be avoided by knowing the Hebrew letters and their Arab equivalents (for example: k = כ = ك ; q = ק = ق). This way, spelling errors can be easily avoided, as those shown by Shehadeh (1998): *mer**q**azi* instead of *mer**k**azi*, [central], *liv**q**ot* instead of *liv**k**ot*, [to cry]. In both cases the Arabic equivalent is spelled with kāf- כ=). ك=k). Awareness of these principles can greatly help eliminate spelling mistakes, as well as identify parallel roots between Hebrew and Arabic.

We recommend providing extra input to vulnerable states, such as those mentioned above, or in all kinds of instances of "false friends" cases that exist between languages (e.g., *laḥm*, which does not mean "*leḥem*" [bread] but "meat", etc.).

It is also important to develop students' awareness of important linguistic processes that influence the transition between Arabic and Hebrew, such as vowel and consonants shifts. For instance, transitions between the Arabic *šīn* (š) and the Hebrew letter *sameḥ* (s)—so they know that *šuq* [Heb] (market) means *sūq* [Arb]; or that the long A vowel in Arabic shifted to a long O vowel in Hebrew - *ḥimār- ḥamōr* (donkey); *ʾālam - ʾōlam* (world). Language educators should "bridge the gap" between knowledge derived from linguistic theory and grammar education (Van Rijt & Coppen, 2017) in order to contribute to both fields.

In the end, it is only natural that the closeness between these two Semitic languages will result in mutual transfers and increasing influences between them. Hopefully, a better knowledge of these two languages will result in their users getting to know one another better.

جارك قريبك

Jārak qarībak - your neighbor is your relative

This is the word “language” written in *Aravrit*—an experimental writing system presenting a set of hybrid letters merging Hebrew and Arabic. Each letter is composed of Arabic on the upper half and a Hebrew on the bottom half.

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