



**HAL**  
open science

# The relation between language acquisition and art : pairing visual art with language acquisition amplifies communicative competence (linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic) and the construct the learner's Identity

Hagit Arieli-Chai

## ► To cite this version:

Hagit Arieli-Chai. The relation between language acquisition and art : pairing visual art with language acquisition amplifies communicative competence (linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic) and the construct the learner's Identity. Linguistics. Université de Strasbourg, 2024. English. NNT : 2024STRAC005 . tel-04698801

**HAL Id: tel-04698801**

**<https://theses.hal.science/tel-04698801v1>**

Submitted on 16 Sep 2024

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



## *ÉCOLE DOCTORALE 520*

**Unité de recherche G.E.O. – EA 1340  
Groupe d'Études Orientales, Slaves et Néo-helléniques**

**THÈSE PRÉSENTÉE PAR :**

**Hagit BABANI ARIELI-CHAI**

**Soutenue le : 2 juillet 2024**

Pour obtenir le grade de : **Docteur de l'Université de Strasbourg**  
Discipline/ Spécialité : **études juives**

**« La relation entre l'acquisition d'une langue et l'art visuel :  
développement de la compétence communicative (linguistique,  
culturelle et pragmatique)  
et construction de l'identité de l'apprenant »**

**Thèse dirigée par :**

**Michèle TAUBER**

Professeur des Universités, Université de Strasbourg

**Rapporteurs :**

**Il-II Yatziv-Malibert Cyril  
Aslanov**

Professeur des Universités, INALCO  
Professeur des Universités, AMU

**Autre membre du jury :**

**Ilanit Derimian**

MCF, Université de Lille

**ÉCOLES DOCTORALES :**

**École doctorale : 520 - Humanités**





© [2024] [Hagit Arieli Chai] All Content and Copyrights reserved





*A special dedication to my children; Ore Yehudah Arieli, Eden Shalom Chai,  
Shiran Malka Chai, Zohar Ester Chai who are the source of light in my life and  
especially to my new granddaughter, Sunny Milah Chai*



**Acknowledgment:**

Special Gratitude to my parents, Esther and Yosef Babani, whose tireless efforts and selflessness have been the cornerstone of our family's well-being. Your unwavering perseverance in the face of challenges has taught me the invaluable lessons of hard work, dedication, and resilience. Beyond that, you've instilled in me a deep sense of pride in my roots and identity. I carry with me the wisdom and values you've imparted, and I am eternally grateful for the strong foundation you've provided, upon which I continue to build.

To my brilliant loving and admirable children, Ore, Eden and Jackie, Shiran, Zohar, as I finish this journey of completing my Ph.D, I want to express my deepest gratitude and admiration for each of you. Your unwavering love, patience, and understanding have been the driving force behind my pursuit of higher education. I have carried your love and encouragement with me, knowing that each milestone was a testament to our collective dedication and determination. Thank you for being my greatest inspiration and for reminding me of the true meaning of success.

To my sister, Sigal Babani Wain, who has always stood by me, your belief in my capabilities and constant support have fueled my ambition and determination to reach far beyond what I had ever imagined.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Leah Hochman, whose guidance, support, and encouragement have been indispensable throughout this journey. Your unwavering belief in the pursuit of knowledge has propelled me forward at every turn.

My dear friend Professor Selma Holo has been encouraging, supportive, and enthusiastic at every step of my research journey since the moment she entered my classroom. Our connection is truly special that only God can see it.

A very special Thank You goes out to my dear friend, Jeni Yaffa Catch, who spent countless hours with me over tea, meticulously editing my work and offering invaluable insights.

## Abstract

Language and the acquisition of language are thoughts to connect communication and social processes within a social context. Vygotsky (1978) explains that psycholinguistic processes are the reconstructions of the individual's mind based on the mediated social interaction the learner has experienced. Mediation occurs through visual, linguistic, and acoustic signs, and language emerges from social and cultural activity. Linguistic signs are created, interpreted, and manipulated by the learner to engage in action. The 'Social Turn' in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) claims that Second Language (L2) acquisition cannot be explained in purely cognitive terms. Poststructuralist theories (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986) and social theories such as Community of Practice Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) provided the constructs and tools for rethinking SLA as a primarily social phenomenon. The emergence of cognitive psychology in the 1960s caused a shift from behaviorist learning theory to cognitive learning theory. This shift characterized learning as an active and creative process. My qualitative research study employs narrative methodology to investigate the influence of Jewish and Israeli art, specifically paintings, on the development of communicative competences. This research is within the qualitative paradigm and draws on narrative study methodology by analyzing of four case studies, each offering insights. The research explores the reciprocal relationship between language learning and the development of learners' language competence, recognizing the symbiotic nature of language acquisition and sociocultural understanding. The research assesses the extent to which paintings amplify the learner's ability to communicate, considering ideal, heuristic, imaginative, linguistic, and interactional aspects, as well as whether the process of language acquisition influences the learner's identity.

Drawing from Eutsler's (2017) assertion regarding the beneficial impact of visual arts on cognitive skills, particularly critical thinking, the study seeks to delve deeper into how exposure to art can contribute to the enhancement of communicative competences. The theoretical framework of the study is anchored in the work of Bachman and Palmer, who introduced the concept of 'Communicative Language Ability' (CLA) in the late 1980s. This model redefines communicative competence, emphasizing the division of pragmatic knowledge into socio-linguistic and functional components. By employing narrative methodology, this study endeavors to capture the multifaceted experiences and perspectives of individuals interacting with Jewish and Israeli art to acquire communicative competences. Through an analysis of narratives and personal accounts, the research aims to critically explore the ways in which Jewish and Israeli paintings serve as a textual medium for the development of these competences. The Bachman and Palmer model of pragmatic competence is used for the purpose of this study in order to examine the pragmatic competences. Additionally, this study aims to reveal new aspects about the role of visual arts in fostering communicative competence and reconstructing the learner's identity. Kramsch (1998) stated, "Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity. Thus, language symbolizes cultural reality" (p. 3). Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding the integration of arts-based approaches in language learning and highlights the potential of art as a catalyst for cognitive and communicative growth.

Key words: Second Language acquisition, commutative language ability, pragmatic competence communicative competence, cultural competence, learner identity, social identity, Jewish – Israeli art

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>V</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>IX</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>- 1 -</b>
INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE REVIEW.....	- 1 -
1.1 THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION .....	- 2 -
1.2 THE VALUE OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RESEARCH.....	- 15 -
1.3 MONO-LINGUAL AND BI-LINGUAL COMPETENCE.....	- 18 -
1.4 LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE.....	- 19 -
1.5 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE .....	- 20 -
1.6 MICHAEL CANALE AND MERRILL SWAIN’S MODEL.....	- 22 -
1.7 BACHMAN AND PALMER’S MODEL .....	- 22 -
1.8 INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE .....	- 24 -
1.9 LANGUAGE PRACTICE .....	- 25 -
1.9.1 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE .....	- 28 -
1.9.2 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ART AND LANGUAGE .....	- 33 -
2.0 LEARNER IDENTITY.....	- 35 -
SUMMARY .....	- 40 -
<b>CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>- 43 -</b>
INTRODUCTION TO MY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	- 43 -
2.1 PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	- 44 -
2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	- 47 -
2.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK .....	- 48 -
<i>Cultural and Historical Background</i> .....	- 49 -
2.4 SITE CHARACTERISTICS.....	- 51 -
2.5 THE PARTICIPANTS .....	- 51 -
2.5.1 THE NARRATIVE OF THE SELECTED CASE STUDY .....	- 52 -
2.6 DATA COLLECTIONS AND INSTRUMENTATION .....	- 56 -
2.6.1 TIMELINE.....	- 57 -
2.6.2 CONFORMABILITY.....	- 58 -
2.6.3 DEPENDABILITY.....	- 58 -
2.7 DATA ANALYSIS .....	- 58 -
2.7.1 THE ANALYSIS APPROACH FOR THE DATA COLLECTION .....	- 59 -
2.7.2 MEASUREMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION.....	- 60 -
2.8 RESEARCH MATERIAL.....	- 63 -
2.8.1 PAINTING SELECTION FOR WRITTEN AND ORAL ACTIVITIES .....	- 65 -
2.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	- 73 -
2.9.1 CONFIDENTIALITY .....	- 74 -
2.9.2 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.....	- 74 -
2.9.3 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER.....	- 74 -
<b>CHAPTER 3: ART AND LANGUAGE</b> .....	<b>- 77 -</b>
ARTISTS SELECTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ART IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION .....	- 77 -
3.1 THE HISTORY OF ISRAELI ART .....	- 79 -
3.2 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ISRAELI ART AND HEBREW .....	- 85 -
3.3 ARTISTS SELECTION FOR THIS RESEARCH.....	- 86 -

<i>Reuven Rubin</i> .....	- 87 -
<i>Nachum Gutman</i> .....	- 89 -
<i>Marc Chagall</i> .....	- 101 -
<i>Yosel Bergner</i> .....	- 104 -
<i>Ruth Ztarfati</i> .....	- 106 -
<i>Yohanan Simon</i> .....	- 107 -
<i>Maurycy Gottlieb</i> .....	- 111 -
3.4    THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL ART IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS.....	- 112 -
3.5    THE ROLE OF VISUAL ART IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING .....	- 115 -
<b>CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE COMPETENCE .....</b>	<b>- 117 -</b>
INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.....	- 117 -
4.1    COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING.....	- 117 -
4.2    MODELS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.....	- 119 -
CELCE-MURCIA, DORNYEI, AND THURRELL’S MODEL.....	- 120 -
COMPARISON OF THE MODELS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE .....	- 120 -
4.3    COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION .....	- 122 -
4.4    FUNCTIONAL APPROACH.....	- 125 -
4.4    THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCE (GENERAL DELIMITATIONS AND GROUNDWORK).....	- 127 -
<i>From Linguistic Competence to Pragmatic Competence</i> .....	- 127 -
4.5    LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE.....	- 134 -
4.5    THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.....	- 135 -
4.6    THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE .....	- 138 -
<b>CHAPTER 5: LEARNER IDENTITY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS.....</b>	<b>- 144 -</b>
THE CONNECTION BETWEEN IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE .....	- 144 -
5.1    THE FOUNDATION FOR LEARNER’S IDENTITY .....	- 146 -
5.2    THE FRAMEWORK OF LEARNER’S IDENTITY THEORIES.....	- 150 -
5.3    THE POST-STRUCTURALIST THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	- 151 -
5.4    IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION .....	- 154 -
5.5    IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY.....	- 156 -
5.6    LEARNERS NEGOTIATE THEIR IDENTITY IN THE PROCESS OF SLA.....	- 161 -
<b>CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>- 166 -</b>
6.1    LEARNERS IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION .....	- 166 -
6.2    HEBREW LANGUAGE AND IDENTITIES - CASE STUDIES’ REFLECTION.....	- 167 -
6.3    THE APPROACH TOWARDS HEBREW .....	- 177 -
6.4    CASE STUDIES’ IDENTITY - SUMMARY .....	- 180 -
6.5    CASE STUDIES ANALYSIS - LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE.....	- 180 -
<i>Case Study 1 – Al’s Analysis</i> .....	- 181 -
<i>Case Study 2- Jas’s Analysis</i> .....	- 184 -
<i>Case Study 3 - Sin’s Analysis</i> .....	- 186 -
<i>Case Study 4 - Lee’s Analysis</i> .....	- 188 -
6.6    PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE ANALYSIS .....	- 189 -
<i>Case Study 1 - AL</i> .....	- 189 -
<i>Case Study 2 - Jas</i> .....	- 194 -
<i>Case Study 3 - Sin</i> .....	- 198 -
<i>Case Study 4 - Lee</i> .....	- 204 -
6.7    CULTURAL COMPETENCE ANALYSIS.....	- 211 -
6.8    THE LEARNER’S CONNECTION TO CULTURAL SYMBOLS AND IMAGES (SEE: APPENDIX F) .....	- 217 -
<b>CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS.....</b>	<b>- 231 -</b>
7.1    SUMMARY .....	- 231 -



7.2	IMPLICATIONS .....	- 240 -
7.3	LIMITATIONS .....	- 244 -
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>		<b>- 247 -</b>
APPENDIX A: PERMISSION .....		- 254 -
APPENDIX A1: CONSENT FORM .....		- 255 -
APPENDIX A2: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA INFORMATION SHEET .....		- 257 -
APPENDIX B : LAGUNAGE AND IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE .....		- 258 -
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE 'THE ATTACHMENT TO HEBREW' .....		- 263 -
APPENDIX D: IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE .....		- 265 -
APPENDIX E: IMAGES AND SYMBOLS .....		- 270 -
<b>APPENDIX F : PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTION ON ART (PAINTING).....</b>		<b>- 273 -</b>
APPENDIX G: CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING BY CITI PROGRAM .....		- 280 -
APPENDIX H: REQUEST TO ACCESS STUDENTS DATA .....		- 281 -
THE IMPACT OF VISUAL ART ON MY RESEARCH (A PERSONAL NOTE) .....		- 284 -

## Introduction

"A nation, in our estimation, is the sum total of those human beings who share a common language, a common history, common customs and traditions, common laws, forms of government, and literary modes of thought; they live under the same climate, on the same soil, nourish themselves on the same natural products, and through common institutions and dependencies breathe the same spirit."

Johann Herder (1744 -1803)

"A language expresses the inner life and knowledge of its speakers, and that languages must differ from one another in the same way and to the same degree as those who use them".

Wilhelm Von Humboldt (176-1835)

The history of the Hebrew language spans from its Semitic origins with the earliest settlements of the Israelite tribes to the present day. Hebrew has been intricately linked with Judaism and has evolved in various communities where it has been spoken, such as Babylonia, Spain, and Russia. In pre-Mandate Palestine, Hebrew was deeply connected to the concept of the 'Land of Israel' (Safran, 2005). By the late Second Temple period (516 BCE – 70 CE), Hebrew had already established itself as the language associated with creation. Throughout the Mishnaic period (10 BCE – 200 CE), Hebrew underwent significant changes in its grammatical structure and style compared to Biblical Hebrew. In the diaspora, Hebrew developed a new literary style influenced by local languages, contributing to its linguistic richness from its inception in the Canaanite period to the present day.

Surviving over 3,000 years, Hebrew has endured periods of obscurity to emerge as both the living unifying language of the Bible and the language of the Jewish people. Culturally,

Hebrew has played a pivotal role not only for its speakers but also within the broader Western world (Saenz-Badillos, 1993). Thus, the study of Hebrew encompasses not just morphology, syntax, idioms, and phonology, but also delves into the historical and cultural factors that have shaped its contemporary usage.

Despite its classification as a non-popular language due to its predominantly Israeli speakers, Hebrew maintains a distinct identity forged through historical migrations, expulsions, and adaptations to diverse cultures. Continuously integrating new words and phrases, Hebrew charts a historical course from antiquity into the modern era.

As art becomes increasingly integrated into daily life and second language education gains prominence in academic institutions, learners can enhance their language proficiency through visual art, thereby broadening their cultural and historical perspectives. Utilizing visual art as a tool for language acquisition deepens learners' development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competencies. The intersection of language acquisition and art represents an innovative field where linguistic and historical information presented visually can be more readily absorbed than through traditional lecture methods. This approach not only enriches learning experiences but also underscores the importance of multi-competency development in education.

My research initiative began during my tenure teaching Modern Hebrew courses at the University of Southern California. Observing students without prior Hebrew knowledge or Jewish backgrounds, I tracked their journey of Hebrew acquisition, particularly noting how visual art facilitated the development of communicative, linguistic, and pragmatic competencies. Furthermore, I observed a heightened interest among learners in Jewish learning and practices, leading them to actively engage with local Jewish communities both on and off-campus. My

research is founded on four case studies involving college students aged 19-27, employing interviews, questionnaires, recordings, observations, and journals.

The primary research questions guiding my investigation are as follows:

1. How does student work across beginner to intermediate Hebrew courses at USC reveal the impact of pairing language acquisition with Jewish and Israeli visual art on the development of language competencies among learners?
2. To what extent does integrating Jewish and Israeli visual art into language acquisition enhance oral language performance among students?
3. What role does cultural knowledge conveyed through Jewish and Israeli visual art play in enhancing learners' linguistic and cultural competencies in Hebrew classes at USC?
4. How does Jewish and Israeli visual art influence learners' ability to connect vocabulary and themes in expressing ideas, thoughts, and opinions in Hebrew classes at USC?
5. How does the process of acquiring a new language and its associated culture through Jewish and Israeli visual art reshape the identity of learners in Hebrew classes at USC?

These questions motivate my exploration into the efficacy of using visual art to facilitate Hebrew language acquisition. Grounded in language acquisition theories, my research aims to examine how learning Hebrew through visual art enhances cultural and linguistic competencies while renegotiating learners' identities. The following literature review is structured to support this premise, presenting research that underscores visual art's role in facilitating language acquisition and supporting the development of multi-competence and identity reconstruction among learners. Specifically, I will assess the effectiveness of employing Jewish and Israeli artists from the 19th and 20th centuries in developing communicative competencies in Hebrew.

In conclusion, my research findings strongly indicate that integrating visual art into instructional design not only enriches students' understanding of Jewish and Israeli cultures but also facilitates second language acquisition and promotes the development of communicative competencies—linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic. Data collected from students at the University of Southern California forms the basis of this case study, providing valuable insights into the intersection of visual art and language education.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

### *Pairing Visual Art with Language Acquisition Amplifies Communicative Competence (linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic) and Can Construct the Learner's Identity*

#### Introduction to Literature Review

“Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation in language and language is not an abstract system but is always socially and historically located in discourses. Discourses represent political interests and in consequence are constantly vying for status and power. The site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist (Weedon 1987:41)”.

This literature review will delve into the historical underpinnings of second language acquisition (SLA), exploring the concept of communicative competence and its interconnectedness with language, culture, and identity. Within the realm of SLA, several competencies play crucial roles, including linguistic competence, communicative competence, and interactional competence, all of which significantly influence the teaching and learning of second languages.

Foreign language acquisition involves multifaceted components such as grammatical proficiency, communicative skills, language fluency, and cultural awareness, whether it pertains to one's own culture or another. SLA is a specialized field within applied linguistics dedicated to understanding how individuals acquire, comprehend, and utilize languages beyond their native tongue.

SLA encompasses diverse theories, methodologies, and research paradigms that elucidate the processes involved in learning additional languages. It draws insights from disciplines such as

linguistics, psychology, education, sociology, and others, collectively exploring the complexities of language acquisition and the myriad factors influencing its dynamics.

Language processing has been a focal point of theoretical interest in the discipline of SLA since the late 1980's. The term Language Processing refers to the cognitive aspect of comprehension of a spoken or written utterance, and in the discipline of SLA it can also indicate production of utterance. Language processing integrates multiple levels such as: visual or aural recognition of sounds and words; the semantic meaning and grammatical function associated with words; formation of multi - word phrases and sentences; and representation of discourse context (e.g., Carroll, 2001; Hatch, 1983; O'Grady, 2003; Pienemann, 1998; Truscott & Sharwood-Smith, 2004; VanPatten, 1983).

The concept of input in Second Language Acquisition has been characterized in different theories from the Krashen model (1980) of *Comprehensible Input* to the Chomsky (1970) Universal Grammar (UG) framework in which input assumes a lesser role. There is a theoretical distinction in language processing between processing and comprehension. Comprehension refers to the ultimate understanding of an utterance, and processing refers to the step-by-step path to comprehension. However, the two terms can be overlapped, and they are sometimes used interchangeably. The distinction is clear in the case of sentence processing because there are many parts to be processed in sequence before final comprehension is achieved, and less relevant in the processing of a single word or sound (Keating & Jegerski, 2015).

## **1.1 Theories of Language Acquisition**

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex phenomenon that cannot be defined by one model. Rather SLA is a mix of several models that developed one from another based on a former model (Larson- Freeman, 2000). Thus, it is important to lay out the various research done

in the field about how individuals acquire a second language and to understand how several theories relate to one another. There are many competing theories on how individuals acquire a second language. In the last decades, second language theories have proliferated, explaining how language learning is acquired and identifying the factors that are relevant to the process.

The focus of early theories in the 1960's was to investigate the stages of language development and to assess whether second language acquisition undergoes phases similar to first language acquisition (Aljaafreh, Lantolf, 1994). Each theory brings a different perspective that distinguishes one from another according to specific criteria. The classification criteria of language theory is split between deductive and inductive. Deductive theories are based on concepts and constructs without any proof, which are labeled axioms of the theory. The hypothesis of deductive theory is based on the law of logic. "If these hypotheses are empirically supported then they become the laws and facts of the theory (McLaughlin 1978:8)". For example: exposure to language - input (A), then acquiring language skills (B). Hypothesis: A child has been consistently exposed to language input (A is true).

Conclusion: Therefore, the child will acquire language skills (B must also be true). In this example, the deduction follows logically from the premises according to the assumption that consistent exposure to language input leads to the acquisition of language skills in children. This deductive reasoning aligns with theories of language acquisition such as the behaviorist theory or the nativist theory, which propose that exposure to language input plays a crucial role in the development of language skills in children.

By contrast, the inductive approach is based on specific empirical facts— how learners acquire a specific syntax of the target language. For example: a researcher examining how language learners acquire the syntax of forming questions. They might collect samples of learner-



produced questions, analyze the structures used, and identify common patterns or errors. Through this process, they may observe that learners tend to use auxiliary verbs to form questions, such as "do," "does," or "did," and that word order often changes from declarative sentences. Based on these observations, the researcher may induce a general rule or hypothesis about the syntactic structure of the questions. The inductive approach allows researchers to build theories and models of language acquisition based on empirical evidence and observed patterns in learners' linguistic behavior. It emphasizes the importance of data-driven investigation and the iterative refinement of hypotheses based on new observations and evidence. The aim of language theories is to describe a specific phenomenon while suggesting an explanation as to 'why' certain phenomena occur.

The Universal Grammar Theory (UG) was founded by linguist Noam Chomsky (1960) on the premise that there are certain principles that are attributed to language development. One of the principles is biologically predetermined. The human brain contains an innate mental grammar that helps acquire language. Chomsky referred to that mechanism in the brain as a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which is "separate from other faculties of cognitive activity.... Input is needed, but only to 'trigger' the operation of the language acquisition device" (Ellis, 2012). Chomsky's theory (1960) posits the UG is an innate structure, and particularly his proposals in the 1960s posits the existence of Universal Grammar (UG) and the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) as central components in explaining how humans acquire language.

The Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is a theoretical construct proposed by Chomsky to describe a hypothetical innate mental capacity that enables humans to acquire language. According to Chomsky, the LAD provides children with the ability to learn language rapidly and effectively from the linguistic input they are exposed to during early childhood. Chomsky (1970) argued that the linguistic input children receive is not sufficient on its own to account for the

complexity and speed of language acquisition. Chomsky contends that without the innate structures of LAD and UG, children will struggle to produce language. The existence of the LAD and UG allows children to infer linguistic patterns and rules from the input they receive, and to acquire a language in a relatively short time.

Gass (1997) presents the major divisive issues in Language Acquisition research for both first and second language, whether acquisition is functional or innate. Theorists who take the position of innateness believe that learners come to the learning task with a structural knowledge that allows them to construct the grammar of the target language. The opposing position claims that language acquisition and social interaction are mutually dependent since language acquisition cannot be understood without context. Gass (1997) discusses the major divisive issues in language acquisition research, particularly concerning whether language acquisition is primarily functional or innate.

Functional Perspective emphasizes the role of environmental factors, social interaction, and cognitive processes in language acquisition. They argue that language learning is a result of the interaction between the child and the linguistic environment, where children learn language through exposure, interaction, and feedback. According to this perspective, language acquisition can be explained through general cognitive processes, such as memory, imitation, and reinforcement, without necessarily invoking innate language-specific mechanisms.

Innate Perspective advocates, inspired by Chomsky's theories, argue that language acquisition is facilitated by innate linguistic structures and principles. They propose the existence of a Universal Grammar (UG) and a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that are biologically endowed in humans, providing them with the capacity to acquire language. From this viewpoint,

children are born with an innate predisposition to learn language, and exposure to linguistic input triggers and guides the development of specific linguistic systems.

The nature vs. nurture debate within language acquisition research revolves around the relative contributions of genetic factors (nature) and environmental influences (nurture) in shaping language development. Proponents of the innate perspective emphasize the role of nature, arguing that genetic predispositions and innate linguistic mechanisms play a central role in language acquisition. On the other hand, advocates of the functional perspective emphasize the importance of nurture, highlighting the influence of social, cultural, and environmental factors in shaping language learning.

Researchers use various empirical methods, including observational studies, experimental research, neuroimaging techniques, and computational modeling, to investigate language acquisition from both functional and innate perspectives. Empirical evidence from longitudinal studies, cross-linguistic comparisons, and studies involving atypical language learners (e.g., individuals with language impairments) contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms underlying language acquisition.

In summary, UG theories of SLA provided explanations for empirical evidence and were primarily investigating the internal mechanisms that led to the acquisition of language. Although researchers have used UG to generate compelling hypotheses about SLA, generative theorists also regard UG as the best theory of grammar because it has a new vision of the human mind. Language Acquisition is a collection of instincts adapted to solving significant evolutionary problems (Pinker, 1990). This claim understands language apart from social influences. On the other hand, social theorists such as Vygotsky (1970) argue that language and social interaction are inseparable.

The current view in the SLA discipline is that cognitive and linguistic abilities are needed to develop language and cannot be separated from the context.

The following theories of the late 1980's and 1990's added to the foundation of the SLA discipline. The Monitor Model theory, developed in the 1970's by Stephen Krashen, had important implications for language teaching. Five major hypotheses underline the Monitor Model: **a.** Acquisition versus Learning Hypothesis "Acquisition is a subconscious process, much like first language acquisition, while learning is a conscious process resulting into "knowing about language" (Krashen, 1982:10). **b.** The Monitor Hypothesis describes that learning has the function of monitoring and editing the utterances that are produced through the acquisition process. "The use of the Monitor is affected by the amount of time that the second language learner has at his/her disposal to think about the utterance he/she is about to produce, the focus on form, and his/her knowledge of second language rules" (Krashen, 1981:3-4). **c.** The Natural Order Hypothesis relates to both early and late learners. Acquiring depends on the simplicity of the form, and this can be influenced by classroom instruction (Krashen. 1985). **d.** The Input Hypothesis relates to receiving input (I) that is just beyond the learner's level of language competence, providing another layer which is I (Input) +1, (Krashen. 1985). **e.** The Affective Filter Hypothesis aims to establish a learner's emotional state unless there is a mental block that acts as a barrier to the acquisition process (Krashen, 1985). Krashen Monitor Theory is an example of macro theory synthesizing several factors such as age, personality traits, classroom instructions, innate mechanism, environmental influences.

According to Krashen (1982), language proficiency involves two processes: acquisition and learning. Acquisition is the unconscious process in the learner's mind to figure out how the language works. In this process the learner focuses on conveying the message rather than on the

linguistic form. This process reflects how children acquire their first language. Learning a language requires focus on the rules of the language. Thus, acquisition reflects implicit learning while learning according to Krashen's definition is the explicit learning.

Krashen's Language Monitor Theory (1980) describes the mechanism which modifies the responses according to specific information that the learner attained. In order to apply the monitor, two conditions are required: time and attention to form. "The monitoring strategy incorporates both aspects of Monitor Theory. It is not, however, restricted to speaking situations. Language responses, verbal or nonverbal include comprehension that is monitored by the formal aspects of the message and its structure. The explicit, formal knowledge that the language learner has obtained may be used in any language encounter to improve the quality of the language" (Bialystok, 1981. p.26). It is assumed that both in the monitor theory and monitoring strategy theory the language is used intuitively. The learner is consciously learning the grammar rules and functions of a language rather than the meaning of linguistic theories.

Steven Pinker, an American psychologist who studies children's language development, argues that all languages are constructed on the same universal grammar and language mechanism. Pinker claims that a combination of both biology and environment determines language acquisition. Pinker calls this "language instinct" the way the brain computes and evolves through natural selection and emerges via social encounter (Pinker, 1990). Pinker claims that language is a human instinct that is wired into our brain by evolution, similarly to a spider spinning a web.

In the late 1960s, Slinker (1969) founded the Interlanguage Theory and claimed that its theory is a temporary systematic grammar composed of rules. The Interlanguage Theory outlines the linguistic stages. These stages reflect five major cognitive processes: **I. Overgeneralization; II. Transfer and Training; III. Strategies of Second Language Learning; IV. Strategies of Second**

Language Communication; **V. Language Transfer.** Slinkers' interlanguage system emphasizes the cognitive aspect and highlights the strategies employed when the learner is engaged while learning a second language.

**I. Overgeneralization:** This stage involves learners applying grammar or language rules in a generalized manner, often incorrectly. For instance, using a rule from their native language across all contexts in the new language. It's a common phase in language acquisition in which learners attempt to apply familiar patterns to new language structures.

**II. Transfer and Training:** This stage refers to the influence of a learner's native language on the acquisition of a second language. Positive transfer occurs when similarities between the two languages supports learning, while negative transfer results in errors due to differences between languages. Training involves deliberate instruction to minimize negative transfer and maximize positive transfer.

**III. Strategies of Second Language Learning:** These are approaches or techniques individuals use to acquire a new language. Strategies can include memorization, context-based learning, grammar drills, immersion, and using mnemonics among others. Learners often adopt strategies that suit their learning styles and the demands of the language being acquired.

**IV. Strategies of Second Language Communication:** These strategies involve how learners navigate and communicate in the new language. This includes tactics like circumlocution (using different words to express an idea when the right word isn't known), asking for clarification, using gestures, and simplifying speech to convey messages effectively despite limited vocabulary or grammar knowledge.

V. Language Transfer: Language transfer occurs when specific elements of a person's native language influence their production or comprehension of a second language. This can either assist or hinder the learning process. Positive transfer aids in understanding due to similarities, while negative transfer can lead to errors or misunderstandings because of differences between the languages.

These stages and concepts are fundamental in understanding the process of learning a second language, as they shed light on the challenges learners face and the strategies, they employ to overcome them.

Schumann's acculturation theory expanded the SLA (Second Language Theory) theory by asserting that “second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturated to the target-language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language” Schumann (1978). Thus, second language acquisition is significantly influenced by the social and psychological distance that exists between the learner's own culture and the target language culture. Some of the affective factors that can be related to the distance between the learner and the target language culture include, cultural stressors, and language shock. Schumann's (1978) Acculturation Model, attempted to explain how social as well as the psychological distance from the target-language community affected learners' access to and acquisition of the target language. This model did not receive strong empirical support and reflected a very deterministic view of the relationship between social context and learning.

Krashen, Long and Swain (1985) describe the 1980's 'Expansion Period' of SLA (Second Language Theory). This period broadened the four major areas of inquiry developed by Long (1980): **I.** Language transfer; **II.** Linguistic universals; **III.** Second Language Pragmatics; **IV.** Input/Interaction. In this period SLA weaved together the established disciplines; Linguistics,

Sociolinguistics, and Discourse Analysis in an effort to investigate different aspects of learner-language and learning. The first period was focused on the research-then-theory approach, loosely informed by work in L1 acquisition; this phase was more focused on theory than research. However, research on input and interaction had obvious relevance to language pedagogy and it was during this period that the first proposal for task-based language teaching appeared, an approach that draws directly on the findings of SLA research (Long, 1985).

The next phase was ‘Coming of Age’ (Sharwood-Smith, 1994), which was an extension of the previous phase but reflected the cognitive psychology perspective on L2 acquisition. Theories on Information-Processing are based on an input-output view of learning which was defined by Lantolf’s (1996) ‘Computational Model’. These key constructs aimed to investigate ‘attention’ and ‘skill learning’. During this period the terms ‘Implicit’<sup>1</sup> and ‘Explicit’<sup>2</sup> learning led to a refinement of Krashen’s (1981) earlier ‘Acquisition’ and ‘Learning’ distinction.

Researchers adopted different strands of research from cognitive psychology that led to alternative approaches about the role of consciousness in language learning. Some researchers (e.g., Schmidt, 1990) argued that a certain level of consciousness was always needed while other researchers (e.g., Tomlin & Villa, 1994) argued that learning could be entirely implicit. Another controversy was concerned with whether language learning (especially among adults) involved skill-learning (i.e., where the starting point was declarative knowledge) or was an essentially implicit process. These controversies were significant for language pedagogy and this key issue became the nature of the interface between explicit/declarative (memorization) and

---

<sup>1</sup> Implicit knowledge is gained through incidental activities, or without awareness that learning is occurring.

<sup>2</sup> Explicit knowledge is straightforwardly expressed and shared between people. (e.g. how to operate a machine or a device).



implicit/procedural knowledge. Declarative memory is based on recall and retrieval while the **procedural** memory is based on the performance of a person.

The non-interface (Krashen, 1981), strong-interface (DeKeyser, 1998), and weak interface (R. Ellis, 1994) positions led to very different proposals regarding the role and nature of explicit grammar instruction. The **non-interface** states that there is an absolute separation of implicit and explicit language knowledge inside speakers' minds. In this view, it would be possible to have implicit and explicit knowledge about the same language features without them being connected in any way. The **strong-interface** position states that explicit language knowledge can always become implicit language knowledge, Explicit grammar is the direct teaching of grammar rules and structures. It is a teacher-centered approach that focuses on the explicit teaching of grammar rules, and the students' learning process is usually through memorization and application of the rules. The **weak-interface** positions fall somewhere in the continuum between non-interface and strong-interface. This position states that the development of linguistic rules such as third person -s can be converted into implicit knowledge only if the learner is at the correct developmental stage for that feature.

Towards the end of the 1990s, SLA researchers (e.g., Firth & Wagner, 1997) turned to poststructuralists that emphasized learners' own agency in constructing social opportunities for learning and the importance of social identity. This started the 'Social Turn' in SLA (Block, 2003) and the claims that L2 acquisition cannot be explained in purely cognitive terms.

I contend that learners are complex and L2 acquisition relies on how learners respond to and shape their social context. Post-structuralist theories<sup>3</sup> (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986) and social theories

---

<sup>3</sup> Post-structuralism developed as a critical response to the growth and identification of the logic of structural relations that underlie social institutions—whether they exist in terms of politics, economics, education, medicine, literature, or the sciences. post-structuralism arising in response to pre-existing structures and, as a set of attitudes, helping to understand, interpret, and

such as Community of Practice Theory<sup>4</sup> (Lave & Wenger, 1991) provided the constructs and tools for re-thinking SLA as a primarily social phenomenon. However, this broadening of the field was not welcomed by all researchers, with Long in particular arguing that SLA should remain a cognitive enterprise (Long, 1998; Long & Doughty, 2003).

Post-structuralist theories (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986) and social theories such as Community of Practice Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) provided the constructs and tools for re-thinking SLA as a primarily social phenomenon. Sociocultural approach's view SLA not purely based on psychological phenomena rather within a sociological context. The major key social factors that influence SLA are level of immersion, connection to L2 community, communication, context, and gender.

Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role that mediation plays in the initial development and subsequent internalization of new knowledge. It identifies the 'mind' as a major vehicle in the learning process. Cognitive-interactionist theories emphasize the importance of interaction in L2 acquisition, but it differs from these theories in how it conceptualizes the role of interaction. Whereas cognitive-interactionist theories see interaction as a source of input and output that is processed through internal cognitive mechanisms, sociocultural SLA views development as originating in the interactions that learners participate in with others or with themselves (Zuengler; Miller, 2012).

---

alter the social environment by calling established meanings into question, revealing the points of ambiguity and indeterminacy inherent in any system, rejecting the rationalistic piety that all systems are internally coherent

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.49>

<sup>4</sup> Community of practice theory - the term was first used in 1991 by theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger who discussed the notion of legitimate peripheral participation. In 1998, the theorist Etienne Wenger extended the concept and applied it to other domains, such as organizations. With the expansion of online communities on the Internet, as well as the increasing need for improved knowledge management, there has been larger interest as of late in communities of practice. People see them as ways of promoting innovation, developing social capital, facilitating, and spreading knowledge within a group, spreading existing tacit knowledge, etc.

Sociocultural Theory incorporates the ‘participation’ and the ‘acquisition’ metaphors (Sfard, 1998). It has led to rich pedagogic applications, notably the importance of ‘linguaging’ (Swain, 2006) for learning. In 2000 the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) was introduced (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) and Dynamic Systems Theory (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007), which share fundamental precepts, that language systems are non-linear, highly variable, individualistic, unpredictable, and always open to change. This theory emphasizes the need to consider the interconnectedness of social, cognitive, and psychological factors, and offers a framework for investigating the use of L2 acquisition and individual learner differences. Larsen-Freeman (2018) sees CDST as a theory that is aligned with the globalized world, which ‘requires a more holistic, ecological, and relational systems account as a complement’ (p. 59).

Another development is the ‘Multilingual Turn’ introduced by Firth and Wagner (1997) who criticized cognitive SLA’s assumption that L2 learners aspire to the competence of a monolingual native speaker. Ortega (2009) pointed out that ‘when we oppose L2 acquisition to L1 acquisition a subtle but dangerous monolingual bias seeps into our imagination’ (p. 5). This perspective redirected SLA to the investigation of multi competences (Cook,1992) and the translanguaging<sup>5</sup> that occurs amongst mixed groups of language users who draw on multiple linguistic resources (May 2013).

Vogel and Garcia (2017) claimed that Translanguaging is a theoretical framework that views bilingualism and multilingualism differently. The theory suggests that rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought; bilinguals,

---

<sup>5</sup> The translanguaging approach is based on the premise that bilingual speakers along all points of the bilingual continuum have, in fact, linguistic competence across language systems and allow multilinguals to acquire comparable levels of competence in each language (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Structuralist language ideologies developed during colonial and modernist periods have been dominant in the study of language. Those ideologies privilege Western European notions of “one language, one people” and reinforce the power of state-endorsed named languages (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). These language hierarchies and ideologies precipitated dominant models of bilingualism throughout the 20th century, which characterized named languages as static, standardized competencies one might “acquire.”

multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy specific features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to export meaning and to negotiate specific communicative contexts. Translanguaging also represents an approach to language pedagogy that affirms and leverages students' diverse and dynamic language practices in teaching and learning. Translanguaging refers to the ability to move fluidly between languages and a pedagogical approach to teaching in which teachers support this ability.

In trans-language, students can think in multiple languages simultaneously and use their L1 language as a vehicle to learn a new language. García (2009) used the term translanguaging to also refer to how bilingual people fluidly use their linguistic resources —without regard to named language categories—to make meaning and communicate. The multilingual turn shares with Complex Dynamic Systems Theory a view that the L2 learner is complex and heterogeneous.

## **1.2 The Value of Second Language Acquisition Research**

The study of L2 from the early SLA research theories until today is a mesh of theories that were added to in every decade. The researchers primarily sought to improve the effectiveness of language teaching. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) viewed “SLA as a source of insight about how to teach an L2 by increasing teachers’ awareness about the learning process and helping populations with specific language learning needs”. For example, informing policy makers about immigrant populations’ needs to acquire language in order to communicate adequately as they establish their life in the new country.

Ortega (2009) saw the fundamental question that SLA addresses is ‘how do humans learn languages after they learn their first?’ (p. 1). She recognized the interdisciplinary nature and its usefulness for addressing real-world problems such as: when best to start learning a second language, overcoming negative attitudes to immigrants, etc. Doughty and Long (2003)

acknowledged the social importance of learning a second language but did not view this as the main reason for studying it. Their claim is that SLA is essentially a cognitive enterprise, focusing on ‘what it (L2) can reveal about the nature of the human mind and intelligence’ (p. 5).

Ellis (2003) claimed that SLA has been fragmented over the years since the Social Turn<sup>6</sup> and is now heterogeneous in knowledge bases, epistemologies, and its methods. DeKeyser (2010), for example, found the division in SLA that emerged with the social turn ‘worrisome for those such as himself who have a vested interest in SLA’ because ‘if this trend continues, second language acquisition (SLA) will be absorbed completely into psycholinguistics or cognitive psychology, on the one hand, and anthropology or sociology, on the other hand’ (p. 247).

SLA is arguably not different from other academic disciplines in the social sciences (e.g. psychology, sociology, and education) that rely on multiple theories that are controversial - subject to debate. Kuhn (1962) suggested that as the disciplines grow, a paradigm emerges that sets limits on the domain of inquiry, but this does not always happen, and clearly not in SLA.

Like many other disciplines in social science, SLA shifts and expands knowledge formations and has been drawing knowledge from other disciplines; L1 acquisition, cognitive psychology, sociology, anthropology, and education. There isn't a body of knowledge unique to SLA. It relies less on the originality of the constructs but on how borrowed constructs were adapted and incorporated into SLA. The Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (Larsen-Freeman, 1991) is a

---

<sup>6</sup> Learners have agency and actively construct their own learning contexts; social identity is crucial; learner interactions are common; learners have local agendas. influenced by Socialization theories e.g., Community of Practice Theory, Post-structuralist theories.

good example that shows how it draws on Chaos Theory<sup>7</sup> from physics but has reshaped the theory by considering the established characteristics of learner-language<sup>8</sup>.

In my view a learner acquires a language by absorbing the cultural and linguistic nuances of the target language that ultimately lead to proficiency in the target language. Inevitably, understanding a language requires not only the knowledge of grammar, phonology, and lexicon but also certain features and characteristics of the culture. In order to communicate internationally it involves communicating interculturally as well. The intention of language is to communicate while a variety of processes occur during communication. Brown (2007) strongly supports the claim that Second language acquisition can be seen as the vehicle for creating communication via interpersonal relationships in foreign cultures whereas second language proficiency consists of the linguistic ability only. The two are interwoven and cannot be separated without losing the significance of either language or culture.

Richards (2015) suggests that a structuralist approach views language as a system of elements related to code meaning. The core of the structuralist approach states that language is simply a code for meaning and the goal of language learning is mastery of the code. A functional or communicative view sees language as a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning. The semantic and communicative aspects are emphasized more than the grammatical aspects. An interactive view sees language as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relations, focusing on moves, acts, negotiation, and interaction found in conversational exchanges

---

<sup>7</sup> Chaos theory is an interdisciplinary area of scientific study and branch of mathematics focused on underlying patterns and deterministic laws of dynamical systems that are highly sensitive to initial conditions and were once thought to have completely random states of disorder and irregularities. The perspective of chaos theory suggests that relatively small life events can have a large impact on psychology, mental health, and human behavior.

<sup>8</sup> Learning a language is what learners say or write when they are trying to communicate spontaneously in a language they are learning. Interlanguage (IL) is the system that underlies learner language grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

(Halliday, 1984). Thus, the learner who becomes bilingual gains an access to a new code of linguistic and cultural perspectives.

### **1.3 Mono-Lingual and Bi-Lingual Competence**

Franceschini (2011) interprets the history of monolingualism focused largely as a development from a psychological generative tradition to a dynamic sociolinguistics of multilingualism. Franceschini's interpretation of the history of monolingualism pivots from an earlier psychological generative tradition towards a dynamic sociolinguistics perspective that values multilingualism. The shift from a psychological generative tradition refers to a historical emphasis on studying language primarily from a psychological/cognitive perspective. This tradition focused on the internal structures of language and how individuals acquired and used language. The study of monolingualism as the norm because of a single dominant language in every society.

Franceschini's pivot towards a dynamic sociolinguistics of multilingualism reflects the move towards a contemporary approach. Sociolinguistics explores the relationship between language and society, recognizing the diversity of languages within a given community and the social contexts that influence language use. Embracing multilingualism suggests an acknowledgment of the coexistence of multiple languages within societies and the importance of studying this diversity (2011).

There are two ways of looking at people who speak more than one language. There is the 'Monolingual Perspective' that sees Second Language (L2) through the lens of the First Language (L1). In this case the Second Language is added on to the speaker's first language, something extra; the L2 user's proficiency in the second language is measured against the sole language of the monolingual. Ideally the L2 learners would speak the Second Language just like a native speaker.

However, there is the 'Bilingual Perspective' that refers to L2 learners as people who speak two or more languages. The additional languages are part of the L2 learners' total language system. Each language potentially differs from that of someone who speaks it as a First Language. An interpretation of the bilingual perspective is captured by the notion of multi-competence. Multi-Competence thus covers the knowledge and use of two or more languages by the same individual.

A communicative approach to the foreign language pedagogy aims to develop students' competence to use sentences appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the classroom as well as to produce sentences accurately in a lesson (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). By engaging in meaningful interactions, learners develop their ability to use language fluently and appropriately in various contexts and situations. This approach recognizes that language learning is not solely about mastering grammatical rules, but also about acquiring the skills needed to communicate effectively in the target language.

An effective way to become a proficient speaker and attain linguistic ability is by communicative competence. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various social and cultural contexts to achieve communicative goals. It involves not only linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar, but also sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, which includes understanding the social norms, conventions, and context-specific rules governing language.

#### **1.4 Linguistic Competence**

The general definition of competence is characterized by the ability and willingness to apply knowledge and skills in real life (Valchuk, 2017). Linguistic Competence was primarily introduced by Noam Chomsky's theory of Generative Grammar in 1957 (Taha & Reishaan 2008), that defined Generative Grammar as a set of rules that can be repeated to generate an indefinite



number of sentences with a clear structural description for each sentence (Tienson 1983). Linguistic Competence is defined as the native speakers' ability to formulate "well-formed sentences" (Thornbury 2006, p. 37). Noam Chomsky's theory revolutionized the field of theoretical linguistics by claiming that second language learners can generate an indefinite number of sentences (Barman 2014).

Hymes introduced the theory of communicative competence (Young 2008). Following Hymes's ideas, Saville-Troike (2003) claims that communicative competence reflects how the speaker communicates the message appropriately in any context, and that it also involves the socio-cultural knowledge that enables speakers to use and understand different speech forms. Based on Hymes' communicative competence theory the concept of interactional competence was introduced by Claire Kramsch (Walsh 2012). Interactional competence elaborates the notion that "abilities, actions, and activities" are formed by everyone who is involved in the discourse and not by a single individual (Young 2013, p.17).

### **1.5 Communicative Competence**

Hymes (1971) pioneered this communicative approach by coining the term, 'communicative competence' which means knowing when and how to say what to whom within a social context. He put the emphasis on the communicative competence reacting to the perceived inadequacy of Noam Chomsky's linguistic competence. In opposition to Chomsky's view of the "ideal speaker-listener" as a nonexistent abstraction, Hymes looks at the real speaker-listener in the social interaction. Afterwards Canale and Swain (1980) subdivided the communicative competence into three components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. In 1983, Canale added discourse competence to their original model. Hymes was criticizing Chomsky competence theory by arguing that the theory was neglecting the

perception of the individual as a whole (Kamiya 2006). He argues that a learner's competence is not merely based on the knowledge of language forms, but rather on the use of the language in real social situations (Young 2008).

Hymes (1972) offered the following four different ways of language use in social contexts:

1) Formally possible with the language

Hymes refers to the kind of social acts that will evoke a reply to the learner's language use and cultural behavior. Formally impossible language use is referred to as ungrammatical, and a cultural behavior that is not formally possible is regarded as "uncultured" (Young 2008, p.95).

2) What is feasible?

Hymes connects the notion of what is feasible to psycholinguistic aspects of a speaker's ability. The speaker's ability is limited by memory and comprehension processing of the utterances. (Van Compernelle 2014).

3) What is appropriate?

Hymes views appropriateness as a relationship between a particular linguistic performance and its context perceived by participants in a communicative practice. Thus, certain language use may or may not be appropriate in a particular context.

4) What is actually done?

According to Hymes, there are set rules of language use that determine "which subset of formally possible, feasible and appropriate utterances" will be used by participants in a particular speech context (Van Compernelle 2014, p.34). He suggests that an individual's competence is reflected in the way language is used in real social situations, not only by the knowledge of language forms. Hymes's primary focus was not language learning, but "language as social behavior" (Sauvignon 2002, p. 2).

## **1.6 Michael Canale and Merrill Swain's Model**

Based on Hymes's work, Canale and Swain constructed their version of communicative competence. Their model emphasizes the knowledge and skills a learner needs to acquire in order to communicate (Young 2011). Canale and Swain's (1980) framework includes three components: **grammatical competence, socio linguistic competence and strategic competence.**

Grammatical competence consists of "knowledge of lexical items, rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar semantics, and phonology" (p. 29). Sociolinguistics competence is divided into two sets of rules: socio cultural rules of use and discourse rules. Sociocultural rules identify the ways in which utterances are produced and perceived appropriately in different sociocultural situations, whereas rules of discourse refer to "cohesion (grammatical link) and coherence, (appropriate combination of communicative functions)" of a combination of utterances (p. 30). The third one is strategic competence, which contains both verbal strategies, (paraphrase, repetition and guessing) and non-verbal strategies (facial expressions, hand gestures) employed by speakers in order to manage breakdowns in communication, and also "to enhance the effectiveness of communication" (Bagaric & Djigunovic 2007, p. 98).

## **1.7 Bachman and Palmer's Model**

In the late 1980's Bachman and Palmer offered a new model of communicative competence called 'Communicative Language Ability'(CLA) (Bagaric & Djigunovic 2007). CLA combines two components: (1) language knowledge and (2) strategic competence. Language knowledge consists of two parts: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. Organizational knowledge controls formal language structures to make or understand utterances or sentences that are grammatically acceptable (grammatical knowledge), and to organize these utterances or

sentences into oral and written texts (textual knowledge). Bachman and Palmer's idea of grammatical knowledge complements Canale and Swain's grammatical competence (Kamiya 2006), where textual knowledge covers knowledge of cohesion and rhetorical organization. While knowledge of cohesion is involved in connecting sentences or utterances, knowledge of rhetorical organization helps with organizational development in written texts or talks (Bachman & Palmer 1996).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) divide pragmatic knowledge into two parts: socio linguistic knowledge and functional knowledge.

A) Functional knowledge (illocutionary competence) - helps an individual to understand the discourse by connecting "utterances or sentences and texts to their meanings" and also to language users' intentions (p. 69). Functional knowledge comprises four types of language functions:

1. Ideational functions help language learners to express or understand meanings based on their real-world experiences. Ideational functions include descriptions, classifications, explanations, and emotional expressions.
2. Manipulative functions allow language learners to use their language to affect the world around them. There are three types of manipulative functions: instrumental functions, regulatory functions, and interpersonal functions. Instrumental functions are used to have other people do things for the speaker, for example, requests and suggestions. Regulatory functions are performed to control the actions of others, for example, rules and regulations. Interpersonal relationships are for establishing, maintaining and changing interpersonal relationships, such as greetings, compliments and apologies.

3. Heuristic functions enable language learners to widen their knowledge of the world around them, such as use of language for solving problems, and retaining information.

4. Imaginative functions allow language learners “to create an imaginary world or extend the world around them for humorous or aesthetic purposes” (p. 70).

B). Sociolinguistic knowledge enables language users to create or comprehend language in a specific context. This requires the knowledge of conventions that determine proper use of “dialects, registers, idiomatic expressions, cultural references and figures of speech” (p. 70).

Bachman and Palmer’s model of communicative competence is multidisciplinary which defines communicative competence in the contexts of language assessment rather than instruction (Furkó 2016).

## **1.8 Interactional Competence**

Interactional competence is based on the theories of linguistic and communicative competences. However, the difference of interactive competence from linguistic and communicative competence is Kramersch’s (1986) view of intersubjectivity. According to Kramersch, interactional competence “presupposes a shared internal context or sphere inter-subjectivity” (p. 367), which means that a participant in a conversation can make predictions about his/her partner’s mind. (Establishing inter-subjectivity is fundamental for successful communication and require the following three conditions: (a) “the receiver should come to attend to the situation as intended by the sender, (b) the sender should know that the receiver is so doing, (c) the receiver should know that the sender knows that this is the case” (Young 2011, pp. 430-431). The difference between interactional competence and communicative competence is that communicative competence focuses on the speaker’s knowledge and skills to communicate in a social context;

interactional competence is constructed by all speakers that are involved in the communication process (Young 2013).)

In conclusion, although Noam Chomsky revolutionized the linguistic world with his theory of linguistic competence, Hymes criticized Chomsky's theory arguing grammatical knowledge was not sufficient for effective communication. Hymes introduced communicative competence. Moreover, researchers such as Claire Kramsch (2012) proposed a constructivist and practice-oriented view of interaction and competence called **interactional competence** which specified that abilities, actions, and activities are not possessed by an individual, but co-constructed by all involved in the communication process.

It is my view that learners who can optimize their interactional and cultural competences by a supported social environment acquire language effectively. In my research I selected the Canale and Swain model to address language competency and Bachman and Palmer's model to analyze the participant's communicative competence according to pragmatic and functional knowledge. The two models share measurement of language practice that overlaps. Bachman's model indicates specific categories of functionality to measure individual ability to connect sentences to text to their meaning as well as the language user's intentions.

## **1.9 Language Practice**

Bourdieu (1977) the French philosopher stresses the notion that practices are the embodiment of actions with history, and when we think in terms of language practices we must consider time, space, history, and location. Pennycook (2010) claims that the focus of language acquisition has shifted towards local, grounded, and particular practices, rather than human nature, universal cognition or language structure. This notion captures the idea of what happened in a particular time and place, as well as in which practices people are engaged. The growth in interest

around everyday life has shifted away from abstract ideas about language, discourse, and society towards language use in the context of locality. This shift requires an examination of time, movement, and interaction. “Practices are the keyway in which every day social activity is organized, and language practices, as one such set of practices, are a central part of daily life organization” (Pennycook, 2010).

The emergence of cognitive psychology in the 1960’s caused a shift from behaviorist learning theory to cognitive learning theory. This shift characterized the learning as an active and creative process, “learning is a cognitive activity involving the mental processing of information and thoughts” (O’Malley & Chamot 1990, Chang .2009). The learner adopts the new information when he or she finds it personally meaningful. The category includes subsets of strategies such as: creating mental links; applying images; using sound (2009).

The cognitive strategies share a unified function which is to manipulate or transform the target language. An example of cognitive strategies is “I try to talk like native English speakers” (Oxford ,1990, p.295). The cognitive strategies are used for understanding the meaning and expression of the target language by practicing, receiving, and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating a structure for input and output.

Bialystok (1981) discusses two major parameters of language strategies - purpose and modality. Both parameters are characterized by the situations in which they are being utilized. He claims that the purpose of language is designated by formal or functional. Formal language involves the language structure and its rule bound system. Syntax, morphology, and phonology classify the content of a formal language. However, functional language is classified by communicative situations for information and conversational purposes. The two aspects can be combined in the classroom. A grammar lesson, for example, is the formal aspect, and discussion

about the meaning of a story is the functional aspect. Despite the differences between the two aspects of content, language growth can occur when exposure to language increases. Exposure to language is characterized by combining the two aspects together. Bialystok shares the following scenario: A learner can listen to a conversation in the target language and analyze the phonological system. The goal is to learn the language system based on the instance of a formal practice. Additionally, the learner is exposed to a communicative situation regardless of his/her intention to acquire the phonological system, this situation qualifies as functional practice (1981). Hence, the study of language combines the form and meaning, and the language learner learns from formal and communicative aspects. The two practice strategies reflect the significance of the situation about its purpose. The practice is the exposure to the language, whether it's formal or functional.

In 1990, Merrill Swain, introduced a change in the way Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was perceived. Swain claims that output pushes learners to process with more mental effort than input because the learner is more in control. The learners use more effort for speaking or writing to meet their communicative goal (Swain, 1995). The notions of 'comprehensible input' (Krashen 1982), 'interaction and negotiation (Long 1980), and comprehensible output (Swain 1985), that depicted to not being connected with culture, gave way to concepts such as 'internal speech', 'zone of proximal development', 'scaffolding' and 'help of more capable peers' (Kramersch, 2014).

Lantolf (1999) raised a major question, whether second learners can adopt the culture acquisition of the native speaker of the target language. He shows that language learners can conceptualize metaphors of native speakers, for example, learners can say "Take your time" but their view about time will be different. Lantolf calls this "an historically transmitted semiotic



network constructed by humans, and which allows them to develop, communicate, and perpetuate their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about the world” (Lantolf, 1999: p.30).

*The question is how do we transmit culture so that learners can access language in a natural manner?*

Kramersch (1993) suggests that until recently two main perspectives influenced the teaching of culture. The first pertains to the transmission of factual, cultural information that is based on statistical information, immersion in literature and art that focus on customs, habits, and folklore of daily life. The second perspective draws upon cross-cultural anthropology or psychology. It is important to make a distinction between culture with a capital C -art, music, literature, politics; and culture with a lowercase c - behavioral patterns and lifestyle of everyday people.

### **1.9.1 The Connection Between Language and Culture**

Researchers in the Sociocultural Theory discipline used Vygotsky's theory<sup>9</sup> addressing the idea that “the mechanism of individual developmental change is rooted in society and culture” (Vygotsky, 1978; p.7) to develop dialectic ways to assess learner competence (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). Vygotsky explains that the psycholinguistic processes are the reconstructions of the individual’s mind of the mediated social interaction he or she has experienced. The mediation occurs through visual, linguistic, and acoustic signs. Language emerges from social and cultural activity. The linguistic signs are created, interpreted, and manipulated by the learner to engage in an action. Vygotsky’s semiotic theory<sup>10</sup> (1978) connects psychological processes within

---

<sup>9</sup> The work of Lev Vygotsky (1934) has become the foundation of much research and theory in cognitive development over the past several decades, particularly of what has become known as Social Development Theory. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory views human development as a socially mediated process in which children acquire cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/0732118X9390020E>

Theory provides a framework for understanding how humans use signs to make meaning of the world around them. Vygotsky's novelty was to see it as presenting a number of developmental problems, problems not only to do with communication, but also with a ‘semiotic-instrumental’ self-control of behavior.

individuals and cultural forms of behaviors between individuals. Learning a language is not by memorizing arbitrary linguistic forms, but rather by engaging in social activities. The activities are mediated by material signs; gestures, facial expressions, sounds and linguistic shapes. These external social interactions are reconstructed internally and become a way of thinking.

Post-structuralist Stuart Hall (1978) defined culture as a space of interpretivism and struggle. His definition is based on the role that media plays in reflecting reality but also creating reality by the dominant cultural order. Specifically, Hall emphasizes the overarching importance of the culture inherited from the Empire. His claim is that the role of culture as a construction of meanings implies sharing conceptual maps and systems of classification and representations.

The sociologist Howard Becker<sup>11</sup> (1982) defines culture as the shared understanding that people use to coordinate their activities. I view culture as a collection of ideas, rituals, beliefs, customs, and behavior that are formed by history and manifested in different circles of society.

Pennycook (2007) claims that culture is rather a process of language use that integrates semiotic systems such as: ritual, dance, music, graffiti, clothing, gestures, postures, way of walking and talking. People do not merely represent culture rather construct it by interaction with one another, “language use is part of a multifaceted interplay between humans and the world. What we do with language in a particular place is a result of our interpretation of that place” (Pennycook, 2010, p. 2). This view was influenced by constructivist Michel Foucault (1970) who claimed that a given culture is not only performed by its members, but they are constantly creating and constructing the culture that they live by. <sup>12</sup>Foucault describes culture as “a hierarchical

---

<sup>11</sup> American sociologist who developed the labeling theory of deviance. Becker’s approach to culture was radically different from sociologies of exteriority and imposition.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a French historian and philosopher, associated with the structuralist and post-structuralist movements. He has had strong influence not only in philosophy but also in a wide range of humanistic and social scientific disciplines.

organization of values, accessible to everybody, but at the same time the occasion of a mechanism of selection and exclusion” (1970, p.170). Foucault's ideas encapsulate how social structures and systems of knowledge can both offer accessibility to everyone while simultaneously serving as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, the question that arises is how to create a meaningful language experience for the learner who is not only engaged in speaking, but also reflecting. The learner can position himself or herself from the inside and outside in what Kramersch calls “third place” (Kramersch, 1993) of symbolic competence (Kramersch, 2009b).

Kramersch (1995) pointed out that traditional language theories and language acquisition affirm the dichotomy between individuals and the social realm. Language and the acquisition of language are thoughts to connect communication and social processes within a social context. Kramersch (1998) suggests that language is the principal means by which society conducts its social lives. Language is being used in the context of communication that is bound with culture in multiple and complex ways. Furthermore, Kramersch argues that language needs to be studied in its social context; although, language itself is viewed as an arbitrary sign or symbol that serves social existence which by design is outside of the language.

However, Whorf (1956) suggested that language influenced how a culture conceptualized reality. Yet, when Chomsky (e.g., 1965) focused linguistic inquiry upon a universalist quest for the structures that underlie all language, Whorf’s relativist view on culture and language became unfashionable.

The dyad of ‘language and culture’ language is a linguistic form that applies to cultural reality that can be found in the real world. Kramersch (2012) discusses culture as a need to reflect on the language which makes the task of learning a language more relevant. She claims that part of learning another language requires the ability to perceive the world through the metaphors, the

idioms and the grammatical forms used by the other. “Without language and other symbolic systems, the habits, beliefs, institutions and monuments that we call culture would just be observable realities, not cultural phenomena” (Kramsch, 2013; p. 62). Bakhtin (1986) defined the ability of speakers to see themselves from outside their own perspective. He noted the term ‘transgression’- that is, the self as dialogical, and thus ‘saturated with otherness’. Because utterances of change participants are made within an ever-changing context, and because utterances affect the way in which change is co-constructed. This notion is central to a dialogic understanding of the negotiation of meanings between one change participant and other change participants, “through transgression, language learners learn not only to use the language correctly and appropriately, but to reflect on their experience” (Kramsch, 2012. p. 62). Kramsch theorized language embodying both the history and the social world, but individuals can add their own voice and intention. Kramsch (1998), Judd (2002;10), and Pennycook (1995), suggests that “culture can be defined as the system of shared objects, activities and beliefs of a given group of people.”

Kramsch (1998:127) also emphasizes the notion of shared practice, suggesting that culture is “the membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting.” According to Kramsch, linguists will focus on the question of people’s perceptions, beliefs, values that are encoded in linguistic signs. Scholars in applied linguistics who use the pragmatic approach focus on how cultural meaning is constructed in a communicative situation (Kramch, 2014). L2 speakers ought to understand the intent of communication that is embedded in specific cultural settings, to fully demonstrate communicative competence (Savignon, 1997).

Furthermore, according to Vygotsky and other sociocultural theory (SCT), “a community’s culture and individual mind are in inherently dialectical relationship as semiotically organized functional systems” (Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1985). They contended that language is constructed from social and cultural activities, and later becomes a reflective object.

Pennycook claims that culture is being constructed by using the modality of verbal discourse, “discourse does not refer to language or uses of language, but to ways of organizing meaning that are often, though not exclusively, realized through language” (Pennycook, 1994, p.128). Therefore, discourse evolves practices we do with language that reflect the way we engage with the world. Lankshear (1996) expanded the idea of discourse to include all aspects of ‘culture’: “A Discourse is composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or to recognize a particular social identity” (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, p.10). Lankshear strengthens the claim that cultures are not only national entities, but groups linked by common interests or history. Every individual is linked through shared ideas, historical events, biological disposition, shared memories/feelings/beliefs, nationality, and other factors that may define their identity.

Pennycook claims that discourse is a vehicle that organizes meaning through the conceptual categories (e.g., man, woman, German, American) “Discourse is shared ways of organizing meaning that are often, though not exclusively, realized through language. Discourses are about the creation and limitation of possibilities, they are systems of power/knowledge (pouvoir/savoir) within which we take up subject positions” (Pennycook, 1994;128).

## 1.9.2 The Connection Between Art and Language

Language learners benefit from the increased capital that art provides to understand the world. Through art, learners gain access to history or current affairs of a place or a person or event through historical images. The exposure to art culture can help learners remember something tangible about a country as well as navigate through today's highly visual culture. Potentially it can provide a cognitive preface for content and reinforce ideas that might be difficult to express in words. Moreover, art can be a gateway to observe history, traditions, and schema in world cultures, as well as promote authentic learning of a second language (Goldberg, 2012).

Images offer learners an effective path to making meaning (National Art Education Association, 2009; Unsworth, 2006; Zeigler & Johns, 2005). A multi-modal multiliteracies approach that joins teachers of different disciplines to design instruction collaboratively supports the challenge of improving 21st century literacy instruction (Castek, Leu, Coiro, Gort, Henry & Lima, 2007; Cazden, Cope, Fairclough & Gee, 1996; Herrera, Perez & Escamilla, 2010; Kalantzis, Cope & Harvey, 2003). Learners in the process of acquiring a second language benefit from processing language using all modalities as well as their unique intelligences (Gardner, 2010). The reinforcement and exposure that occurs when students have numerous opportunities to use new language increases when their world provides them links between what they hear, read, see, and write. (The New York State Education Association, 2010; Carger, 2004).

Art enables students and individuals to be aware of their own cultural identity, and to be able to accept others' cultural values. It is essential to cultivate respect for one's own culture and traditions, as well as the acceptance and tolerance of other cultures. "Teaching visual culture is about students making and viewing the visual arts to understand their meanings, purposes,

relationships, and influences" (Freedman 2003:11). The use of visual arts in second language acquisition can be a challenging process because it links the two hemispheres of the brain: the left that is "specialized not only for language but also for analytical and sequential thinking and the right is responsible for spatial thinking and visuomotor skills" (Silver1989:10). However, making the connection between the two hemispheres is beneficial since it is a similar process that takes place in language.

Eutsler (2017) claims that the use of visual arts in language learning improves cognitive skills, in particular thinking critically as an active, purposeful, organized, and cognitive process. Visual art provides various competencies "in developing cognitive growth, including the perception of relationships and that problems and questions can have multiple possibilities" (Baker 2013: 2). Mincemoyer (2016) claims that Arts support students' self-expression about their world, feelings, ideas, and themselves. Goldberg (2012) suggested that infusing the visual arts in elementary school offers second language learners an opportunity to express, formulate ideas, and discover a topic without relying on their language level. Moreover, studying art can be a gateway to engage with history, traditions, and world cultures, as well as promote authentic learning of a second language.

Learners who are acquiring a second language benefit from all instructional modalities as well as their unique intelligences while they engage in the learning experience (Gardner, 2010). The reinforcement and exposure that occur when students are presented with historiographic images numerous opportunities to use new language increases the connections between what learners hear, read, see, and write.

Current research suggests that visual examples enhance the understanding of content, culture, and ideas (Jarvis, 2011; Siegel & Panofsky, 2009). Visual representations reinforce

students' connection to a topic through all modalities as they use their second language in a meaning-making manner.

Since learning is an individual human condition, it is important to make connections into a student's fund of knowledge (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005) to examine the student's own identity as a base for learning. While linguistic proficiency and contextual awareness are necessary for communication to take place, an internal motivation is also necessary: "successful communication is not just about shared knowledge of linguistic cues but also, and perhaps more importantly, a shared willingness to cooperate" (Hall, Hendricks, & Orr, 2004, p. 81). Language learners draw an identity from their ability to use language, with this identity affecting motivation for advancing learning the language.

## **2.0 Learner's Identity**

In recent years there is an emphasis on investigating language learning as a sociocultural practice. The traditional models of psychology perceived SLA primarily as a cognitive process (Lantolf, 2000; van Lier, 2004; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Vygotsky (1978) noted that the importance of sociality of learners is paramount because it enhances the individual's acquiring linguistic, or sociolinguistic competence. Dornyei claims (2001) that learner's motivation can be described in two broad subsystems, an instrumental and integrative. The integrative motivational subsystem is concentrated on individual L-2 predispositions such as: social, culture, ethnic and nonlinguistic components. The instrumental motivation stems from the learner's future career endeavors. "English has become a world language, one that dominates business and science. In many respects it is hegemonic. To participate in the world economy and to benefit from the advances of science, it is believed, one must know English" (p.694). In my observations throughout my years of teaching in academic institutions I have encountered learners that had integrative



motivation to shape their Jewish identity. The study of Hebrew language is instrumental for forming a connection of national identity, society, and culture, and to strengthen a Jewish identity. Therefore, I believe that educators who pay attention to the learner's individual profile and motivational factors from the pedagogy perspective can help learners to maximize their acquisition in the target language - in this case Hebrew.

A student enters the classroom with his own identity and culture. When acquiring a second or a new language, the student can absorb the culture of the second language, too (Spackman, 2009, p.2). This is a meeting point between culture and identity influencing second language acquisition. The process of learning a second language affects the students' identity and sense of belonging to a community. This is based on the notion that identity is embedded in culture and language. Leveridge (2008) implies that there is an intrinsic relationship between language, culture, and identity. Language can be the vehicle to express the individual's identity and culture. Gunderson (2000) aptly describes language and culture as inextricably linked. Norton (2007) defines identity as how humans understand their relationship to the world, how the relationship is constructed across space and time, and how the person understands his/her future possibilities.

Edwards (2009) remarks that the underlying construct of identity is similarity, based on the Latin root of the word 'identity'(identitas), which means 'same'. Norton (1997) argued that language learners are continuously engaged in a process of identity construction every time they speak. Many scholars view language learning and identity as inseparable (Day, 2002; Edwards, 2009; Norton, 1997). Norton (2011) believes that the growing interest in identity is due to the shift of interest from the psycholinguistic aspects of language learning to the sociological and anthropological aspects of language acquisition. Learning a new language can be a stimulating experience that involves the whole person: physically, cognitively, and emotionally. In this

experience, language learners shift from an understanding of themselves as speakers of their first language (L1) and their awareness of themselves as learners of a second language (L2), of how they 'identify' themselves. Thus, it is believed that identity construction through language use is a dynamic process (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2007).

Various types of identity have been suggested in the literature including 'social identity', 'sociocultural identity', 'cultural identity', 'ethnic identity', amongst others (Norton, 1997). Identity has been approached from various perspectives. One approach of identity is post-structuralism which, according to Norton (2013, 2014), attempts to explain identity in terms of our subjectivity defined simply as 'our sense of ourselves' (p. 4). Subjectivity is explained in terms of power; that is to say, individuals are either subjects of power or subjects to power. In a globalized, post-structuralist, postmodern world, identity is considered to be diverse, dynamic, varied, shifting, subject to change and contradictory. Identity is regarded to be socially organized, reorganized, constructed, co-constructed, and continually reconstructed through language and discourse. Identity is unstable, flexible, ongoing, negotiated, and multiple. It is a collection of roles or positions, and a mixture of individual agency and social influences (Zacharias, 2010; Omoniyi & White, 2008). Rather than being unique, fixed, and coherent, identity is considered as "a process" by social theorists (Block, 2007b). For Harr'e (1987), identity was about the constant and ongoing engagement of individuals interacting with others (Block, 2007).

Learners are perceived as members of social and historical collectivities, who fit the practices of a given community, rather than as language producers (Vygotsky, 1978). This view of language learning as a sociocultural practice has put the identity on the SLA road map. In the field of SLA, interest is growing pertaining to the ways in which language learners understand their relationship to the social world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space,

and how the learner perceives possibilities for the future. “Every time language learners interact in the second language, whether in the oral or written mode, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation” (Norton, 2000).

Researchers who are interested in identity are interested in the relationship between the language, the learner, and the larger community. According to the post-structuralist perspective, identity is viewed as being unstated, contextually driven, and emerging within interactions of a given discourse (Miyaharay, 2010). Post-structuralism refers to theoretical approaches that seek to examine the role of discourse and construction of experiences. Block (2007) suggests that identity is not fixed, rather it can be reshaped by social discourses, practices, and experiences. Norton (1997), the leading figure in research on identity in language, strongly supports the relation between language learning and identity. She views identity as intimately tied to language education.

Norton (2003) presents another dimension of identity which is the *imagined communities* that learners may aspire to join. “The term “imagined community,” originally coined by Anderson (1991), was introduced to the language learning community by Norton (2001), who argued that “in many language (/?) classrooms, the targeted community may be, to some extent, a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future” (Norton, 2012; p.).

Major scholars (Ricento, 2005; Zuengler & Miller, 2006; Block, 2007a; Swain & Deters, 2007; Menard-Warwick, 2009) cite Norton’s theorizing of identity (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) as a fundamental contemporary understanding of identity and language acquisition. One of the central interests of a learner's identity are the ways in which language learners perceive their

relationship to the social world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the learner may explore possibilities for their future. Norton names this construct “investment,” which complements constructs of motivation in Second Language Acquisition (Dornyei, 2001), is inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1991) and addresses the constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their ambivalent feeling to learn and practice it. Bourdieu (1991) suggests that when learners ‘invest’ in the target language, they acquire an understanding that they will obtain a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will contribute to their ‘cultural capital’.

The major argument of the identity approach to SLA is twofold: First, SLA theorists need a comprehensive theory of identity that integrates the individual language learner and the larger social world; second, SLA theorists need to address how relations of power in the social world affect learners’ access to the target language community. In relation to the former, a fully developed theory of identity highlights the multiple positions from which language learners can speak, and how sometimes marginalized learners can appropriate more desirable identities with respect to the target language community. In relation to the latter, identity theorists are concerned about the ways in which opportunities to practice speaking, reading, and writing, acknowledged as central to the SLA process (cf. Spolsky, 1989), are socially structured in both formal and informal sites of language learning.”

Furthermore, language assumes human cognition and condition, identity construction and self-development (Edwards, 2009). Norton (1997) argued that language both shapes and is shaped by one’s identity. In addition, it is often acknowledged that language learning and identity reconstruction are linked (Edwards, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Norton, 1995, 1997, 2009).

An increasing literature in SLA poses a variationist perspective on second language learners. Block (2007) presents methods of data collection on culture, language, and identity. Empirical research has shown a link between second language learning and identity. Learners' identities are not merely based on their interactions in the classroom, rather on a broader scale of interactions in the community. It is an "encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relationship to these communities" (Wenger, 1998; cited in Block, 2007, p.865). Learners can actively engage in and contribute to various social practices within their communities. These practices can include cultural norms, rituals, traditions, linguistic interactions, and everyday behaviors that define the community's social fabric. For instance, participation in religious ceremonies, cultural celebrations, or community events reflects active engagement in these social practices. Through active participation in social practices, learners construct and shape their identities as they engage selectively within the learning community. Identity construction involves how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others within the community. This process is influenced by cultural values, social roles, collective histories, and personal experiences. For example, someone actively participating in cultural activities may develop a stronger sense of cultural identity tied to that community.

### **Summary**

This literature review presents the theoretical framework of SLA, communicative competences (linguistic, cultural) culture (Art) and learner identity. From the behaviorist perspective proposed by B.F. Skinner suggests language is acquired through imitation, reinforcement, and conditioning. Children learn language by imitating adults and receiving positive reinforcement for correct language usage. Followed by Cognitive theories, like those proposed by Jean Piaget, emphasize the role of cognitive processes in language acquisition.

According to Piaget, children construct their understanding of language through cognitive development and schema formation. Then in 1960 Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory posits a major outbreak that humans are born with an innate capacity for language acquisition. Universal Grammar proposes that there are underlying principles common to all languages that children unconsciously use to learn their native language. However, Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in language development. According to this theory, language acquisition is intertwined with social interaction, cultural norms, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This review seeks to introduce the framework for my research of using Art as a tool to acquire various competences from linguistic to pragmatic which touch upon each of the theories listed above. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in various social contexts. It involves not only linguistic knowledge but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences.

Learning a new language involves exploring and engaging with different cultures associated with that language. As learners immerse themselves in the language, they expand aspects of the culture, which may lead to shifts in their cultural identity. As learners gain fluency and competence in the language, they may develop a sense of accomplishment and integration into communities where the language is spoken. Language plays a crucial role in shaping social identity. Language learners may identify with specific language communities and adapt their language use to fit in or express their cultural and social identities. Language learners endure a dynamic process of identity formation as they engage with new languages and cultures. This process is influenced by language proficiency, cultural immersion, social interactions, motivations, and the contexts in which language learning occurs. Embracing linguistic diversity and

understanding the interconnectedness of language and identity are essential aspects of language education and cultural competence.

Understanding language acquisition theories is paramount to maximize effective teaching strategies, while communicative competence serves as a goal for language learners to achieve proficiency in real-world communication.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

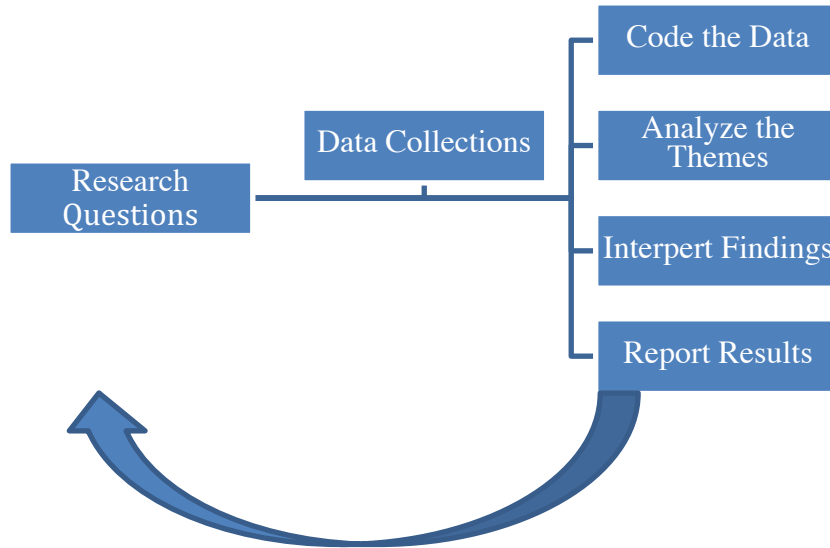
### **Introduction to my Research Methodology**

This chapter focuses on the methodology of qualitative research design using narrative study. I carried out this study based on the principles of narrative study, which is participatory, change-oriented, practical, and cyclical in nature. This chapter also details the design of the study and the methods and processes used to carry out this research. It also addresses ethical issues, rigor, the challenges of conducting narrative study and issues relating to myself in the roles of a researcher. The research design had three phases: phase one I gained insights during my teaching and sought my interest in incorporating art by Israeli and Jewish painters as a learning strategy tool. I gather information about the different learners' interests, perspectives, experiences, and background. Phase two, I generated a proposal for my objectives in this research and designed questionnaires, wrote questions for an interview, selected research material that consist of paintings that connect to cultural and historical theme. Phase three commenced when I scheduled individual time with each participant to record their answers and ideas about the selected art presented to them. The questions gave the participants directions but was not limiting for individual interpretations.

The methodology steps are as follow: (2.1) purpose statement and research questions, (2.2) description of the research design, (2.3) site characteristics, (2.4) participants, (2.5) data collection and instrumentation, (2.6) data analysis, (2.7) timeline, (2.8) research material (2.9) ethical issues. This research focuses on four case studies. The four participants were observed for over several years in which data for this research was collected.



**Figure 2.2:** Conceptual Model of Steps for Conducting my Research



## 2.1 Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Language, culture, and identity are intrinsically interrelated. Culture plays a significant role in shaping and influencing language. It represents the collective beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and behaviors of a particular group of people. Hebrew language is not only a means of communication but also plays an active role in the culture. For example, culture shapes the vocabulary and expressions within a language; it reflects concepts, practices or objects that may include unique words or phrases. Idioms and proverbs are cultural expressions that convey meaning beyond their literal interpretation. According to Kasper and Schmidt (1996), language is closely tied to social norms and etiquette within a culture. It dictates how people address each other, show respect, and use polite expressions. Different cultures have their own rules and expectations regarding communication styles, levels of formality, and appropriate use of language in various social contexts. Language reflects the worldview and beliefs of a culture. It shapes how individuals perceive and interpret the world around them. Different cultures may have unique linguistic structures, metaphors, or symbols that embody their understanding of concepts like time,

relationships, spirituality, and nature. The historical and geographical context of a culture affects its language. Historical events, colonization, migration, and contact with other cultures can introduce new vocabulary, loanwords, or changes in grammar and pronunciation. The geographical environment can also influence the development of languages and dialects; in the case of Jewish languages for example, Yiddish and Ladino<sup>13</sup>. Hebrew language and culture have a rich history spanning thousands of years. Exploring this heritage offers insights into ancient religious traditions, literature, and folklore, providing a deep understanding of human civilization's development.

Hebrew is not only a classical language but also the official language of Israel, a country with a vibrant modern culture and a dynamic society. Investigating modern Hebrew language and culture shed light on current social, and cultural dynamics in Israel. For many individuals, Hebrew language and culture are integral parts of their identity and sense of belonging.

Kramsch (1998) stated, “Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity. Thus, language symbolizes cultural reality” (p. 3). Researching these aspects can illuminate how language shapes individual and collective identities, fostering a deeper understanding of multiculturalism and diversity.

Critical theorists view language and culture as intertwined with ideology and propose a stand against hegemonic forces. Pennycook claims that this is about becoming “the author of one’s world, finding an autonomous voice and engaging in a struggle for culture alternatives (1997, p.45)”. Overall, culture and language intertwine. Language shares the cultural values, norms, and worldview of a community; while, at the same time, culture shapes the development, use, and

---

<sup>13</sup> Throughout the world, wherever Jews have lived, they have spoken and written differently from their non-Jewish neighbors. Some of their languages have differed by only a few embedded Hebrew words, but others have been so different in grammar and pronunciation that Jews and non-Jews could barely communicate. Most long-standing Jewish languages are now [endangered](#), but new ones are emerging. Many people have heard of [Aramaic](#), [Yiddish](#), and [Ladino](#), but knowledge of other Jewish languages is less common, such as [Judeo-Greek](#), [Jewish Malayalam](#), and contemporary [Jewish French](#).

development of language. Understanding the cultural context is essential for effective communication and for appreciating the richness and diversity of human language.

My research endeavors to address two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to investigate the potential impact of visual art on language acquisition, specifically focusing on vocabulary retention, grammar comprehension, and overall linguistic competency. Additionally, it seeks to explore the reciprocal relationship between language learning and the development of learners' cultural and communicative competence, recognizing the symbiotic nature of language acquisition and sociocultural understanding. Secondly, the research aims to assess the transformative effects of second language learning on students' identity. It will examine the extent to which the process of acquiring a second language influences individuals' sense of self and belonging within a community. By delving into this aspect, the study aims to elucidate the complex interplay between language acquisition, cultural adaptation, and the construction of personal and communal identities.

The research questions that derived from my objectives are:

- 1) What does student work from across Hebrew courses at USC beginner through intermediate reveal about the ways pairing language acquisition with Jewish and Israeli visual art influence the development of language competences among learners?
- 2) What does student work reveal about the extent to which integration of Jewish and Israeli visual art into language acquisition enhances the language performance of oral competence?
- 3) What does student work from across Hebrew classes at USC reveal about the role cultural knowledge conveyed through Jewish and Israeli visual art contributes to learners' language (linguistic and cultural) competence?
- 4) What does student work from Hebrew classes at USC reveal about the role Jewish and Israeli visual art plays in encouraging learners to connect vocabulary and themes in communicating ideas, thoughts, and opinions?

5) What does student work from across Hebrew classes at USC reveal about the extent to which the process of acquiring a new language and its associated culture through Jewish and Israeli visual art reshape the learners' identity?

## **2.2 Research design**

The research is within the qualitative paradigm and draw on narrative study methodology.

Qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 56) as:

multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.

This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

The characteristics of qualitative research are:

- It has an exploratory and descriptive focus.
- It has an emergent design.
- Data collection is done in the natural setting.
- The emphasis is on human as instrument.
- It uses qualitative methods of data collection.
- Data analysis is inductive and ongoing during the research process.

The qualitative research design known as content analysis, which is used to identify the specific characteristics of a body of material (any verbal, visual, or behavioral form of communication), will be used to identify patterns, themes, or biases and will help to analyze the process of how

students experience acquiring a second language and culture; it will also help to assess to what degree the participants' identity is reconstructed<sup>14</sup>. The qualitative research design of content analysis is appropriate to my research because its concepts require successive probing, observations, interviews, and discussion. It is important to understand the phenomena of language, culture, and identity from the students' perspectives in a particular situation. This research examines and documents the four case studies to provide an understanding of each learner's experience, issues, insights, and developmental pathways within the language acquisition process.

### **2.3 Methodological Framework**

A narrative methodology in social science has intellectual roots in the humanities (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. Narrative inquiry has fueled studies having to do with curriculum, subject matter, and culture. Narrative inquiry contributes to the emergence of the self-study of teaching and teacher education practices genre of research is additionally highlighted, along with collaborative narrative inquiries, studies with children, and reforming educational institutions landscapes. By focusing on the richness and complexity of human stories, narrative studies offer deep insights into how people experience and interpret the world around them.

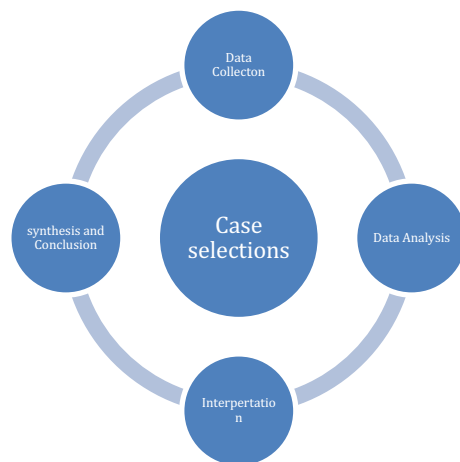
---

<sup>14</sup> Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead, *You and Your Actions Research Project*, 3rd edition. 2010, p. 89-112.

## *Cultural and Historical Background*

I established cultural and historical backgrounds based on the art of major Israeli and Jewish artists working in the 20th century. The art depicted historical events, costumes, rituals, and lifestyle in the Jewish and Israeli world. A list of all the topics can be found in the appendix. This corresponds to Lado's (1964) findings that there can be no actual knowledge learning a language without understanding the values of the culture.

**Figure 2.1:** Conceptual Model of Narrative Study



The characteristics of narrative study:

- ◆ Focus on stories.
- ◆ Subjectivity and Personal Experiences
- ◆ Contextual Understanding
- ◆ Chronology
- ◆ Interaction Between Research and Participant
- ◆ Holistic Approach
- ◆ Narrative Analysis Techniques
- ◆ Representation of a Voice
- ◆ Reflexibility

- ◆ Purpose and Application
- ◆ Ethical consideration
- ◆ Multiple disciplines

Narrative Study	My Research
Focus on stories	Focused on individual biography background and experiences learning Hebrew
Subjectivity and Personal Experiences	Documented the participant personal experience learning Hebrew and personal connection to Hebrew language and culture.
Contextual Understanding	Paid close attention to the context in which the stories are told. This includes the social, cultural, historical, and personal contexts that shape and influence their learning
Interaction Between Researcher and Participant	The participant and the researcher chose an area/ zoom meeting
Holistic Approach	Looked at the entire story not on isolated segment
Representation of Voice	Presenting the participants storied authentically
Purpose and Application	The study aimed to convey richness of each individual experience and was open for exploration.
Ethical Considerations	The participants received an informed consent ensuring confidentiality, and being sensitive to the emotional impact of sharing personal stories
Multiple Disciplines	Applied linguistic, language acquisition, sociolinguistic, psychology

**Table 2.1:** The Characteristics of Narrative Study and How it Applies to my Research.

This narrative study involves case study research that employed a mixed-methods approach, combining language proficiency assessments, language use observations, and semi-structured interviews. Language proficiency is assessed using standardized tests, while language use observations capture interactions in academic, social, and professional settings. Semi-

structured interviews provide insights into Hebrew language learning experiences, challenges, and strategies.

## **2.4 Site Characteristics**

The site was at University of Southern California classes and mainly on Zoom during 2020-2022. Students met via zoom for five individual interviews of approximately 30-40 minutes during the year. Additionally, data was collected from previous courses that the students attended. The main site for this research was over zoom with each participant separately.

## **2.5 The Participants**

For this research, I chose students from my four <sup>15</sup>USC Hebrew Language courses from 2017-2022. This study took place between 2023-2024, and the respondents were Hebrew Language learners in the USA at different language proficiency levels, ages, genders, cultural background, religious affiliations, and educational background. The participants were asked if they will be willing to participate in my research. I was interested to follow the development of students without any Hebrew background and very minimal or no Jewish background practice.

Participant (1) (AL) Hebrew 120, Hebrew 150, Hebrew 220, Hebrew 315, JS 495

Participant (2) (Jas) Hebrew 120, Hebrew 150, Hebrew 220, Hebrew 121

Participant (3) (Sin) Hebrew 120, Hebrew 150, Hebrew 220, Hebrew 315

Participant (4) (Lee) Hebrew 120, Hebrew 150, Hebrew 220

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://dornsife.usc.edu/center-for-languages-and-cultures/usc-languages/hebrew/>



## 2.5.1 The Narrative of the Selected Case Study

### 1. Al

Al grew up in Cincinnati in a family with no religious affiliation. Both his parents came from rural farming backgrounds. His father was born in Madrid, Spain. Al's grandfather was a Spanish professor studying for many years in various parts of Spain. Due to World Wars Al's grandfather had journeyed through various countries from the Czech Republic to Cuba. The grandfather's first language was German, and Al's father's first language was Spanish, and Al's first language was English. From one generation to another more languages were added to the family, which benefitted Al's linguistic exposure. "I didn't really speak German or Spanish... but I was exposed to different languages a lot ... my father had some German children's books that he would read to me." Al's mother converted to Tibetan Buddhism and exposed him to classical Tibetan prayers. Al felt that chanted Tibetan and Jewish prayers sounded similar. Al considered himself a Buddhist until he was thirteen.

Al's interest in Hebrew began when he tried to understand the prayers while he was a guest at a Bat Mitzvah ceremony. This event sparked the idea of conversion to Judaism. The conversion to Judaism for Al was about connecting with Jewish people, "... I started doing more and more research about Jewish cultures and about Judaism. And the more I learned about the religion, the more I thought this really resonates with me", *This religion had so much to do with reading and analyzing I wanted that connection with other descendants of survivors.*"

One of the first Jewish books Al read was Back to the Sources: Reading the Ancient Jewish Texts by Barry W. Holtz. He was interested in different translations of the Torah written by Robert Alter, which taps different aspects of Biblical Hebrew. This book was formative for Al although it was too advanced for him when he first read it. Al's interpretation revolved around the history

of a transgression within Jewish thought and the role that transgression played in the evolution of Jewish philosophy and law.

Al's official Hebrew language studies began in his freshman year in 2017 as an undergraduate at the University of Southern California. His first Hebrew course was Modern Hebrew Level I; thereafter, he continued studying for four consecutive semesters followed by two independent studies in Modern Hebrew Literature. In his first independent study Al's main focus was comparing medieval Hebrew poetry from Spain with early 1900 Hebrew poetry. In the second independent study, Alex explored the short story genre in contemporary Hebrew literature.

## 2. Jas

Jas was born in Southern California to a mother from Singapore who moved to the United States in 1988. Her father is from Poland, and he moved to the United States in 1986. They married in Los Angeles California in 1994. Jas was born in Pasadena in 1995. Her parents separated when she was two and half, and Jas moved to Singapore where her grandmother raised her speaking only Chinese. Jas returned to Monterey Park, California and recalled her first day in kindergarten as “a new world” where she started learning and speaking English. Jas and her mother spoke only Mandarin, but the mom's friends spoke a variety of Chinese dialects. As a result, Jas grew up listening to a variety of Chinese dialects.

During her teenage years Jas expressed resistance towards speaking only Mandarin at home. She wanted to feel more like a native. However, Jas experienced a transformative moment during adolescence when she was watching a trilogy. It showed a boy her age speaking and conversing naturally in Mandarin and English, which was very similar to her heritage. Jas recalls that during this period of her upbringing there were many students coming to the school from

China, and she served as a translator and mediator. This role empowered her, and she realized the benefit of bilingualism. Since then, Jas overcame the cultural and language barrier, and she was no longer resistant to speaking Mandarin at home. She traveled to China and was thankful that she learned Chinese because she was able to speak to the locals and gain a cultural perspective.

Jas began studying Hebrew while in Jerusalem at the Hebrew University on a semester abroad program. She studied Arabic and her roommate studied Hebrew. She liked the Hebrew that she practiced with her roommate more than the Arabic. When she came to USC for her master's degree in public policy, she inquired about joining Hebrew Level I as an audit student and continued to audit for four semesters. Jas demonstrated an extraordinarily high quality of work. Since then, she independently studies the Hebrew Bible and immerses herself in Israeli and Jewish contemporary music and current events.

### 3. Sin

Sin was born and grew up in Istanbul in a middle-class neighborhood. Both parents' families came from Yugoslavia and his mother's parents came from Skopje, the capital city of Macedonia. The families migrated to Turkey in the 1950s when Yugoslavia was becoming a socialist country. Sin's parents spoke exclusively Turkish, but his grandparents spoke Macedonian, Albanian and Serbian. The family assimilated into Turkish culture. Sin speaks a little bit of Albanian and Macedonian at an introductory level. He recalled his parents speaking Albanian during family gatherings. Sin's home was multicultural, as many languages were spoken with parents and relatives.

Sin officially started learning Hebrew in the Fall of 2020. His interest in studying Hebrew was primarily for the purpose of his research as a Ph. D student in Political Science, focusing on

Middle East politics. Prior to the Hebrew course at USC, Sinhad no knowledge of Hebrew. He mentioned he has Jewish friends, but they don't speak Hebrew beyond "Shalom". Sin completed the full Hebrew program as well as conversational course. After two semesters of Hebrew, he joined the Jewish Studies Graduate Certificate program. Sin showed a strong commitment towards his studies and achieved the highest level.

#### 4. Lee

Lee was born in San Diego, California. Lee's father was born in Israel, and when he was thirteen the family moved to New Mexico. Lee recalled that his family spoke mainly Hebrew, but eventually started speaking less. "Everyone spoke English, it was a standard step through the assimilation process to speak only English as a sign of how successful a family was".

Lee's mother is an American who converted to Judaism; she doesn't speak Hebrew. The main exposure to Hebrew language came from his father's side of the family, the visits to Israel, and the conversations with his grandmother. Lee admits "as a student in a Hebrew course, when I hear a new vocabulary word, it really only takes like one or two exposures to retain". His parents sent him to a Bar Mitzvah program in a Temple in Northern San Diego. The program was focused on Bar Mitzvah training. Lee strives to expand his Hebrew skills and cultural knowledge, "I feel proudly Jewish, and I have no shame with being Jewish". Lee expressed that his connection to Hebrew and Judaism is all cultural, he doesn't know a lot about the Torah, but his connection is from the heart, "For me the explanation about the Torah is very interesting because it is how Hebrew all started."

He feels more culturally Israeli than Jewish. “My connection to Israel is very strong and I always defend it. I feel obligated to learn Hebrew ... mainly because of the Shoah. [...] I’m convinced that if Israel didn't exist then the Holocaust would happen like 10 more times. [...]

Lee aspires to immigrate in the future to Israel and he feels it is essential to become a fluent Hebrew Speaker. Lee started Hebrew in his freshman year. He completed three semesters and is registered for Spring semester 2024.

## **2.6 Data Collections and Instrumentation**

Prior to starting the research, I collected data from the participants work in the courses. The data pertaining to written and oral samples. This data was observed and trigger my interest to pursue this research. The data collection for this study is a retrospective data from teaching material use, including visual art resources (e.g., images of Jewish and Israeli art), and any multimedia material aids. I gathered samples of students work such as: reflective essays, projects, survey, questionnaires, presentations, art piece that reflect the learner’s engagement with both language and visual art. Some of the data pretraining to informal assessments evaluations, observation notes, anecdotal record collected during the course.

A set of questionnaires, interviews, observations, tests, audio recordings, and videos were collected for this research. The data was collected by gathering techniques as appropriate to each student’s stage and situation. These include the following:

written methods - field notes, surveys, and questionnaires.

the methods - interviews and critical conversation about the research.

Multimedia data - websites, blogs, and paintings with a visual narrative, such as Chagall.

Dornyei (2010) suggests that “developing questionnaires is a stepwise process, and the quality of the final instrument depends on the cumulative quality of each sub process” (p.111). All

the steps and stages of questionnaire development and validation were performed according to the instructions given in manual on questionnaire development by Brown (2001) and Dornyei (2010). My review of published methods revealed that the study-made instruments were not viable for this study. Therefore, questionnaires were formulated to address the objectives of my study assessing the connection between Hebrew acquisition and identity, symbols representation, vocabulary association.

Appendix B – Identity and Lagunage Questionnaire

Appendix C – Attachement to Hebrew Questionnaire

Appendix D – Identity Questionnaire

Appendix E – Symbols and Images Survey

The data collection for this study is a retrospective data from teaching material use, including visual art resources (e.g., images of Jewish and Israeli art), and any multimedia material aids. I gathered samples of students work such as: reflective essays, projects, survey, questionnaires, presentations, art piece that reflect the learner’s engagement with both language and visual art. Some of the data pretraining to informal assessments evaluations, observation notes, anecdotal record collected during the course.

### **2.6.1 Timeline**

The participants were interviewed during the 2023. The data for the study was collected from the beginning of 2023 until the end of the year. All students' cases were observed after the time they were taking courses with me between 2020-2024. The case of Al who was taking several courses and independent studies in Hebrew took more language courses than the other participants. Al also worked as a Hebrew tutor after he graduated from USC. Sin is currently a Ph.D student in political science who decided to enroll in a Jewish study certificate designed for graduate students

after taking one course of Hebrew as an elective for self interest in August 2021 (Fall semester). He completed all courses in the USC Hebrew program in the spring of 2023 before beginning the Jewish Studies certificate. Jas studied Hebrew courses starting in 2019 and continued her own until 2024. Her case study lasted over two years. Lee has taken three Hebrew courses from 2022-2023.

### **2.6.2 Conformability**

Conformability involves evidence that procedures described actually took place. This is comparable with objectivity and neutrality (Tobin & Begley, 2004) where the researcher establishes that data and interpretations of findings are not figments of her own imagination. To establish the conformability of this study, I used instruments such as, classroom observation notes, journals, sample material, and transcripts of meeting. These are available for reference (see Appendix G).

### **2.6.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to research procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny, and it is comparable to reliability (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Dependability can be demonstrated through an audit trail, where others can examine the inquirer 's documentation of data, methods, decisions, and end product. Reflexivity is central to the audit trail, in which inquirers keep a self-critical account of the research process, including their internal and external dialogue (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). In this research dependability achieved through recorded meeting, reflections, notes, and collection data from course material.

### **2.7 Data Analysis**

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as: “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of

coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1278). Qualitative content analysis accentuates a combined view of discourse/writings and their specific contexts. Qualitative content analysis “allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p.1).

The data of this study was analyzed through students' writing, written reflections, questionnaires, oral recording, and surveys. The data showed that students developed insights about Jewish historical and cultural events that were presented in paintings, and they were able to communicate their ideas and understanding in Hebrew by recalling the paintings. They expressed their ideas and feelings about the visual and were able to make personal connections. The participants noticed details in the paintings which pertained to their individual beliefs and background. Students not only made astute observations and interpretations, but also offered subjective feelings about the painting. Such remarks demonstrated a personal perspective but also mindful thinking in Hebrew.

### **2.7.1 The Analysis Approach for the Data Collection**

1. Data source: analyze student projects and presentations that integrate language skills with visual art. Look for evidence of enhanced communication skills, such as the ability to express complex ideas, use of advanced vocabulary, and effective storytelling.

Analysis: identify themes related to multi-communicative competences (e.g., verbal, visual, written) and how students demonstrate these through their work.

2. Data source: review student assessments and teacher evaluations before and after introducing visual art into the curriculum. Compare language performance metrics such as vocabulary usage, grammar accuracy, fluency, and creativity.



Analysis: look for improvements and note specific instances where visual art seems to have played a role.

3. Data source: examine student essays and projects focusing on cultural themes, as well as reflections on cultural learning. Identify references to cultural knowledge and its application in language use.

Analysis: evaluate how well students understand and integrate cultural context into their communication.

4. Data source: analyze student work where they describe or discuss visual art pieces.

Analysis: look at vocabulary lists, thematic essays, and discussions. Look for patterns in how students use art to inspire their language use. Note specific vocabulary and thematic connections made through their engagement with visual art.

5. Data source: reflective essays, student feedback, and personal narratives.

Analysis: Identify statements and reflections indicating changes in self-perception, cultural awareness, and identity. Look for deeper personal insights and transformative experiences attributed to the integration of visual art and language learning.

### **2.7.2 Measurement of Communicative Function**

The curriculum of foreign language classes at University of Southern California (USC) emphasizes communicative competence in which grammatical competence is one dimension. The focus is on fluency and accuracy which fluency defines as a practical ability to form coherent sentence form in order to communicate effectively. The current research analyzes four cases of learners who acquired Hebrew as a forging language through selected art painting as a tool to develop communicative competence. The research merges the cultural aspect in every painting, and the artist's geographical background as an historical influence (see table 2.3 p.71).

The functional approach in foreign language places the ‘learner in the center’. This approach emphasizes the needs, goals, and the interest of the learner. With the release of Can-Do Statements by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL-ACTFL)<sup>16</sup> Many language teachers nationwide shifted their focus on the language learning experiences to be centered on building communication skills, asking the critical question: What can students do with the language?

The table below shows the category and subcategories for each function in order to improve communication in written and oral form. A set of guided questions were presented to the participants for the written and oral activity.

Main Category	Subcategories Function
Transmit information	Identify, describe, state, report, revising, questioning, answering
Expressing opinion	Agree, disagree, denying
Expressing knowledge	Expressing curiosity,
Expressing will	Hope, desire, wish
Expressing emotion	Joy, sad, sorrow, asking about, disappointment
Constructing a discourse	Expressing opinion, asking about, exemplifying, defining, summarizing
Improving communication	Asking for: repeating, confirming, explaining, spelling

**Table 2.2:** Communicative Function

My research seeks to identify what communicative functions through Jewish/Israeli art paintings learners develop in their oral and writing activities. The categories and subcategories were gathered from ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) standards for communication. The guided questions for written and oral activity are as follow:

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.actfl.org/educator-resources/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements>

- What are the colors in the painting? Objects and things in the painting?
- What year or era does this painting represent in your opinion?
- What is the relationship between the people if any? Is there a connection?
- What activities are portrayed in the painting?
- What are the expressions? Or Thoughts evoke?
- What is the meaning of such expressions or thoughts?
- What topics can the people be discussing at the time the painting took place, if it was today what were they talking about?

The chart below presents the criteria I used to assess the data I collected for the purpose of my research.

Grammar pattern	Novice	Proficient	Advance
Using tenses in agreement with gender single or plural	Able to use few verbs in past tense no agreement with gender, often use infinitive form of the verbs	Able to use past tense in an interlocutor pattern in some sentences.	Sufficient control of the use of appropriate tense.
Agreement between noun and adjective according to gender. (in Hebrew every word is identified with a gender)	No agreement between noun and adjective	Show agreement between noun and adjectives	Show agreement between noun and adjective including the irregular nouns
Singular and plural nouns / using correct suffix ending.	No use of plural is observed	Demonstrate some but not all the time	Use of singular and plural is shown according to context with correct suffix
Conjunctions words	No use of conjunctions is observing	Demonstrate some use but not all the time.	Demonstrate comprehensible sentences with appropriate conjunctions.
Propositions	Use one or two propositions	Use propositions appropriately in the sentences	Demonstrate use of propositions in possessiveness form to pronouns

Compound noun	Not used	Use in some sentences	Use appropriately according to gender rules.
---------------	----------	-----------------------	--

**Table 2.3:** Grammatical concepts for linguistic analysis

## 2.8 Research Material

For this study I selected paintings by Jewish/Israeli artists: 1) Reuven Rubin, 2) Yohanan Simon, 3) Maurycy Gottlieb 4) Nachum Gutman, 5) Marc Chagall, 6) Yosel Bergner, 7) Ruth Ztarfati. This selection was chosen mainly for paintings that represent cultural and historical events in which learners can easily identify objects and themes. The images by Rubin, Gutman, Simon and Begner were chosen primarily to teach historical events in Israel during the British mandate and after 1948 when Israel became an independent state. The influence of the Jewish artists of the Paris Expressionist school on Israeli art is evident in works from the 1930s; in those from the 1940s the influence of Canaanite ideology is also represented. This Israeli art collection reflects what was happening early in the twentieth century.

The objective of using visual art was to develop and expand linguistic ability; to practice the proper use of the present tense (painting description), to recall and practice the proper use of the present simple (expressing opinions), to be able to express their own opinions about the topic of the painting, to be able to see explicit and implicit connections in the painting (symbolic references), to active cognitive skills, such as to reinforce concentration, critical thinking, reasoning, caution, connection making skills, and to improve imagination and creativity.

The goal was set to foster fluency more than accuracy. However, grammar is necessary to express precise meaning in discourse. Grammatical competence is one of the dimensions of communicative competence as Canale and Swain (1980) suggested. Additionally, the use of visual art was to introduce the learner about cultural and historical themes. Culture is the everyday lifestyle of people who use the language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). It can provide authentic

materials for communication such as nonverbal behavior which enables students to develop the strategic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980).

A learner's vocabulary can be expected to become measurably larger and more sophisticated as communicative competence increases (Milton, 2010). With every course level the learner is expected to increase his or her vocabulary from the basis of use, frequency, range, and usefulness. A list of vocabulary was generated based on the historical and cultural themes portrayed in the visual art. This research seeks to assess the communicative functions of students using painting as a pedagogical tool.

The objectives of teaching foreign languages at USC are for students to:

- know how to communicate in a manner characteristic of the target language and its culture.
- be able to assess their language skills in relation to the objectives.
- be familiar with their own strengths and development needs as communicators and language learners.
- know how to develop their language skills through strategies that are appropriate to their development needs, study assignments, and communication tasks.

## 2.8.1 Painting Selection for Written and Oral Activities

### 1) Reuven Rubin<sup>17</sup>



Image 1.1 The Artist's Family 1926



Image 1.2 The Pomegranate

<sup>17</sup> Reuven Rubin, the Family Artist, 1926 <https://tamuseum.org.il/he/collection/israeli-art/>  
<https://www.rubinmuseum.org.il/en/home/a/main/>

Reuven Rubin was born in 1893 in Galatz, Romania. He painted from childhood and came to Jerusalem in 1912 to study at the Bezalel Art Academy. A year later he continued to Paris, then the art capital of the world, to pursue his art studies. After W.W.I he traveled to America, exhibited in 1921 in New York and in 1923 returned to Palestine to settle. He was soon recognized as one of the leading pioneer artists in the country. His depictions of the local landscapes and the people, Arabs, and Jews alike, reflect the Zionist enthusiasm of those early years.



1.3 First Seder in Jerusalem<sup>18</sup>



1.4 Jesus and the Jew



1.5 Madonna of the Unhoused

---

<sup>18</sup> First seder in Jerusalem 1949-50 <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/judaism/476969/>  
<https://israeled.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/First-Seder-in-Jerusalem-Art-by-Reuven-Rubim-Article-by-Carmela-Rubin.pdf>



2) Yohanan Simon <sup>19</sup>



Image 2.1 Shabbat in the Kibbutz



Image 2.2 In the Kibbutz 1950

---

<sup>19</sup> Yohanan Simon, Shabbat in the Kibbutz, 1947 <https://tamuseum.org.il/he/collection/israeli-art/>  
Yohanan Simon, was born in Berlin in 1905. From 1927 he lived mainly in France. Beginning in 1934 he worked in New York for the magazine Vogue. In 1936 he immigrated to Pre-Mandate Palestine. Until 1953 he was a member of Kibbutz Gan Shmuel. He executed a number of murals for Israeli ships, public buildings and hotels, including Bank of Israel offices in New York and a hotel in Côte d'Ivoire. He also illustrated books and designed stage sets.



3) Maurycy Gottlieb<sup>20</sup>



Image 3.1 *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement*. Maurycy Gottlieb, 1878. Oil on canvas. Tel Aviv Museum of Art.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> In his early years, Gottlieb painted historically themed works about Poland, which demonstrated a clear impact of Matejko, both ideologically and artistically. A painting that stands out among them is the small-format **Sigismund Augustus and Gizanka** (ca. 1874), probably inspired by Matejko's painting **Sigismund Augustus and Barbara Radzi will**. The antisemitic behavior of his colleagues from the Kraków School of Fine Arts put an end to Gottlieb's hopes for assimilation and his awareness of the Jewish cultural and national identity had ultimately formed during the Munich era. He then started passionately studying the history, tradition, and literature of his nation, which was reflected in the subject of his works (**Jewish Wedding**, 1876, **Torah Scribe**, ca. 1876).

<https://segulamag.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/img278923-1.jpg>

<sup>21</sup> "Gottlieb's artistic talent was strongly encouraged by his family (three other brothers became artists, including the well-known Leopold). In the course of his brief life he studied at the art schools of Vienna, Kraków, and Munich, and counted among his teachers some of the prominent academic artists of the 1870s. He was not the first Polish Jew to become an artist, but perhaps was the first to aspire to be both a "Polish" and a "Jewish" artist".

[https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/gottlieb\\_maurycy](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/gottlieb_maurycy)

#### 4) Nahum Guttman<sup>22</sup>



Image 4.1 Tel Aviv Beach



4.2 Gymnasia Herzliya

---

<sup>22</sup> Nahum Guttman was born in 1898 in the village Telenesti in Bessarabia, at that time under Russian control. His mother was a housewife, and his father was a Hebrew writer and educator, who published stories and novels under the pen name S. Ben Zion. At the age of 5, Nahum Gutman moved with his family to the city Odessa, where his father was called to teach in the “Cheder Ha`metukan” – a school in which the teaching language was Hebrew rather than Yiddish. The poet Chaim Nachman Bialik used to visit the school and play with the children. He especially loved the teacher’s son, Nahum. He recognized his natural painting flair and was like a second father to him. <https://www.gutmanmuseum.co.il/en/about/nahum-gutman/biography/>



4.3 Jaffa Port



4.4 Pomegranates in Tzfat.

## 5) Marc Chagall<sup>23</sup>



Image 5.1 The Birthday 1915 (Head over heels in love: Marc and Bella Chagall<sup>24</sup>)

<sup>23</sup> Marc Chagall was born Moïse/Marc Chagall in Lioune, near Vitebsk, in modern day Belarus, in 1887. He was a Russian French-Jewish artist of international repute who was one of the most influential modernist artists of the 20th Century, both as an early modernist, and as an important part of the Jewish artistic tradition. He distinguished himself in many arenas: as a painter, book illustrator, ceramicist, stained-glass painter, stage set designer and tapestry maker. Widely admired by both his contemporaries, and by later artists, he forged his creative path in spite of the many difficulties and injustices he faced in his long lifetime. <https://mymodernmet.com/marc-chagall-paintings/>

<sup>24</sup>“From the moment Marc and Bella fell for each other in 1909, [Marc Chagall](#) and his wife, Bella, seemed to share a particular way of seeing the world. Bella was a talented writer and her description of their first encounter is like a Chagall painting in



Image 5.2 Green Violinist

6) Yosel Bergner <sup>25</sup>



Image 6.1 The Green Beach

words: “When you did catch a glimpse of his eyes, they were as blue as if they’d fallen straight out of the sky. They were strange eyes ... long, almond-shaped ... and each seemed to sail along by itself, like a little boat.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/may/27/marc-and-bella-chagall-the-flying-lovers-of-vitebsk-emma-rice>

<sup>25</sup> Yosel Bergner was born into a Jewish family in Vienna, Austria, on 13 October 1920 and grew up in Warsaw, Poland. In 1937, fleeing antisemitism the family moved to Australia (his father was involved in an ultimately unfulfilled plan by the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization to search for a potential Jewish homeland) and he studied in the National Gallery School in Melbourne. During the Second World War Bergner served in the Australian Army, afterwards continuing his studies. He lived in Melbourne from 1937–48, socializing with a wide circle of local artists, among whom were Sidney Nolan and Stacha Halpern. Bergner left Australia in 1948, traveling in Paris, Montreal and New York City. Two years later he settled in Safed, Israel, moving to Tel Aviv in 1957 with his wife, the artist Audrey Bergner. He is known as a painter of allegorical still lifes, he also designed scenery and costumes for the Yiddish and Hebrew theaters. <https://benuri.org/artists/265-yosl-bergner/biography/>



7) Ruth Tzarfati<sup>26</sup>



7.1 Between Fields and Houses



7.2 Children's House



7.3 Shavuot Holiday in the Kibbutz

---

<sup>26</sup> Ruth was born in Petah Tikva in 1928 and grew up in Kfar Ma'as. The move to the village has made her a nature lover and influenced her artistic world. She was inspired by her father who was an amateur painter yet nurtured her love for painting. Her initial work was with applied arts and she presented ceramic jewelry in the triennial in Milan next to artists such as Salvador Dali and Chillida. She made the glazed ceramics Zodiac Street signs decorating Old Jaffa. <https://www.ruthzarfati.com/>

Regional background	Artist	Cultural Categories
Eastern European Jewish (Russia / Belarus, Poland)	Marc Chagall, Maurycy Gottlieb	The Jewish town, Jewish characters and Jewish symbols, holiday, ceremonies (wedding)
Central European Jewish (Romania)	Reuven Rubin	Israel landscape, local people in Israel and pre mandate Palestine
Israeli culture	Nachum Gutman, Ruth Ztarfati	Historical development of Tel Aviv; the first Hebrew city, local people, cities in Israel, People in the first years in Tel Aviv The beach, the streets, the holiday parade. The city of Tzfati in the Galil Fields, houses, and children in Israel, children celebrating Jewish holidays.
Western Europe Jewish (Germany, Austria)	Yosel Bergner, Yohanan Simon	scenery and costumes Yiddish and Hebrew theaters, Lifestyle in the kibbutz, shabbat

**Table 2.3:** The Criteria for Cultural Topics and Artist’s Background

**2.9 Ethical Considerations**

Dornyei (2007, p. 67) stated —the primary principle of research ethics is that no mental or physical harm should come to the respondents because of their participation in the investigation. The research participants for this study were human beings. The present study started with an informed consent form from all participants that allowed sharing its results. The data interpretation and the excerpts from the interviews, writing, and oral speech has been approved by all participants. During the entire research process, I, as researcher, has been the interviewer for the entire study.

Informed Consent (see: Appendix A1)- informed consent was given, the participant read it and were given time to ask questions and clarifications. Additionally, University of Southern

California Information Sheet (see: Appendix A2) was disclosed in order to inform the participants about the research participation procedures and privacy protection.

### **2.9.1 Confidentiality**

I kept information provided by the participants confidential on my computer, not sensitive information about the participants is stored. I replaced the students' names when mentioned in transcripts and analysis by XXX. To ensure privacy, the interviews were conducted solely with me in the zoom room.

### **2.9.2 Voluntary Participation**

I informed the participants that they were not compelled to participate in this study unless they choose to. The participants were asked if they are willing to participate in this research. I express my interest learning about their story and journey of learning a new language. All raw data would be destroyed after the completion of the study.

### **2.9.3 Role of the Researcher**

In a narrative study, the role of the researcher is multifaceted and deeply engaged with the participants and their stories. The relationship between insider and outsider needs to be clear and is necessary for thinking through issues of research validity as well as research ethics. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 30) stated that —while insider and outsider positions are at the extremes of the continuum, many studies are done by true collaborations among insiders and outsiders.

The students in my study had previously attended Hebrew Language courses at the University of Southern California. The data used in my research was retrospective and obtained

from the university's learning management platform, such as Blackboard. From this data, I selected four cases that intrigued me, aiming to research and compare their learning processes and outcomes. I selected four cases that interest me due to their diverse ethnic background, and non-Hebrew speaking prior or very minimal Hebrew background to research and compare their processes and results. Each student brought a unique perspective shaped by their ethnic background, influencing how they approached and engaged with the Hebrew language curriculum. Their differing linguistic backgrounds and experiences not only added depth to the study but also allowed for a comparative analysis of how learners from diverse cultural contexts navigate language acquisition. By focusing on their processes and outcomes, rather than solely on predefined results, the research aimed to uncover the nuanced ways in which these students developed their linguistic skills and cultural understanding through their engagement with Hebrew language courses. This approach acknowledges the complexity of language learning and identity formation within an educational context, offering insights that can inform teaching practices and support strategies for diverse student populations. I didn't have to collaborate with any insiders. As an outsider, I initiated the research proposal, and it was noncontingent on institutional approval (Herr & Anderson, 2005). I was an insider in that I am a member of the university where I met these students initially. My role was not to impose but to stimulate. The essence of the study was to follow the process and the development rather than achieving specific results.

My role as a researcher in this study included the following:

- ◆ A listener - to be attentive, empathetic, and non-judgmental, record these narratives through interviews, audio recordings, video recordings.



- ◆ An Interpreter - interprets the stories, seeking to understand the meanings that participants attach to their experiences. This involves analyzing the narrative for themes, patterns, and insights that reveal deeper understandings.
- ◆ Ethical Guardian - I was adhering to ethical guidelines throughout the study, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy and dignity.

### **Chapter 3: Art and Language**

#### **Artists Selection and the Importance of Art in Language Acquisition**

*The idea of being a so-called Jewish artist is like being a professional Jew. I think art is international and should transcend any racial, ethnic, religious, or national boundaries.*

Adolph Gottlieb

The story of Genesis set forth the interaction of humanity with God. This represents the historical moment of creation. The challenge to humanity was to continue enhancing the world through creativity. Visual images have appeared in Jewish life since classical times in texts such as the scroll of Esther and mosaic floors in synagogues. Artists' expressions became an integral part of Jewish life and continue to modern times. The concept of Jewish art since the Age of Absolutism<sup>27</sup> has changed. Prior to the 17th century, Jewish ritual symbols that decorated tombstones, synagogues, mosaics, and frescoes were not recognized as “Art” (Cohen, 1993). The Jewish art consisted predominantly of objects for religious rituals. However, during the Enlightenment the shift from traditional to secular forms of art began to flourish. The appearance of Marc Chagall’s art precipitated the acknowledgment of Jewish Art at the beginning of the 20th century. Reuven Rubin, who came to Pre-Mandate Israel in the early 1900’s had the opportunity to pioneer Israeli Art by creating an art that didn’t exist in his birthplace. Other artists who came during this period sketched and painted the development of the state of Israel. The art provides historiographic images that depict people, places, and the lifestyle.

---

<sup>27</sup>The Age of Absolutism is a historiographical term describing a form of monarchical power that is unrestrained by all other institutions, such as churches, legislatures, or social elites.

Artists live in a certain time and space; thus, the work that they create has a significant connection with the time, space, and culture in which the work was created (Petrač, 2015). When observing a work of visual art, it requires a knowledge of history, religion, anthropology, etc. It is important to observe the visual aspect in the socio-historical context in which the work was created (Levačić, 2011). I strongly believe that communicating through art provides a uniquely enriching experience that goes beyond mere language acquisition. The objective is to foster an environment where learners become active observers, engaging deeply with visual representations to expand their understanding and articulate their own viewpoints. Art serves as a powerful medium for communication because it transcends linguistic barriers, allowing learners to interpret and convey meanings in ways that words alone cannot capture. By encouraging learners to interact with art, whether through visual artworks, films, or performances, educators aim to stimulate curiosity and critical thinking.

The learners are prompted to explore diverse cultural contexts, historical narratives, and societal perspectives embedded within artistic expressions. This process not only enhances their cultural awareness but also encourages empathy and appreciation for different viewpoints. Moreover, communicating through art cultivates skills in interpretation and expression. Learners learn to analyze visual cues, symbols, and themes, thereby developing their ability to communicate nuanced ideas and emotions effectively. This approach encourages creativity and individual expression, empowering learners to articulate their perspectives on complex issues.

Ultimately, the goal of integrating art into language education is to create a dynamic learning environment where learners actively participate in constructing meaning, expanding their knowledge base, and developing their ability to engage critically and creatively with the world

around them. This holistic approach not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and a broader understanding of human experiences.

### **3.1 The History of Israeli Art**

Israeli Art started encompasses the works of artists from the beginning of the twentieth century in pre mandate Israel. Israeli artists have always found themselves pulled in two conflicting directions; the need to address the diaspora, and the desire to focus on the autonomous concerns of art itself, of material, method, and definition. Moreover, Israeli art has developed in a complex context of socio-political tension, war, and persecution. In the formative years (1900-1960) these realities heavily influenced the artist's personal perspective.

In the first decades of the 20th century, many Jewish artists were unable to see or unwilling to portray that complexity; instead, they painted an idealistic, optimistic, and often naïve picture that reflected their vision of a better future. Reuven Rubin's famous painting **First Fruits** is a good example. Rubin drew the land as an Oriental paradise, a place of harmony and fertility – the perfect setting for the birth of a new kind of Jew and the shaping of a native Israeli identity.

The local context of Mandatory Palestine lacked the long history of conflicting styles and traditions like older countries had. However, the fact that a group of young artists in the 1920s declared their allegiance to painting as an international. European and modern art was to determine the way they inventoried their physical and human surroundings according to European categories of subject matter. They re-constituted or projected this classification of subjects (and styles) established throughout in the long and intimate processes of centuries, onto the raw materials of an old/new land groping for its historic, artistic, and affective identity, building for itself a sense of place.

The 1920 era was defined by an immense flowering of art in Pre mandate Israel. With the end of World War I, the connection between pre-mandated Israel and the art centers in Europe was renewed and Jewish artists from the Yishuv began visiting them. At the same time, immigration to Palestine resumed, bringing immigrant artists from various countries, as well as influences of new artistic movements. Yaacov Peremen, a Zionist activist and intellectual who was also an enthusiastic art collector, arrived in Palestine in 1919 on the SS Russian, which was a kind of Israeli Mayflower, bringing a collection of some two hundred modern works by Russian Jewish artists, together with a large library of books on linguistics and Hebrew culture. After the war, the status of the Bezalel school declined until it closed in 1929. Other artistic forces, which opposed the conservative Bezalel artists, struggled within The Hebrew Artists' Association that organized exhibitions at David's Citadel in Jerusalem. As a result, towards the end of the decade most of the "modern" artists moved to Tel Aviv where, since 1925, an important center had formed. Their exhibitions at the Ohel theater and at the Herzliya Gymnasia marked the beginnings of Modernism in Israeli art. This process reached its peak in 1932, with the establishment of the Tel Aviv Museum.

The 1920s were characterized by an endeavor to produce a local cultural statement in Palestine, however, the 1930s were characterized by two major orientations, imported from two different countries: France and Germany. The French orientation was a product of the "rush" of Jewish artists to Paris. A special influence was that of the Jewish Expressionist artists of the School of Paris, for social reasons (a common language and a similar background and mentality) and for cultural reasons (identification with a universal Jewish style). The German orientation was due to the immigration from Germany and Austria that followed the rise of Nazism. The immigrants' artists joined the German and Austrian artists who had been living in the country for several years.

They brought with them the tradition of German Expressionism, with all its varieties, as well as the ideas of the Bauhaus. Tel Aviv became the center of the “French” artists, and Jerusalem that of the “German” artists. The two artistic “capitals” became more established with the opening of the Tel Aviv Museum in 1932 and the reopening of the Bezalel School 1935. The new Bezalel, in contrast to the old one, was established explicitly as an art institute, with no connections to commercial workshops.

World War II disrupted all contacts with the art centers abroad and until 1948 (the establishment of the State of Israel) there was no new artistic activity in the country beyond the continued disputes between the conservative artists and the modern—or, as they were then called, the “progressives.” There were also disputes between the Committee of the Association of Painters and Sculptors and the directorate of the Tel Aviv Museum, to the point that in 1948 the modern artists seceded from the Association and founded the New Horizons group, a name under which they held a joint exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum. The members of this group represented a new perception of reality and a new conception of art—the development of an international and abstract artistic language. They initiated discussion of fundamental problems related to the significance of art in the modern period and its role in Israeli society. During the 1950s New Horizons continued to be the major power center and held six exhibitions (most of them at the Tel Aviv Museum) over the decade.

According to Manor (2002) In Israeli historiography, the artistic activity in Pre-mandate Israel during the twentieth century, the formative years of Israeli art, has been linked to an idealized image of the Zionist *Yishuv*<sup>28</sup>. The emergence of modern art in the 1920s was influenced and

---

<sup>28</sup> Jewish community in Pre mandate Israel

inspired by the pioneer movement *Hovevei Zion*<sup>29</sup>. For example, when describing the small Jewish population of Mandatory Palestine in the early 1920s, Gideon Ofrat remarks: “It was .... a community that had a pioneering spirit, the naivete of youth, and a flair for renewal traits that would soon permeate its newly emergent art. In the same spirit, Amnon Barzel describes the growing Tel Aviv of 1925: “About 1000 *halutzim* (pioneers) settled the sand, and the writers and artists resident there numbered 133. . . . It was a genuine center for an artistic proletariat, a growing stronghold of the Labor Federation, for avant-garde periodicals and the first working-men’s theater, inaugurated in January of 1926 with the premier exhibit of the works of modern artists”.

The art of the previous generation, which was a product mainly from the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem (founded in 1906) was claimed to be the subject of the pioneers, the builders of the country. The art that was created in the newly developing *Yishuv*, and particularly the modern art of the 1920s, was concerned with pioneers, labor, and youth, and with processes of renewal and construction; the valued spirit of *he-halutz*<sup>30</sup>. It is surprising to discover that most artists of that period paid little attention to the new kibbutzim or to the rapidly growing city of Tel Aviv. They painted ancient towns like Jaffa, Safed, and Old Jerusalem, or Arab villages and their surroundings. Similarly, in the depiction of people, they painted the old inhabitants of the country, Arabs and Jews and almost ignored the pioneers.

---

<sup>29</sup> The first *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) organizations were established in 1881--1882 with the aim of furthering Jewish settlement, particularly agricultural settlement in Eretz Israel. The groups varied not only in size but in their activity. Some were interested in philanthropic work while others were intent on immigration to Eretz-Israel. From its inception, the Hovevei Zion groups in Russia sought to erect a country wide legally recognized framework.

<sup>30</sup> The word in Hebrew for pioneer



**Fig. 1. Meir Gur-Arieh, Hora, silhouette, from the book Ha-halutzim, 1924/25**

According to Manor (1998) the lack of interest was observed at the time. Mordechai Narkiss, who was involved in the publication of a series of silhouettes on the life of the pioneers by Bezalel teacher Meir Gur-Arieh<sup>31</sup> in 1924/1925, noted in his introduction: “It is odd that such a strong movement as the pioneer movement which in recent years has flowed to this country at a rapid pace . . . this movement found no expression in Jewish art. Gur-Arieh, whose images of members of the Labor Battalion (gedud ha-avoda) at work and leisure were accompanied by popular pioneer songs, was, according to Narkiss, the first one<sup>a</sup> who brought the first sound of this mighty poetry which bursts out together with the hora of the blue cold nights<sup>32</sup>. The silhouettes, especially those that show the pioneers in the hard physical labor of stone breaking or in an enthusiastic hora dance, became the visual epitome of the pioneering ethos and were often reproduced in later years (see figure 1). But Gur-Arieh’s work had no followers either among the Bezalel artists or among the rival modernists. The latter were even criticized at the time for their neglect of the subject.

---

<sup>31</sup> Mordechai Narkiss, in Gur-Arieh, Ha-halutzim, Jerusalem: Bnei Bezalel, 5685 (1924/25), not paginated.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Narkiss had compiled the songs and arranged them so that each song is accompanied by an image.



The pioneering ethos was less popular among artists in the *Yishuv* than historians tend to admit, a different Jewish image was offered by artists at the time that of the Hassidic Jews. Reuven Rubin painted the “Dancers of Meron”, which was painted in 1926 and was one of the major works in his second solo exhibition held early in 1927 (figure 2). The prominent Hebrew poet Hayim Nahman Bialik described the painting in his introduction to Rubin’s exhibition and it was mentioned by a critic as the most important exhibit. Rubin himself considered it one of his major works. At the same exhibition, Rubin showed another large painting depicting a Jewish ritual, Succoth in Jerusalem. Both paintings described Orthodox Jews engaged in religious rituals: one shows a group of nine men embraced in a dance with the Torah scroll and the other shows two men (and two more in the background) holding the four kinds of species of plants for the festival of Sukkot.



**Reuven Rubin, Dancers of Meron, 1926, oil on canvas, 160 128cm, Rubin Museum, Tel Aviv (Courtesy Rubin Museum Foundation).**

The most challenging situation of a modern artist was to select from the abundance of tradition. However, for the young painters in Eretz Israel in the 1920s were hampered (not by the

multiplicity of styles and viewpoints that had appeared in art since the 19th century) by a paradoxical epistemological situation in which the scarcity of representations of the present, was counterbalanced by a wealth of ancient sacred images, poetic and metaphoric in form, in which history and myth intertwine. The search for models that could represent the vision and image of the present and would provide an alternative to the Biblical and Orientalist tradition precipitated the ideological and artistic struggle launched by painters such as: Tager, Rubin, Paldi, Litvinovsky during the 1920s. The implementation of modern European styles plays its part in local debate and the widely divergent opinions about art (Lévy-Eisenberg, 1998).

Lévy-Eisenberg (1998) suggests that the aesthetic issues constituted part of the broader conflicting perceptions of the nature and meaning of the renewed Hebrew settlement. Those painters who left Betzalel at the beginning of the 1920s felt that it should be represented as a concrete and directly apprehended "becoming". The means at their disposal were the European modern traditions of painting, such as Romanticism and Symbolism, which could give human or cultural relevance to myth and history; Realist and Naturalist art, which defined the moral and aesthetic obligation to be of one's time; and early 20th century.

### **3.2 The Connection Between Israeli Art and Hebrew**

For my research, I selected artists for their contribution in establishing Israeli art culture and repertoire. These five artists portrayed historiographic and cultural elements pertaining to Israeli and Jewish life as it evolved in the 20th century. I believe that art is fundamental to the nation's culture, and its future in order to create a fresh, vibrant, humanistic society. Art is a testimony of a society's vision, beliefs, customs, rituals, and values. Art provides a road map to investigate the culture and history of a nation.

Just as art serves as a vessel for cultural transmission, language is a crucial component in the formation of cultural identity and social cohesion. Language acquisition research delves into how individuals learn and internalize the languages spoken in their communities, which in turn influences their cognitive development, social interactions, and cultural affiliations.

Similarly, language serves as a medium through which cultural knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. Research in language acquisition often explores how children learn their native language(s) and the impact of bilingualism or multilingualism on cultural identity.

Visual art communicates cultural narratives and historical contexts, offering insights into the values and experiences of a society. For instance, the selected Israeli artists encapsulate the evolution of Israeli and Jewish life, highlighting significant historical events and cultural shifts. The selected artists' works reflect the historiographic and cultural elements of Israeli and Jewish life, providing a visual narrative that complements written histories and oral traditions. In this research I examine the role of narratives stories, whether told through art or language, that can be a powerful tool for preserving history and imparting cultural values.

The selected artists express the collective vision, beliefs, customs, and values of Israeli society. Art is a dialogue between the past and the present that shape the cultural landscape. Language is intertwined with similar elements. The words and expressions used within a language reflect the underlying beliefs and values of its speakers. Language acquisition research explores how language shapes thought and how cultural contexts influence language use.

### **3.3 Artists Selection for this Research**

I strongly believe that teaching Hebrew through the lens of Israeli artists from the 20th century suggests a unique and engaging way to explore language and culture. Israeli art from the

20th century reflects the cultural, social, and political landscape of Israel during that time. By studying the works of Israeli artists, learners can gain insight into the historical events, societal changes, and cultural movements that have shaped modern Israel. Studying Israeli artists provides an authentic cultural content that can enhance language learning experiences and help learners develop a deeper appreciation for the Hebrew language. Israeli art intersects with various disciplines, including history, politics, literature, and religion. Incorporating Israeli art into Hebrew language instruction provides opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, allowing learners to make connections between language and other areas of study in their future endeavor. The selected artists in this research provide a rich landscape of Israel cultural and historical themes. The artists I selected portray their personal story and feelings on the canvas and provide viewers a unique angle to interpret their personal story. The integration of Israeli artists from the 20th century into Hebrew language instruction can enrich the learning experience and offer students a multifaceted approach to language acquisition while also deepening their understanding of Israeli culture and society.

### *Reuven Rubin*

Rubin pioneered the Israeli art capital from early to mid-1900, he developed a strong connection to the land of his forefathers. He was inspired by both ancient and contemporary environments which became closer to his heart in every aspect of his paintings. He immersed himself in the landscapes and the rising new culture - the path in the Galil mountains, the Negev desert, the streets in Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Tzfat. He felt emotionally close to all the living things, flora and fauna, that symbolize the land of Canaan. He developed admiration for the fishing

community in the 'Kineret' that looked to him like "the toughest fighter from the Bar Kochva rebellion"<sup>33</sup>.

Rubin painted everything he loved, his family, his nation, the landscape of his homeland. He told his friend that "to paint means to sing". On the streets of Tel Aviv Rubin was spotted painting in an elegant outfit immersed in his Art. The atmosphere of the early days of the new emerging Hebrew City (Tel Aviv) energized Rubin; he was absorbed and grew like an olive tree which he drew with great love and passion (Lido, 1930). Rubin's talent flourished and he tied his destiny to the land of Israel "if there was an artist that permanently declared his home in Israel it was Rubin (Bikel, 1974; p.250)".

Rubin was one of the most distinguished draftsmen of the Twentieth Century. There was a timeless and majestic rhythm in his drawings. He was one of the first painters who sought to present Tel-Aviv through the eyes of magical realism. The painting of Tel-Aviv which Rubin painted in early 1930 has remained one of the city's most authentic 'portraits'. Rubin was a pupil of Professor Boris Schatz<sup>34</sup> at the Bezalel School<sup>35</sup> of art when he was young man, but he was also

---

<sup>33</sup> The Bar Kokhba revolt marked a time of high hopes followed by violent despair. The Jews were handed expectations of a homeland and a Holy Temple, but in the end were persecuted and sold into slavery. During the revolt itself, the Jews gained enormous amounts of land, only to be pushed back and crushed in the final battle of Bethar. When Hadrian first became the Roman emperor in 118ce was sympathetic to the Jews. He allowed them to return to Jerusalem and granted permission for the rebuilding of their Holy Temple. The Jews' expectations rose as they made organizational and financial preparations to rebuild the temple. Hadrian quickly went back on his word, however, and requested that the site of the Temple be moved from its original location. He also began deporting Jews to North Africa. The Jews were ready to rebel, but **Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah** calmed them. The Jews prepared secretly in case a rebellion would later become necessary. They built hideouts in caves and did shoddy work building weapons so that the Romans would reject the weapons and return them to the Jews.  
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-bar-kokhba-revolt-132-135-ce>

<sup>34</sup> Boris Schatz broke from his religious upbringing and education to pursue his interest in art. In 1889 he went to Paris and was trained as a sculptor and painter in a traditional, academic style. While in Paris he began to achieve recognition for his own work, and at the invitation of Prince Ferdinand, Schatz moved to Bulgaria in 1895 as a court sculptor, and there founded the Royal Academy of the Art in Sofia. In 1903 he met Hertzl and became a Zionist. Schatz died in Denver, Colorado in 1932, on a fund-raising trip for the school.  
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/boris-schatz>

<sup>35</sup> At the Zionist Congress in 1905, Schatz proposed the idea of an art school in the Yishuv, and in 1906 he moved to Eretz Yisrael and founded the **Bezalel School of Art** in **Jerusalem**. Bezalel, which was a school for crafts as well as for graphic art.

one of the first to rebel against his beloved teacher and his teaching techniques. Rubin's art is realistic yet charged with a large measure of romanticism.

In 1926 the Mandatory Palestine government bought his large canvas "My family" and it was displayed in the Tel Aviv Museum. "There in Jerusalem, in Tel Aviv, in Haifa, and in Tiberias, I feel as if I were reborn" Rubin wrote in 1926 in 'Menorah', a periodical that appeared at the time, "Here, life and nature are mine; dispelled are the gray clouds of Europe, and my sufferings too are at an end, the war is ended. All is bathed in the sun's splendor, in the clear light, in the happiness of creative work. Just as the desert comes to life and flourishes under the hand of the pioneer, so do I feel myself the re-awakening of my latent powers (Safrai)<sup>36</sup>".



**Reuven Rubin, The Road to Ein Kerem, Jerusalem 1925, 73.5 x 91.5 cm. (28.9 x 36 in.) oil on canvas.**

### *Nachum Gutman*

Nachum Gutman was another student at the Bezalel Academic Art Institute<sup>37</sup> founded by Boris Shatz. Through his paintings Gutman told the mythological story of Tel Aviv in his ever-

---

Schatz added a small museum to the school, which was the foundation for the Bezalel Museum and later the Israel Museum. The exhibition of Bezalel works in Europe and the United States arranged by Schatz were the first occasion that works from Eretz Yisrael were exhibited abroad. During World War I, the school was closed by the Turks, and despite its reopening after the war, suffered major financial difficulties.

<sup>36</sup> <https://safrai.com/product-category/rubin-reuven/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.bezalel.ac.il/>

changing styles. [Tel Aviv](#) was founded by Zionists entrepreneurs and evolved into a bourgeois European city in the 1930's. Gutman painted the city that rose from the golden sand dunes just north of Jaffa.

Schnell (1998) claims that Gutman's changing painting styles sent a clear message that the paintings intended to deliver to the viewers, and more so the spirit of the different time and social reality. Gutman was an agent in designing the mythological city in the public awareness, which didn't coincide with the historical narrative of Tel Aviv that was founded as a neighborhood in the outskirts of Jaffa - the Arab city.

In Western art history, "Orientalism" commonly describes a prevalent trend in nineteenth-century painting that depicted sites and scenes from the Near East and North Africa in a realistic, academic style. These representations were often based on imagination or biblical narratives. Recent reassessments of nineteenth-century art have led to many exhibitions and publications focused on Orientalist works. However, these studies have sometimes failed to critically examine how such art relates to the West's economic and political influence over these regions, as well as the cultural attitudes toward the "Orient" (Manor, 2005). The aspect of Orientalism in Israeli art and particularly the image of the Arab as an exotic 'Other' has been relatively widely discussed. The orientalist model is essential for the analysis of modern discourse by and about Jews. Employing the concept of orientalism is linked to Judaism and postcolonial studies which enriches both fields and generates new perspectives, challenging the dichotomies upon which modern consciousness has been based. It adds a new dimension to critical Jewish approach toward modern European perceptions of culture and history (Raz-Krakoitzkin, 2005).

According to the received notion of orientalism, the image portrayed as ‘exotic’ emerged in response to the artists’ encounter with the Levant<sup>38</sup>. For the Jewish artists who came from Europe, the Palestinian Arab in his rootedness and powerful physique became a role model for the New Jew that they aspired to create. This interpretation is well supported by the numerous images of Arabs produced by artists in Mandatory Palestine during the 1920s. According to curator and critic Yigal Zalmona (2014), the artists of the 1920s found in the Orient “a powerful source of national and existential renewal”, and the image of the Arab in their painting “is the antithesis of that of the displaced Jew of the diaspora...a model of belonging, a human representative of the natural and sustaining tie to the land”. The ultimate example, according to Zalmona, is the monumental figure of the Goatherd, painted by Nahum Gutman in 1926 (figure 4).

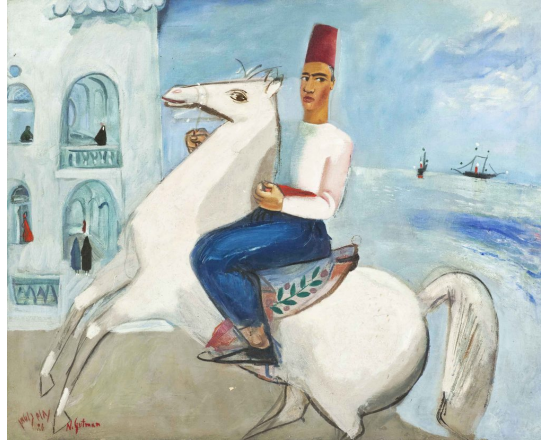


**Nahum Gutman, The Goatherd, 1926, oil on canvas, 72.5 54cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.**

---

<sup>38</sup> "Levant" is a historical term that refers to a region in the Eastern Mediterranean, encompassing countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and sometimes parts of Turkey and Cyprus. The term has historical, cultural, and geopolitical significance, often used to describe the area's shared cultural, linguistic, and historical ties.





**Nahum Gutman, The White Horseman, 1921, 55.5 x 38 cm / 21.8" x 15", Gutman Museum, Tel Aviv.**

Gutman's view as a young and optimistic boy, was filled with Zionist pioneering romanticism, yet with his nostalgic memories from Jaffa where he grew up. Both these elements influence Gutman's perspectives in his drawings. His paintings can serve as a mental map of Tel Aviv and its surroundings and invite the viewers to interpret the symbolic and iconographic meanings of the paintings (Schnell 1998).

From reading his book *The Orange Peels Path* and my passion for Gutman's artwork, in which I was exposed to from my early teens, I attest that, as a child, Gutman followed the establishment of the city, documenting his memories from its early days in works of art. Concurrently, he depicted Arab Jaffa, its inhabitants, and surrounding orchards. His artworks provide a window into the lives of these two populations living on either side of the Jaffa-Tel Aviv Road.

The geographical reality that Gutman's landscape works represent can be understood in the cultural context of the period. Guttman's paintings are not examined with the tools accepted in art criticism, but in the context of a territorial narrative, according to which Guttman defines cultural spaces as determinants of social identities. The sanctification of the territory and its redemption

from the wilderness are central elements in the Zionist ideology by identifying with the territory. Gutman shaped the territory by the cultural identity of the local people and by that he reconstructed the cultural identity with territorial identity. The reconstruction of identity legitimized the settling of the forefathers' land. Gutman's paintings became a testimonial document which designed the collective memory about the beginning of Tel Aviv - the first Hebrew City (Schnell, 2001).

In Gutman's eyes Tel Aviv was a big celebration. The distance from and longing for his birthplace made Tel Aviv an ideal world in his eyes. Tel Aviv is portrayed as a settlement of people who love each other very much and do only good. A city without sorrow and death, the city of the fulfillment of the Zionist dream. Gutman's changing styles throughout the decades (from 1910) onward was also due to the changes of the language (Hebrew language), and the changes of geographic locations. Gutman's spontaneous style in the early paintings alluded to the simplicity of the pioneers' life; their first experience with the homeland, and their pioneering enterprise.

Gutman described 'little' Tel Aviv during its construction boom. He painted construction sites, pioneer workers leveling dunes, pouring foundations, and conquering the wilderness as they built a city that was planted on the sandy soil. Gutman depicted the pioneer as a young and robust worker, a creature like the natives who are ready with determination and heroism to build with their own hands the new city. The *Sabra*<sup>39</sup>, born of the Land of Israel who evolved as a natural inhabitant as opposed to the figure of the Tel Aviv pioneer who built a city in its European image. The houses of the White City<sup>40</sup>, the Ficus trees that replaced the palm and olive trees and the wide boulevards became the new landscapes of the city.

---

<sup>39</sup> A sabra or Szabar (Hebrew: סַבְרָא, plural: tzabarim) is a modern Hebrew term that defines any Jew born in Israel. The term came into widespread use in the 1930s to refer to a Jew who had been born in Israel, including the British Mandate of Palestine and Ottoman.

<sup>40</sup> White City - Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 and developed as a metropolitan city under the British Mandate in Palestine. The White City was constructed from the early 1930s until the 1950s, based on the urban plan by Sir Patrick Geddes, reflecting

It is remarkable to observe the description retains the simplistic, Zionist dichotomies Eretz Yisrael and the diaspora, Jews and non-Jews, spirituality, and corporeality which the writer then reads into the painting. Manor (1998) claims that an ideological interpretation presents itself as an interpretation of ideology. Furthermore, it takes for granted that artists at the time subscribed to this version of Zionist ideology and that their work was a straightforward depiction of it. Most importantly, it ignores the various Jewish images, some in fact influenced by Chagall, that were made at that time by artists in Pre mandate Israel.

Nahum Gutman (1898 1980) is well recognized for his paintings of physical and sensual Arab men and women integrated into the country's landscape. He also painted the Jewish Orthodox community, and they too seem to blend naturally into their environment of ancient cities (The Synagogue *'Avraham Avinu'* in Hebron; The Western Wall). While Gutman's focus was the architectural setting, as is also seen in his picture Sabbath in Tiberias (1927), there is no mistake about the identity of the figures and their religious way of life (see figure). Moreover, the painting suggests a harmonious and relaxed relationship existing between the Orthodox Jews and their Arab neighbor (seen standing on a balcony at the top left corner of the painting) in this ancient city. Views of ancient, oriental, or exotic sites in Palestine were common in the art of the period. Old Jerusalem and Jaffa were particularly favored by Gutman, and other parts of the country were chosen for similar interests: the holiness or historical significance of the place mainly for Jews, or its appeal as an "oriental" landscape. The Galilean towns of Safed and Tiberias were frequently painted.

---

modern organic planning principles. The buildings were designed by architects who were trained in Europe where they practiced their profession before immigrating. They created an outstanding architectural ensemble of the Modern Movement in a new cultural context.



**Nahum Gutman, The urban landscape, Watercolor on paper 50X34 cm, Museum of Nachum Gutman, Tel Aviv**

The geographical reality which is the object of Gutman's paintings become the central factor dictating his artistic style. This style opened a window for geographical narrative interpretation through which the viewers interpret the subjects Gutman chose to paint.

Zaritsky (1891- 1985) who settled in Jerusalem in 1923 became a leading figure in the artistic community of the *Yishuv*. In 1924, Zaritsky went to Safed<sup>41</sup> at the recommendation of another artist, Menahem Shemi. Upon arriving there Zaritsky was immediately spellbound and remained for four months during which he produced many watercolor paintings. Forty years later Zaritsky recalled an interesting anecdote: he showed his paintings to acquaintances he met in Safed coincidentally and they were astonished to see that without any knowledge of Hebrew or Jewish

---

<sup>41</sup> The city was first mentioned at the time of the Jewish revolt against Rome (66–70 CE), thereafter it is frequently referred to in rabbinic literature. The city is strategically situated in northern scenic hill country, in the Galilee area which Safed passed from hand to hand during the Crusades until captured by [Baybars I](#), who razed its citadel (1266). Safed achieved renown in the 16th century as the principal center of the [Kabbala](#), the occult theosophy and interpretation of the Scriptures forming the principal mystical system of Judaism. Important Kabbalists such as [Isaac ben Solomon Luria](#) and [Joseph Karo](#) lived in the city, and the doctrines expounded there spread throughout the Jewish world.

history he had nonetheless perceived that the Kabbalah was born there. “Kabbalah<sup>42</sup>”, says Zaritsky, “I did not know what it meant”, and he explains: “I perceived the Kabbalah because I am a Jew, son of Jew. The Catholic Matisse would not have perceived it.” It is implied, there was something in the psyche of the Jew, no matter how remote from anything Jewish, that enabled him to grasp the unique “spirit” of a place that has a significant value in Jewish history.

For Jewish artists in Mandatory Palestine Safed was more than only a summer spot as was, for example, the Mediterranean village, Collioure, for Henri Matisse. In reality, Safed attracted artists and others during the summer due to its cool dry air. During the 1920s, and particularly the 1930s, Safed gradually became a summer resort particularly for Jewish tourists. The unique style in which the Jewish houses were constructed, and the fresh dry air were attractive for tourists. Safed, “with its stores of Hasidic traditions . . . a place rich in historic associations” was part of the typical itinerary of the Zionist tours that were organized in the 1920s alongside visits to new workers’ settlements, Jewish colonies, and towns. It was customary among artists in Europe to travel to remote picturesque villages to paint during the summer, thus artists on the *Yishuv* followed this tradition in the city of Safed. Yet, Safed also had a unique Jewish history, a Jewish population that contributed to its popularity among artists. Safed was a mixed town of Arabs and Jews, since the eighteenth century it had been the destination of immigration by East-European Hassidic Jews.

Prior to the First World War Jews constituted half of the town’s population. But, in the 1920s, the Jewish community declined to about a third and continued to decline in the following

---

<sup>42</sup> Kabbalah applied to the entire range of Jewish mystical activity. While codes of Jewish law focus on what it is God wants from man, kabbalah tries to penetrate deeper, to God's essence itself. There are elements of kabbalah in the Bible, for example, in the opening chapter of Ezekiel, where the prophet describes his experience of the divine: "... the heavens opened, and I saw visions of God.... I looked and lo, a stormy wind came sweeping out of the north-a huge cloud and flashing fire, surrounded by a radiance; and in the center of the fire, a gleam as of amber" (1:1,4). The prophet then describes a divine chariot and the throne of God. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/kabbalah-an-overview>

decades. For Jewish artists in Pre-mandate Israel, however, Safed was primarily a Jewish town, and it was often the Jewish part of the town or the Orthodox Jewish residents that were depicted. The Jews of Safed were also associated with the pilgrimage site in the nearby mount Meron and with the celebration (in Hebrew called *hilula*)<sup>43</sup> that takes place on the festival of Lag ba-omer<sup>44</sup>. Images of dancing Hasidic Jews are therefore often related to Safed. Rubin's painting *Hasidic Ecstasy* of 1924 is also known by the title of *Agadati Dancing*, alluding to the dancer-choreographer, painter and, later, film maker Baruch Agadati (1895-1976) whose solo dance performances were based, inter alia, on the movements and expressions of Hassidic Jews.



**Reuven Rubin, *Hasidic Ecstasy (Agadati Dancing)*, 1924, oil on canvas, 78.5 ´ 73 cm, Esther Rubin collection, Tel Aviv (Courtesy Rubin Museum Foundation).**

---

<sup>43</sup> See Avraham Ya'ari, 'Toldot ha-hilula be-Meron', *Tarbiz* 31 (1962) pp. 72-101.

<sup>44</sup> According to a medieval tradition, the plague ceased on Lag Ba'omer, the 33rd day of the Omer. Omer in Hebrew is a reference to wheat. (The Hebrew letters *lamed* and *gimel* which make up the acronym "Lag" have the combined numerical value of 33.) As a result, Lag Ba'omer became a happy day, interrupting the sad-ness of the Omer period for 24 hours. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/lag-baomer/#:~:text=Lag%20Ba'omer%20is%20a,period%20between%20Passover%20and%20Shavuot.>

Rubin's painting *Agadati Dancing*<sup>45</sup>, in which the dancer is seen from the back hovering over the landscape in a Chagallian manner, cannot be regarded strictly as a portrait. In fact, it closely resembles an earlier image on the same theme: a woodcut entitled *The Dancers of Meron* (the Hebrew title reads *Lag ba-omer be- Meron*), which was part of the series *The God Seekers* that Rubin published in late 1923. The dancer's features in both images, his costume, gestures and in particular his head, which is depicted upside down, suggest that they derive from the artist's perception and imagination, rather than from the actual dance.

Rubin's images of Orthodox Jews of Safed and Jerusalem were revealed in early paintings he made during his first year in Pre mandate Israel. Many of his works concerned a tormented spiritual quest, often through Christian images, several of them images of Jesus, who, as in the work of other Jewish writers and artists at the time, became a symbol of human suffering. Following his settlement in the new land Rubin had gradually disregarded his previous themes in exchange for the figure of Jesus with Hassidic Jews, and images of sorrow were replaced by illustrating joy and piety. The series of prints of *The God Seekers* reflected the transition which included both Christian and Jewish themes, as well as less obvious expressions of spiritual aspiration. The dance, with the head and hands raised upward, on the background of Safed, implies that the dance is perceived as a mystical and ecstatic nature, and is part of a spiritually devout experience. "Coupling Judaism with exaltation rather than with agony demonstrates another significant change from Rubin's pre-Palestine works. In his previous pictures Jews are often old, hunched, and tired. Their misery is conveyed through a frequently used motif of a weary, destitute man seated on the ground with head bent or held in his hands. In Jewish art at the turn of the

---

<sup>45</sup> Agadati had known Yemenite Jews since his time as a student of Bezalel in 1910-1914, but his early works showed a taste for a different Orientalism. One of his earliest documented performances in December 1920 included the oriental dance <sup>a</sup>Ali Baba (of the Thousand and One Night) [sic], an Italian dance, and Caucasian dance. See program in Giora Manor (ed.), *Agadati, The Pioneer of Modern Dance in Israel*, Tel Aviv: *Sifriat Poalim* and Dance Library of Israel, 1986, p. 10 (Hebrew part)



twentieth century this theme had usually related to images of Jews suffering in pogroms and exile (Manor, 1998, p.81)”. This portrayal of diaspora Jews was used to promote Zionist as healthy and strong pioneers. Rubín used exactly this idea in the image he designed for the Palestine Foundation Fund poster<sup>46</sup> (Keren ha-yesod) in 1921. The poster called for the Jews to support the settlement in Zion in all forms (Manor, 1998).



**Reuven Rubin, poster of Keren ha-yesod, 1921, 84 ´ 59.3 cm (Courtesy Rubin Museum Foundation).**

Hyed (1993) suggested that Dancers of Meron and others of Rubin’s paintings of that time were influenced by Romanian neo-Byzantine art that Rubin might have absorbed in his youth in Romania. Indeed, certain compositional and stylistic elements support this interpretation. Yet the choice of subject matter and the meaning of the painting to both the artist and his public must be viewed in the context of its making in Palestine of the 1920s. As already mentioned, this was not

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL\\_ARCHIVE\\_AL997009637000505171/NLI#\\$FL170036305](https://www.nli.org.il/he/archives/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009637000505171/NLI#$FL170036305)



an unprecedented appearance of Hassidic Jews in Rubin's art or in that of his fellow artists. Moreover, representations of Orthodox Jews and *Hasidic* culture were not as exceptional in the cultural life of the New *Yishuv* as one would imagine from the accepted Zionist historiography. The common tendency in discussing the cultural life of the pre-State period has been to emphasize the efforts towards the creation of a new "Hebrew culture", the pioneering ethos and the struggles between different groups over the issue of modernism in artistic expression. Without a proper survey of the cultural life of the *Yishuv*, it would be difficult to assess the extent and weight of Jewish religious traditions in the creation of this "new" culture. However, the examples presented in this section suggest that the appearance of these traditions were not a marginal phenomenon.

Bialik<sup>47</sup>, is considered a pioneer of modern Hebrew poetry, part of the vanguard of Jewish thinkers who gave voice to a new spirit of his time, interpreted Rubin's paintings in his introduction to Rubin's exhibition of 1927, Bialik not only compared Rubin to Chagall and Agnon but also connected his paintings with the long literary tradition of legends and midrashim about Eretz Yisrael. "It is in this tradition that he sees the key to future creative art: It is clear to me that Hebrew art, like the Hebrew epic, if it has any hope, must be rooted in the legend of our past. It will sprout from this past and will delve deep into it in search of influence. . . . The ways of Hebrew legend of the past are the ways of Hebrew art of the future. There is no other way".

In conclusion, paintings of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews in the Jewish settlement in Pre-mandate Israel of the 1920s were expressed within the *Yishuv* through Jewish mysticism and messianism and in Jewish folk culture. The search for a new national culture was not perceived by members of the *Yishuv* as utterly divorced from the Jewish past and its different spiritual traditions as sometimes suggested by Zionist historiography. Rubin's Hasidic Dancers of Meron represented

---

<sup>47</sup> Bialik, <sup>a</sup> Ha-tzayar Reuven, p. 13.

the notion of cultural continuity through time and space. In his picture the young and old unite in their faith and belief, there is no rupture between the generations. The embrace of Sephardi - Mizrahi (Oriental) and Ashkenazi Jews evoked the idea of the Ingathering of the Exiles, a concept that had been adopted by the Zionist ideology. The ancient holy town of Safed in the background and the allusion to a centuries-old tradition of a local festival further emphasizes this view.

### *Marc Chagall*

I chose to include the work of Marc Chagall, one of the most significant Jewish artists of the 20th century. Chagall (1887–1985) used painting, writing, designing, graphics, and sculpture, illustrating in original and imaginative ways<sup>48</sup>. He created a unique style that presents emotions and motifs from his Jewish life in realistic and distinctive ways. His works tell a fairy tale, as if his canvas were a place where amazing wonders happen. Characters are either depicted completely realistically or fantastical. His paintings are dominated by floating images, green faces of people, animals playing violins, upside down houses without spatial determinants (DUBRAVKA KUŠČEVIĆ, BRAJČIĆ, ŠIPIĆ, 2019).

Vitebsk, Chagall's hometown, occupies a central position in Chagall's art that the names have become virtually synonymous. Yet contrary to the image conjured up by the paintings, it was neither a shtetl nor a ghetto, but a bustling town of well over 50,000 inhabitants, picturesquely located at the confluence of the Dvina and Lucheso rivers, where Jews and Christians co-existed and commerce flourished (Bohm-Duchen, 1997).

Socialism and Zionism, two causes espoused by many of Chagall's contemporaries, seem hardly to have impinged on the young man's consciousness. Virtually the only reference in Chagall's poetic but unreliable autobiography *My Life* to social injustice comes in a passage in

---

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.marcchagall.net/>

which he describes his father hard at work while 'his fat employer stood around like a stuffed animal'. In another passage that expresses his surprise that Gentiles as well as Jews often suffered hardship in Czarist Russia reveals his political naiveté. As for Palestine, there was no mention in *My Life*.

Chagall rejected organized religion, Hasidic Judaism, the religion of his parents. His artwork fails to reflect Russian anti-Semitism, or the harsh realities of poverty and hardship endured by many Jewish families, including his own. Similarly, the art overlooks the gradual shifts undermining traditional Judaism in Vitebsk, predating the Soviet era's additional pressures and the ultimate devastation wrought by the Nazis. Chagall's artistic mind flourished with the canvas and paint brush, whereas in the Torah study he could not express himself creatively.

Vitebsk had served as a stronghold for Hasidic Judaism since the early 18th century. Originating in the southeastern region of Poland-Lithuania around the 1730s under the guidance of the Ba'al Shem Tov<sup>49</sup> the movement, which enjoyed widespread popularity, stood in opposition to the rationalism, intellectual rigidity, and exclusivity of Orthodox *Talmudic* Judaism. Drawing inspiration from the Kabbalah, Hasidism emphasized ecstatic, intuitive connection with God, believing that divine 'sparks' permeated all things and beings, regardless of their stature or moral standing. Central to the Hasidic understanding of religious life is the notion of love for all people and creation, viewing them as conduits to experiencing God. In Hasidic belief, possessing a loving heart outweighs scholarly knowledge; a poignant parable recounts the tale of a young boy

---

<sup>49</sup> Baal Shem Tov is an 18th century Ukrainian rabbi founder of the Hasidic movement. Born Israel ben Eliezer around the year 1700 in western Ukraine, his name literally means "Master of the Good Name" and is often abbreviated as Besht. Much of what is known about the Baal Shem Tov's life is related in stories passed down by his followers, the historical veracity of which is not firmly established. The Baal Shem Tov was reputed to possess deep insight into human nature, have visions in which prophets appeared to him with messages, and be able to ascend to heaven to commune with the spiritual realm. He also gained a reputation as a skilled healer, which earned him the title *baal shem*, "master of the (divine) name," a term then used to refer to anyone endowed with curative powers.

discovered reciting the Hebrew alphabet in the synagogue. Unable to read the prayer book, he explains that by sending the letters to heaven, he trusts that God will assemble them into a prayer on his behalf. Chagall's emphasis on 'that clamorous love that I have, in general, for mankind', his anti-intellectualism and distrust of conventional logic, even his intense empathy for animals are all - in part at least - a legacy of his cultural and religious heritage'. By the end of the nineteenth century, Hasidism had considerably waned in its initial vigor, and in numerous regions, it had regressed into practices characterized by superstition and deceit. Nevertheless, within Chagall's artistic realm, Hasidism persisted vibrantly and thrived (Bohm-Duchen, 1997). Chagall poured his love in every drop on his canvas.

Jewish Art shows the contribution of 'Jewish' artists to modernity. Chagall (1887–1985) revealed how 'Jewish identity' became a defining force for his art. The Modern Age is the Jewish Age, and the twentieth century, in particular, is the Jewish Century. Modernization is about everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible. [. . .] Modernization, in other words, is about everyone becoming Jewish. Chagall's work<sup>50</sup> is seen through the presence of religious experience in a creative expression (Styen, 2011).



**I and the Village 1911, Museum of Modern Art New York.  
6' 3 5/8" x 59 5/8" (192.1 x 151.4 cm)**

---

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78984>

The floating letters that populate Chagall's artistic imagination have a meaning that tells a story. The menacing rocky letters that hover in Shmuel Bak's sky (1967) spell his name—S. Bak, in contrast to Magritte's painting *The Art of Conversation* (1950), where an ancient temple composed of a pile of colossal stones conceals a certain word, which on closer examination turns out to be *rêve*—dream. The torn parchments and letters in Ardon's night scenes attest to the catastrophe that befell logos and ethos, but they also spell their metaphysical destruction since the remnants are filled with quotes from the book of Psalms. Thus, the quasi-surrealist Jewish and Israeli artists are, in fact, symbolists and not surrealists. The artists are consciously aware of the signified images of the narrative to transmit the message.

### *Yosel Bergner*

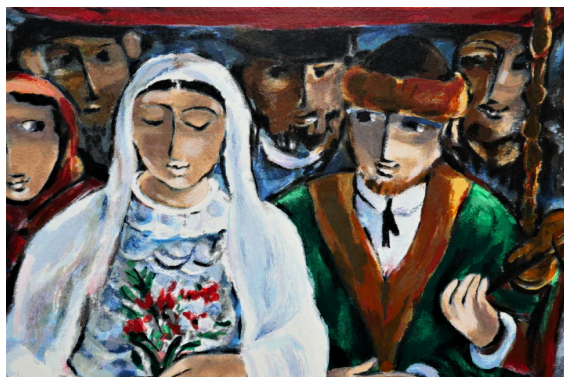
Bergner was born in Vienna in 1920 and was raised in Warsaw. The rise of rampant antisemitism in Europe pushed the establishment a Jewish homeland. The Bergner family moved to Australia, and Yosel struggled to survive as a young teenager. He found comfort in writing novels through the defying reality of being uprooted from home and forced to build a home elsewhere. He worked in many jobs to survive and studied painting in Melbourne's National Art School. He was committed to humanitarian values. He painted images which were drawn from his experiences: of hunger; views of a sad urban environment; refugees and slum dwellers. Bergner displayed empathy in his art that drew immediate attention<sup>51</sup>. In the 1940s he was a homeless painter. Bergner became involved with the Australian Jewish community *Kadimah* and the Yiddishists. He became very friendly with writers Pinchas Gold-har, Judah Waten and Yosel Birstein. Fortunately, they provided food! During WW2, Bergner enlisted in the Australian Army

---

<sup>51</sup> Yosel collection of painting in National Victoria Gallery <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/1678/>

Labor Company serving from 1941 to 1946. After his experience in the army his palette became bleak with muted browns adding to the atmosphere of gloom. The anonymous figures, their bodies slumped dejectedly, had survived another day of endless loading, and unloading of goods from the trains for the war effort. Bergner received a Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scholarship, to return to studies at the National Gallery Art School. Bergner kept his sense of humor, but his work was often dark and despairing. There were hints of optimism in his recurring motif of the ladder, symbol of hope. Yet it was Bergner who showed that art was not merely a reflection of Australian society; instead, it could be an instrument in shaping the society.

He left Australia in 1948, first traveling to Paris and then to Israel in 1951. He became an Israeli citizen without shedding his Jewish cosmopolitan/refugee identity, an identity he zealously guarded in Israel's melting pot of the 50s and 60s. In the new Jewish homeland, many of newcomers upon arrival shed their previous life as persecuted Jews, however Bergner carried his childhood persona closely and expressed it through his painting. Even after the state was established, Bergner's Israeli works were filled by the trauma of the refugee. (An interview with Bergner in the Jerusalem post<sup>52</sup>).



'The Wedding' Yosel Bergner 1990, oil on canvas 63 x 84 cm (25 x 33 in).

---

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/culture/a-master-artist-reflects-on-his-life-407322>  
<https://safrai.com/product-category/yosl-bergner/>

## *Ruth Tzarfati*

Ruth Tzarfati Sterenshuss was a notable female artist in Israel, a sculptor, a painter, an Illustrator, and a designer working in a variety of media. She started to paint when she was still in high school, and though she was quickly acknowledged as a gifted painter, she turned to sculpture with the guidance of Moshe Sterenshuss (1903-1992). Though her pieces were strongly influenced by modern art, and especially modernist sculpture, she formulated her own artistic language and gained a reputation as an independent and original artist among the most influential art's figures in Israel. In 1949, Tzarfati joined the *Ofakim Hadashim* (New horizons) Movement<sup>53</sup>, and was the only female artist and the youngest amongst older men. Her style being different from that of the others, she felt like an outsider, as she did not share the group's worldview. *Ofakim Hadashim* was oriented towards modern and abstract art, however she remained faithful to figurative sculpture. Many of her works<sup>54</sup> were inspired by her personal biography, like in the Infant sculpture series<sup>55</sup> (detail: *Baby sculpture*, 1970), which was created following the birth of her daughter, who quickly became an ongoing inspiration source.

---

<sup>53</sup> The New Horizons art movement began with a group of artists who mounted an exhibition in Tel Aviv's Habima national theater in December 1942, under the name "The Group of Eight". The group evolved into a coherent artistic movement only after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Members of the school included Arie Aroch, Zvi Meirowitch, Avraham Naton (Natanson), Avigdor Stematsky and Yehezkel Streichman.

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.nli.org.il/en/a-topic/987007303442005171>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.ruthzarfati.com/>



Ruth Tzarfati Sterenshuss, *Uncle Simha*, 1962, illustration, pen and paper cuts

### *Yohanan Simon*

Yohanan Simon was born in Germany in 1905. In 1926, after studying art at the University of Berlin, he moved to Frankfurt, where he studied with Max Beckmann and Peter Rasmussen and was greatly influenced by German expressionism (Ofrat, 1980). In 1928 he won a scholarship from the Jewish community in Berlin to study painting in France. He first headed to Toulon, where he studied with André Derain, one of the founders of Fauvism, who was another major influence on his early work. Later he attended the famous École des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1934, Simon moved to New York where he worked for the magazine *Vogue*. He returned to Paris in 1935 and left it in 1936, due to the rise of fascism (Ofrat, 1980). He immigrated to Mandatory Palestine where he joined Gan Shmuel, a kibbutz<sup>56</sup> located south of Haifa. Following the move from Europe to Gan Shmuel – one of the cornerstones of Zionist-socialist ideology at that time. Simon abandoned the modernist style that had characterized his early work and adopted social realism. In pre-state Israel, social realism was predominant in its East European, and especially Russian form. Russian culture continued to be the main influence on the Israeli cultural scene at least until the 1950s (Even-

---

<sup>56</sup> A communal settlement typical of Israel, where people hold property in common and have their needs satisfied by the commune (Reich and Goldberg Citation 2016, 305).



Zohar, 1950). Simon, on the other hand, was more oriented towards the Latin American branch of social realism. He was particularly inspired by the Mexican painter Diego Rivera and his murals with their distinctive bright colors (Ofrat,1980).

The attraction to this style was probably triggered by his travel to New York, and the opportunity to view Rivera's huge mural in Rockefeller Centre (Tamir, 2001). Simon immigrated to Israel from Germany following his formative years as an artist in Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris and New York. Between almost two decades on the kibbutz and his last phase of immigration to the city (Tel Aviv) – in both a literal and emotional sense – he spent two years traveling in South America. His life is thus characterized by transitions and transformations, acts of immigration and tourism, which became embedded in his work.

In the years 1948–1956, Simon was a member of *Ofakim Khadashim*<sup>57</sup>, a group of artists that favored abstract art and insisted on the autonomy of art. Despite the apparent contradiction, he went on creating social realist posters and murals. In 1953, he left Gan Shmuel and started a new life with the noted designer Fini Leitersdorf. Throughout his career, he also designed theater sets and illustrated children's books (Tamir, 2001).

Simon's landmarks are reflected in changes of artistic style and genres, changes that mirrored his ideological transformations. He evolved throughout his life – as both an immigrant who had to adjust to a new society and a new language, and an artist who struggled to keep his creative freedom and individual voice in a society that sanctified the collective and lived by the codes of a strict ideology. His works offer a multifold perspective that integrates Simon's attitudes

---

<sup>57</sup> Literally meaning = new horizons

towards the dictates of each era in his life, the artistic genres he embraced, and the inner clashes, or conflicts he experienced (Simon Ben-Sedef, 2017).

Simon's trajectory was influenced by immigration, that brought more families to the homeland. Thus, he was keeping with the description of cultural translation as a change in the 'state of things': 'Etymologically, translation evokes an act of moving or carrying across from one place or **position** to another, or of changing from one **state of things** to another' (Buden and Nowotny, 2009). Like Bhabha's idea of the 'third space' as the site of cultural translation (Bhabha, 1994), the 'immigration' we refer to involves the bringing together of incompatible values and the emergence of a new hybrid form – even in an ostensibly simple genre such as a propaganda poster.

In 1956, the last year of his participation in the *Ofakim Khadashim* group (Tamir, 2001, 119–129), Simon produced *Youths in the Negev* (Figure 1:1, 1956). While still portraying the theme of young Israelis who connect with their land by walking its paths and conquering its landscapes, he appears to be more interested in the colors and material essence of the land than the ideological content. The landscape becomes more abstract in the upper part of the painting, and the tension between the theme and the ideology embedded in it, and Simon's struggle for artistic expression is evident.



**Yohanan Simon, Shabbat in the Kibbutz 1947, 65×55 cm oil on canvas**

Simon, who translated and retranslated himself, metaphorically, both as an individual and an artist, throughout his life notwithstanding his uniqueness. His life story was not exceptional: other Israeli artists shared similar experiences, including immigration to Israel, the move from the kibbutz – the emblem of socialism – to the city, and the expression of all these experiences in their art. For Simon and others, this series of translations also meant a change of language, often more than once. A native speaker of German, Simon switched to Hebrew when he immigrated to Palestine, but German remained the language he used in his communications with old friends, and Hebrew was possibly a second if not a third language besides French that was the language during his formative years in France. Self-translation and retranslation manifested themselves in switching from one language to another. Weissbrod & Kohn (2020) claim that his multi-lingual ability of thinking in one language and expressing himself in another language influenced his painting.

## *Maurycy Gottlieb*

Maurycy Gottlieb was born in Lemberg (Lviv in modern Ukraine) and strove during his productive but brief artistic career to establish his Jewish identity. But Gottlieb also strove to mesh his Polish identity in his art, studying under Poland's leading history painter, Jan Matejko, at the Cracow Academy and later worked in Vienna. Gottlieb worked principally in Galicia<sup>58</sup> where he was later buried there due to his tragic death at the age of 36.

Despite his premature death, Maurycy Gottlieb successfully planted his Jewish roots onto the dominant academic art forms of Central Europe and provided pioneering inspiration for his artistic co-religionists, led by Samuel Hirszenberg. Gottlieb lived a short life as a Polish-Jewish artist. He painted but didn't finish a large biblical subject, *Jesus Preaching at the Synagogue in Capernaum*. In this scene from the New Testament Gottlieb intended to provide accurate details of the costume and architecture of biblical Palestine, a period when the area was ruled by the Roman Empire.

Gottlieb's paintings added distinctly Jewish elements, including the figure of Jesus himself, whom the artist expressly identifies as a practicing Jew. Jesus wears a *tallit* (prayer shawl) around his waist as he preaches with an open Torah scroll on the synagogue's *bimah* (lectern). Gottlieb's scene of Christ teaching addresses the dominant Catholic audience in his native Poland.

Gottlieb's autobiographical spirit is portrayed through the painting of *Jews in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur*. In this seminal work Gottlieb's bearded self-portrait appeared, posed at the downcast angle in seeming meditation, yet he represented himself as a full-length figure, wearing a Jewish prayer garment (which eventually is a burial covering), called a *kittel*. The artist is surrounded by

---

<sup>58</sup> Galitzia – today's [Drogobych](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Drogobych) Ukraine  
[https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Gottlieb\\_Maurycy](https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Gottlieb_Maurycy)

elders holding the Torah scroll and reading from prayer books at the lectern. Elsewhere boys are scattered, and Gottlieb highlights the women in the gallery. Certainly, both the self-portrait and the woman looking out at the viewer above him reveal a talent for portraiture that Gottlieb also practiced during his brief career. Yet Gottlieb already seems wistfully aware of his own death. On the mantle of the Torah scroll he wrote an inscription in Hebrew that suggests a foreknowledge of his early death: “Donated in memory of the late honored teacher and rabbi Moshe Gottlieb of blessed memory 1878.”



**Maurycy Gottlieb, *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur*, 1878, 243 x 190 cm**

**[\(Tel Aviv Museum of Art\)](#)**

### **3.4 The Importance of Visual Art in the Language Class**

The art conveys renditions through artistic perception of the world and allows the learners observers to reflect on the historical time and the dynamic. Artists want the kind observer to see what we see and imminent certain feelings. Every artist finds complete representational freedom by casting a glance at the past. Learning is an individual human condition. It is important to pay attention to a student’s funds of knowledge (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005) and to examine who the student is in order to design a conducive learning experience. Culture and language acquisition

are complementary parts for learning and should be considered simultaneously as teachers design lessons (TESOL, 2010).

Learners' cognitive processes are facilitated by images (John-Steiner, 1995; Rufo, 2011). Visuals capture students because they add another dimension to the inputs they are receiving (Dunn & Finley, 2011). A student who has not mastered a second language likely struggles to express ideas in the target language (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Visual art fills a need for this student because expression does not have to be linked to printed words to effectively convey the learner's thinking. Visual art provides a unique avenue for communication and self-expression that doesn't rely solely on verbal or written language. For students who may be challenged to articulate their thoughts or feelings through words, visual art allows them to communicate more intuitively and viscerally.

The act of creating or interpreting visual art can tap into emotions, perceptions, and sensory experiences that may be difficult to capture through verbal means alone. For example, a student might find it easier to express complex emotions, abstract concepts, or personal perspectives using visual compositions rather than through written or spoken language. Visual art offers a direct and immediate way to convey ideas and interpretations without the need for explicit language skills or literary conventions. Furthermore, visual art is inherently open to interpretation and subjective response. Unlike academic writing or verbal debates that often require precise arguments and logical reasoning, interpretations of art can be more fluid and personal. This flexibility allows students to explore and express their opinions freely, without the pressure of conforming to strict linguistic or rhetorical standards.

In educational settings, encouraging students to engage with visual art can foster creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. It provides opportunities for self-discovery and self-expression, promoting a deeper understanding of one's own perspectives and the perspectives of others. Therefore, for this student, visual art fulfills a need because it offers a versatile and expressive outlet that complements or even surpasses the limitations of verbal communication in conveying their thoughts and feelings effectively.

Language teachers can assign visually creative tasks to express knowledge or ideas adapted to students' language level. Teachers can use such activities to either scaffold language instruction or to facilitate content learning, especially if enhanced understanding results in greater intrinsic motivation. If learning the language is a collaborative endeavor rather than an arduous task, the students will be more motivated, interested, and ultimately engaged (Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Gardner (2010) suggests that motivation is responsible for achievement in a second language and a positive attitude toward the learning situation helps the student. Visual art can provide the extra layer for comprehension that lowers the affective filter (Krashen, 1981) and keeps the student from being overly conscious about his or her struggles with the second language. The act of creating visual artwork can inspire learners and help students to apply their multiple intelligence creatively in classroom tasks (Gardner, 2010). Students are offered opportunities to use their imagination through art and may find the process serves as a gateway encouraging them to focus on their writing skills (Daniel, 2007; Olshansky, 1994).

Most importantly, the use of works of art as authentic cultural artifacts can change the nature of language learning from a formulaic isolated artificial experience into a true to life, authentic, "language for communication" interaction. The foremost reason for this is the fact that "the more there is connection to the real world the students live in, the more a lesson gains

authenticity” (Oguz and Bahar, 2008, p. 328). Hence, in addition to implementing the course activities, it might be a good idea to supplement our speaking classes with discussions about works of art in the target language/culture.

The importance of teaching culture has been widely acknowledged as an integral aspect of language instruction rather than a peripheral one. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) emphasize that culture should be fully integrated as a fundamental element of language acquisition. They assert that second language teachers must identify key cultural elements across all facets of language instruction, suggesting that students can only achieve proficiency in speaking a second language if cultural considerations are embedded in the curriculum.

### **3.5 The Role of Visual Art in Communicative Language Teaching**

Research suggests that visual art enhances the understanding of content, culture, and ideas (Jarvis, 2011; Siegel & Panofsky, 2009). Visual representations support students' connections to a topic as they use their second language in a meaningful task. The opportunity to use visual art as a text can enrich a personal connection to another culture while helping the learner explore his or her own culture (Turkcan & Yasar, 2011). Since learning is an individual human experience, the student’s current knowledge must be considered (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

Learners’ cognitive processes are facilitated by images (John-Steiner, 1995; Rufo, 2011).

Visuals capture students' attention because they add a sensory dimension to the inputs, they are receiving auditorily (Dunn & Finley, 2011). A student who has not yet mastered a second language often struggles to find the words to express ideas in the target language (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Visual art provides additional cultural connection for the student’s language acquisition. Expression does not have to be linked to printed words to effectively convey the learner’s language processing.



As for the importance of Israeli art in the language class has two-fold ways. The first fold is art as an historical testimony. In early days of the establishment of the state of Israeli art documented the awaking of the Jewish nation in its ancestral homeland. The Israeli art served was an historiography that portrayed the artistic activity in Pre- mandate Israel of the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When describing the small Jewish population in the early 1920s, Gideon Ofrat stated “It was a community that had the naivete of youth, a pioneering spirit...and a flair for renewal” (p.48).

The second fold is describing and discussing artworks requires the use of specific vocabulary related to colors, objects, atmosphere, belief, and culture symbols. Engaging with art helps learners expand their vocabulary and develop their ability to express, describe and narrate. I strongly attest that by integrating art into language learning enriches the learning experience, deepen cultural understanding, and enhance communicative competence by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication skills.

## Chapter 4: Language Competence

### Introduction to Communicative Competence

Communicative competence in a second language originated from the Chomsky (1965) generative possibilities of language systems, and Hymes (1974) prompted ‘What is so competent and remarkable about language behavior?’ Hymes (1974) developed the notion of competence to the social and cultural norms and rules of speaking. He defined competent speakers as capable of producing adequate ways of speaking that each situation demands and of making use of the rules for their own ends (Hymes 1973, cf. Widdowson 1983). As a rejoinder to Chomsky’s cognitive essentialism, Hymes reinstated the social realities of communications in language studies that Chomsky had suppressed for analytic reliability (Taylor 1988). Hymes (1974) emphasized the idea of sociability of language. This notion of sociability in L2 has been the catalyst in the field of language education as it expanded the scope and epistemic content of competences. Furthermore, it offered more theoretical rationale for L2 research, which was leaning toward a more functional approach than only linguistic (Richards and Rogers 1986)<sup>59</sup>.

#### 4.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been recognized as an ideal approach to help learners acquire a foreign language (Gómez-Rodríguez, 2010). The importance of meaningful language use at all stages in the acquisition of communicative skills has come to be recognized by foreign language teachers. Many curricular innovations have been proposed in response to incorporating meaningful communicative tasks in teaching (Savignon, 1997). A communicative approach to the foreign language pedagogy aims to develop students’ competence in using sentences appropriately when communicating outside of the classroom as well as producing

---

<sup>59</sup> Hymes (1992) and/or Cazden (1996) for the historical development of the concept of communicative competence

sentences accurately in a lesson (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Hymes pioneered this communicative approach by coining the term, “communicative competence” which means knowing when and how to say what to whom within a social context (Hymes, 1971). In opposition to Chomsky’s view of the “ideal speaker-listener” as a nonexistent abstraction, Hymes looks at the real speaker-listener in the social interaction. Afterwards Canale and Swain (1980) subdivided communicative competence into three components: grammatical competence.

sociolinguistic competence; and strategic competence.

Students engaging in discourse and applying their language skills to engage in an exchange is called Interactional Competence. IC development in the classroom happens when students take part in “exchanges that are spontaneous, topically coherent, and extend over multiple turns” (Todhunter, 2007, p. 605). Providing a transition between formal instructional activities, this conversation allows opportunities for authentic question and response between teachers and students and for students to initiate target language conversations. When necessary, the teacher can help students with necessary repairs in context and keep the conversation moving forward. Furthermore, students can co-construct their understanding of the teacher’s target language speech. “Interactionally competent speakers negotiate meaning in order to repair communication breakdowns. However, achieving mutual understanding does not always lead to resolution or awareness of grammatical form” (Todhunter, 2007, p. 614). Instructional conversation allows teachers to lead students to correct grammatical forms while the students also build their IC. IC allows turn-taking in a conversation to move forward, as it is used in manners such as “displaying and seeking agreement or confirmation, initiating interaction, introducing a new topic, and mitigating face threatening acts” (Masuda, 2011, p. 521).

## 4.2 Models of Communicative Competence

In 1983, Canale added “discourse competence” to their original model. The combined models are illustrated in Figure 1.

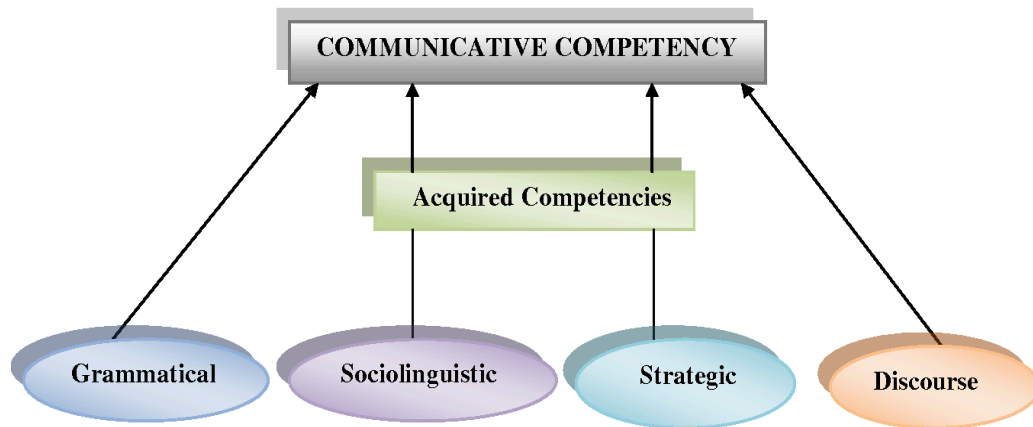


Figure 1: Canale and Swain’s Model of Communicative Competence (Canale, 1983) Published 5 July 2013, Education, Computer Science A. Agbatogun.

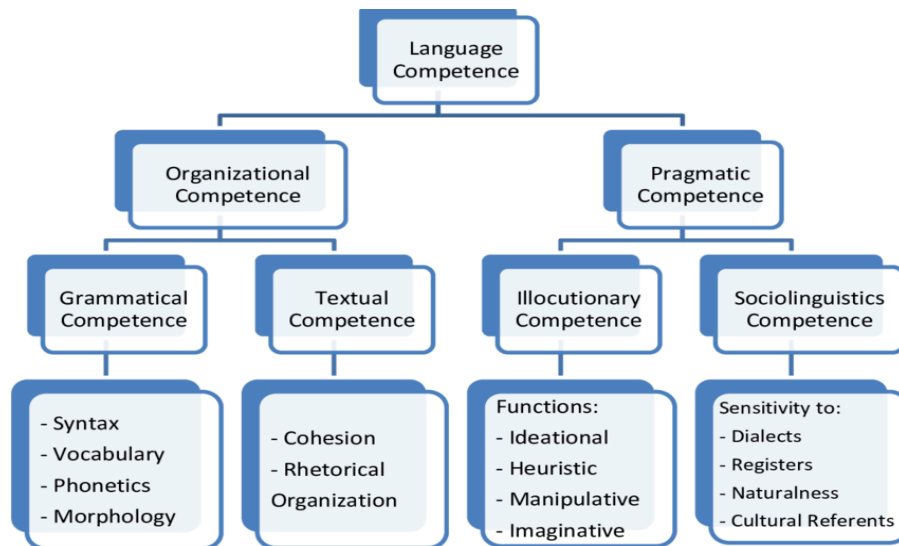
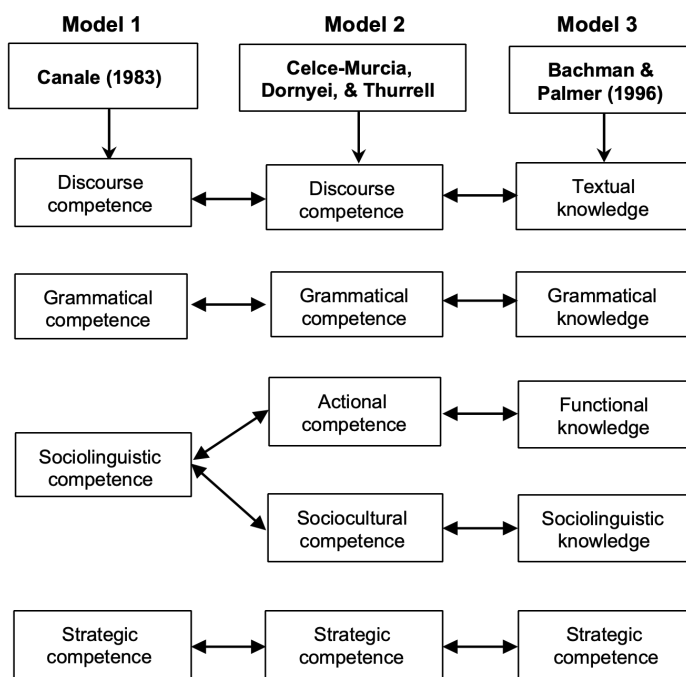


Figure 2: Bachman and Palmer’s Communicative Competence Model (Bachman, 1990) Copyrights Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta 2013

Another model of communicative competence was proposed by Celce-Murcia, et al., (1995). This model includes discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence. The term *sociocultural*

*competence* refers to the same concept as that of *sociolinguistic competence* in Canale's model. While the other four competences are similar to the Canale's (1983) model, *actional competence* in this model is defined as 'competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent, that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory or verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force (speech acts and speech act sets)' (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995: 17). *Actional competence* in this model is included in the sociolinguistic competence of Canale's (1983) model.

### Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell's Model Comparison of the Models of Communicative Competence



From the figure above *sociolinguistic competence* in the Canale's (1983) model is elaborated further in the Celce-Murcia, et al's (1995) model by introducing *actional competence* and in the Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model by introducing *functional knowledge*. The terms *actional competence* and *functional knowledge* in the last two models refer to the same idea which is knowledge of

language functions that enables learners to fulfill actual and authentic communicative tasks and activities. However, the model of Celce-Murcia, et al (1995) offers a more viable option for language teachers and practitioners since it not only highlights the theoretical foundations of communicative competence but also elaborates and identifies possible content specifications that might be integrated into the development of communicative language curriculum. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the main points of content specifications offered by this model.

**Table 1: Content Specifications of the Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell's (1995) Model of Communicative Competence**

Competences	Main contents
A. Discourse competence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cohesion</li> <li>2. Deixis</li> <li>3. Coherence</li> <li>4. Genre/generic structures</li> <li>5. Conversational structures</li> </ol>
B. Linguistic (grammatical competence)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Syntax</li> <li>2. Morphology</li> <li>3. Lexicon</li> <li>4. Phonology</li> <li>5. Orthography</li> </ol>
C. Actional Competence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge of language functions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Interpersonal</li> <li>b. Information</li> <li>c. Opinion</li> <li>d. Feelings</li> <li>e. Suasion</li> <li>f. Problems</li> <li>g. Future scenarios</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Knowledge of speech acts</li> </ol>
D. Sociocultural competence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social contextual factors</li> <li>2. Stylistic appropriateness factors</li> <li>3. Cultural factors</li> <li>4. Non-verbal communicative factors</li> </ol>
Competences	Main contents
E. Strategic competence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoidance or reduction strategies</li> <li>2. Achievement or compensatory strategies</li> <li>3. Stalling for time-gaining strategies</li> <li>4. Self-monitoring strategies</li> <li>5. Interactional strategies</li> </ol>

Source: Summarized and modified from Celce-Murcia, et al. (1995: 14, 18, 22, 24, 28)

### 4.3 Communicative Function

The curriculum of foreign language classes at University of Southern California (USC) emphasizes communicative competence in which grammatical competence is one dimension. The focus is on fluency and accuracy; fluency is defined as a practical ability to form coherent sentence form to communicate effectively. In addition to grammatical competence, the goal is to develop strategic, sociolinguistics and discourse competence. The model I use for this research is Bachman and Palmer to assess the functional competence involved. My research analyzed four cases of learners at USC who acquired Hebrew as a foreign language in relation to selected paintings to develop communicative competence.

Learning a second language involves several communication functions, which are the various purposes or reasons for communication. These functions are essential for effectively using the language in real-life situations. According to ACTFL<sup>60</sup> four key communication functions in learning a second language are:

1 Expressing and Requesting Information: This involves asking questions, seeking clarification, and providing information. Learners need to understand how to ask for and give information in various contexts.

2 Expressing Opinions and Belief: Learners should be able to express their thoughts, opinions, and beliefs on different topics. This involves using appropriate vocabulary and grammar structures to convey personal viewpoints.

---

<sup>60</sup> American Council of Teaching Foreign Language-  
<https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/Documents/AppendixAStandardsforFLExecsumm.pdf>

3 Narrating and Describing: Being able to describe events, situations, people, and places is crucial. Narrating stories or events and providing detailed descriptions helps in practicing language skills related to past events and descriptive language.

4 Expressing Feelings and Emotions: Learning to express emotions, feelings, and attitudes helps in connecting with others on a deeper level. Understanding and using emotional vocabulary aids in building relationships and understanding cultural nuances.

The standards of teaching language by ACTFL are characterized as follows:

1. Learners develop an ability to communicate in genuine contexts, this reinforces the cultural context in which the learner is being immersed in the target culture.

2. The contents of a language course are based on social communicative functions and not merely on linguistic structures.

3. Students work in groups to establish meaningful negotiation when they are involved in role-playing activities, problem-solving tasks, dramatizations, and simulations of situations in real life.

4. Classroom materials and activities are authentic, as they reflect typical real-life situations.

5. Language is created by the individual, frequently through trial and error. Hence, making mistakes is part of the learning process.

CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) is an umbrella term to support the form and meaning of language tasks in classrooms. Students play a role in CLT as they are actively engaged



in negotiating meaning by trying to understand others and making themselves understood, even when their knowledge of the target language is limited. Teachers facilitate communication in the classroom by establishing situations likely to promote communication. During the class, the teachers act as advisers, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) divide pragmatic knowledge into two parts: socio linguistic knowledge and functional knowledge. The four elements comprising functional knowledge are: idealization, imaginative, manipulative, heuristic. In the following section I will describe every case study of functional knowledge. Ideational knowledge helps language learners to express or understand meanings based on their real-world experiences. Ideational functions also include descriptions, classifications, explanations, and emotional expressions such as sorrow and anger. Imaginative function allows language learners to create an imaginary world or extend the world around them for humorous or aesthetic purposes. Heuristic function enables language learners to widen their knowledge of the world around them, such as: use of language for solving problems and retaining information.

A set of questions presented to the participants to reflect on the visual art. The questions were as follows: 1). What are the colors in the painting? 2). What period or era was this painting done? 3). What is the relationship between the characters in the painting? 4). What do women or men do? 5). What are the expressions in the painting? 6). What do these expressions represent in your opinion? 7). What are the topics that the images in the painting might be talking about in relation to the time?

#### 4.4 Functional Approach

My study followed the ‘functional approach’ that places the ‘learner in the center’. This approach emphasizes the needs, goals, and the interest of the learner with the release of ‘Can-Do Statements’ by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL-ACTFL). Many language teachers nationwide shifted their focus on the language learning experiences and centered it on building communication skills, asking the critical question: What can students do with the language?

These criteria define linguistic competence and represent the underlying knowledge and abilities that enable individuals to communicate effectively in Hebrew.

Other aspects of my research involve communicative competence -pragmatic and interactional. I was interested to see beyond basic grammatical development (grammatically correct sentences), to what degree paintings (Art) served as tools for eliciting language and developing communicative competences; pragmatic and interactional. The pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in various social contexts. It involves understanding and applying the implicit rules, conventions, and norms of language use to achieve communicative goals and interact successfully with others. **Pragmatic competence** goes beyond grammatical correctness and encompasses the following key aspects which I selected to address in my research: Ideational, Heuristic, and Imaginative.

- Ideational Competence: the ability to convey and understand ideas, concepts, and information accurately and effectively. It involves the mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax necessary to express complex thoughts and convey factual information.

Ideational competence enables individuals to share knowledge, describe experiences, and discuss abstract concepts in a clear and coherent manner.

- Heuristic Competence: the ability to seek, interpret, and evaluate information from various sources to solve problems, make decisions, and acquire new knowledge. It encompasses critical thinking skills, information literacy, and the capacity to analyze and synthesize information effectively. Heuristic competence enables individuals to engage in inquiry-based learning, conduct research, and make informed judgments based on evidence and reasoning.
- Imaginative Competence: the ability to express creativity, imagination, and originality in communication. It involves the use of language to evoke emotions, create vivid imagery, and engage the imagination of others. Imaginative competence encompasses storytelling, creative writing, artistic expression, and the ability to communicate ideas and experiences in imaginative and compelling ways.

The model and chart below were used for the purpose of my research to analyze the data.

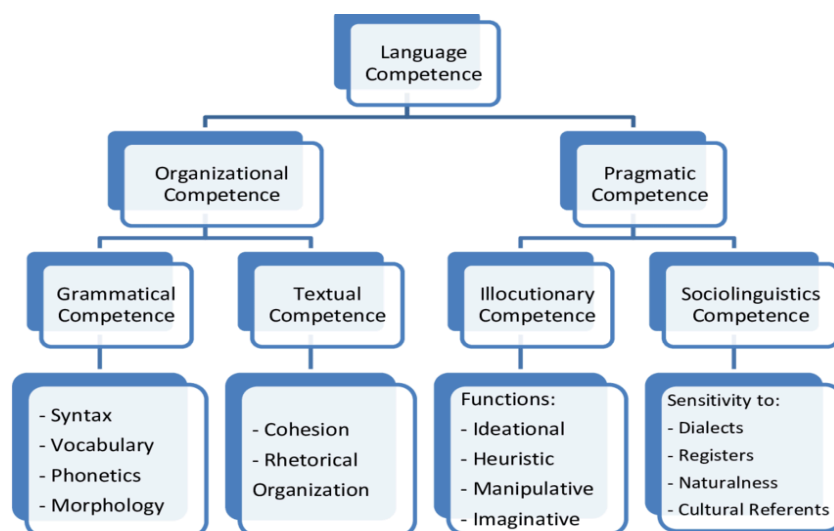


Figure 3: Bachman and Palmer's Communicative Competence Model (Bachman, 1990)

Based on the Bachman and Palmer Language Competence Model I adapted the model below to analyze the participants' language competences pragmatic and grammatical

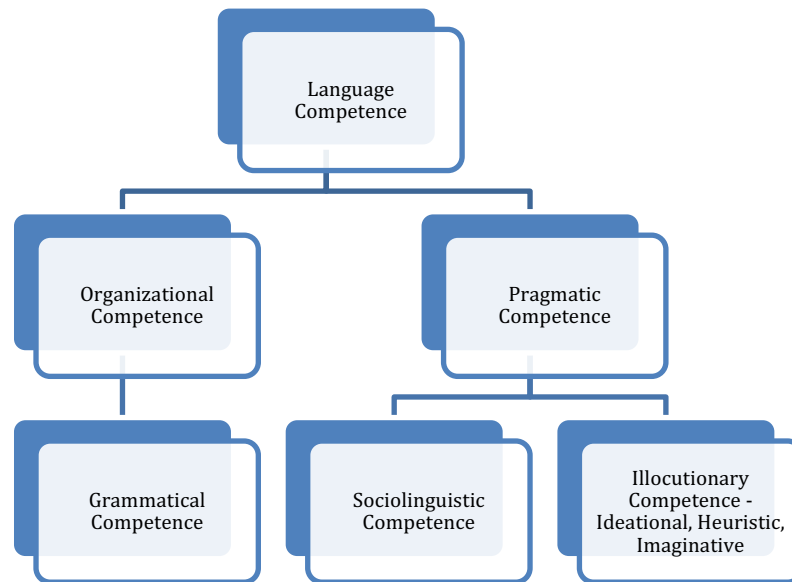


Figure 3.1: Bachman and Palmer's Communicative Competence Model (based on Bachman, 1990)

#### 4.4 The Concept of Competence (general delimitations and groundwork)

##### *From Linguistic Competence to Pragmatic Competence*

The term competence has been interpreted by linguists for different purposes. Chomsky originated the concept, subsequent writers for a clarification of the term, changed it, creating, thus, a confusion. The concept of communicative competence is commonly recognized as the foundation for assessing both oral and written communication proficiency. However, there isn't yet an agreement regarding the formal, structural, and functional representation of communicative competence which would constitute a suitable model with precise skills or abilities. "The notion of communicative competence evolved in order to account for the fact we have already observed that linguistic competence does not adequately account for how language is used or the forms that

occur in actual use (Ingram 1985, p.226)<sup>61</sup>". Before dealing with the notion from the linguistics' point of view it is essential to address the issue of the word competence itself and of the meanings it generates.

For this research **competence** refers to the linguistic approach, primarily to a relation of adequacy. The multitude of synonyms found in dictionary entries emphasize the variety of the aspects of the term. For example, "competence" is identified in Webster's dictionary<sup>62</sup> as "fitness or ability". Items proposed as synonyms, or linked to the term, are "capability", "capacity", "efficiency", "proficiency" and "skill". The variety of meanings suggest different theoretical approaches on competence, making it difficult to determine a common conceptual framework.

Harris (1988) stresses that Saussure's ideas about the nature of language itself justify the plurality of theories concerning competence in linguistics. Language in its entirety has many disparate aspects. It lies astride the boundaries differentiating various domains (e.g., semantic, syntax, morphology, phonology, and pragmatic). At the same time language is connected to the physical, physiological, and psychological. Language belongs both to the individual and to the society.

In linguistics it was Saussure's differentiation between language, langue and parole which constituted the basis for the transformation of linguistic philosophy in the twentieth century. Harris (1988), in the preface to his study concerning Saussure and Wittgenstein notes that "Language is no longer regarded as peripheral to our grasp of the world ... [Words] are collective products of social interaction, essential instruments to articulate the world."

---

<sup>61</sup> Ingram, D. E. (1985) "Assessing proficiency: An overview of some aspects of testing." In K. Hyltenstam & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1985. p 226

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

From his point of view language is a system independent of the individual users which encompasses abstract, systematic rules. It is a universal system with an underlying, fundamental, structure, representing the faculty of speech or ability to speak, which all human beings possess hereditarily. There are two aspects of this faculty: 'langue' which denotes the language system, and 'parole' which is the actual act of speaking. Langue denotes the conceptual systematic rules of a particular language while parole is the concrete realization of Langue in speech.

Butler (1978) seeks to clarify the notion of competence by considering the following aspects; it refers to the process and to the result of an activity, it can be viewed as depending on internal or external features, it can refer to a general characteristic or to a specific one, it can be defined as knowledge or as skill in applying knowledge, it can be part of the personal or of the professional domains, it can be viewed in its virtual or in its actual representation. Additionally, a consideration must be given to a potentiality; being based on the ability to access certain knowledge to perform a certain activity, or to manifest a certain behavior.

In the 1960's, the linguist Noam Chomsky characterized language as being composed of linguistic competence and performance. The concept was developed as a response to the assumptions about language of the structuralist linguistics, represented namely by Saussure, which sustained the idea of an unconscious system. Linguistic competence, from his point of view, refers to a person's intuitive knowledge of the rules and structure of his language as a native speaker, while performance is the actual use of this knowledge.

Chomsky's innovative idea does not essentially rest on this division but rather in revealing the intrinsic character of this knowledge in the native speaker, which constitutes a native speaker's capacity of comprehending and formulating utterances not encountered previously. At the core of a native speaker's ability to understand and speak lies an 'internalized set of rules', allowing the

speaker to recognize ungrammatical structures irrespective of his understanding of the meaning of the utterance. This is what Chomsky coined “the language faculty”.

Competence in Chomsky’s approach entails neither an amassed collection of knowledge nor an ability or skill. Chomsky’s ‘linguistic competence’ involves a native speaker’s intrinsic knowledge of the grammatical rules regulating his/her language. “Such knowledge, Chomsky argued, enables speakers to create new and grammatically correct sentences and accounts for the fact that speakers can recognize grammatically incorrect as well as correct. He maintains that Saussure’s concept of *Langue* is “merely a systematic inventory of items”, and that the study of language should adhere to a reasonable paradigm focusing on processes sentences (Brown 2009, p.93)".

Key influences for Chomsky’s approach on language were Rene Descartes and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Descartes’s interest with the creative powers of the mind leads to Chomsky’s assumption that language can be considered an instrument of thought. Humboldt influences Chomsky in that he argues that language is determined by the processes required by thinking, the laws governing language originating in cognition. Competence is regarded independent of performance. It is a faculty of the mind.

Chomsky’s places competence in an ideal language system unaffected by speech errors, differences generated by region, social strata, or other factors. In this ideal system research can only refer to an ideal speaker/listener in the analysis of language. Therefore, Chomsky postulated that: “Linguistic theory is primarily concerned with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interests, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of language in actual

performance (Chomsky, 1965 p.9)". This definition allows to label transformational grammar as a theory of idealized linguistic knowledge and competence and discriminates it from the broader study of language use represented here by linguistic performance. The relation between these two notions, as Chomsky (1965) emphasized, is that "... investigation of performance will proceed only so far as understanding of underlying competence permits." In *Language and mind*, Chomsky restricts the notion of competence further as follows: "... the technical term competence refers to the ability of the idealized speaker-hearer to associate sounds and meanings strictly in accordance with the rules of the language. The grammar of a language, as a model for idealized competence, establishes a certain relation between sound and meaning ... (Chomsky 1968, p.116)".

According to Chomsky (1968) Idealization pertains to two key constituents of the communication process. The first is the speaker, unaffected by external or internal limitations in his knowledge and use of language, and thus placed in the context of a theory of possible performance applicable only on an ideal speaker and not on any actual speakers. The second is the behavior. A theory of linguistic competence does not describe the behavior of any actual speaker, but it does describe an ideal to which the behavioral capacities of actual speakers approximate, hence, it plays a role in predicting their actual behavioral capacities.

Chomsky (1965) envisaged the innate knowledge<sup>63</sup> as representing grammatical competence, an innate knowledge of rules rather than knowledge of items or relations. The innate knowledge can be applied to any number of unknown utterances. An individual cannot stock knowledge about the linguistic mechanisms controlling each communication act, particularly given the fact that he has not come upon all the possible sentences in that specific language. It is impossible for the speaker to store in his mind all the utterances he has ever produced or received.

---

<sup>63</sup> Chomsky's account proposes that children are born with a knowledge of general rules of syntax that determine how sentences are constructed.



It entails that, at the moment of production or understanding of an utterance, the speaker accesses a prior existing knowledge generated by a set of mechanisms, processes or principles.

Chomsky (1968) generative<sup>64</sup> grammar is directed at two primary goals. The first goal requires the uncovering of the deep structure of the sentence by analyzing the distinct elements of it. Therefore, competence can be understood as the instinctive knowledge of the axioms for translating deep structure into surface structure. The second objective of generative grammar is to institute an array of predetermined patterns and rules that will make possible the formulation of an infinite number of utterances. This goal is divisive as grammar offers numerous examples that are at the limit of acceptability from the perspective of the speakers. Thus, the divisive feature of generative grammar consists in its allegation that the rules of grammatical structure and generation originate in an innate.

However, despite the idealized approach sustaining the idea of a complete grammar, it is critical to notice that Chomsky's approach is difficult to apply in the field of language learning, as the non-native speaker is not a perfect speaker; he is influenced by the knowledge of his native language, by social and cultural elements. Real life situations demonstrate that, while the idealization of the speaker may prove beneficial for the study of the general mechanisms in language, in actual communication it does not always work.

Understanding utterances may be impaired by internal or external factors, like tiredness, divided attention, memory, motivation, peripheral nervous system, drugs, environment, etc. While the number of utterances an individual can understand is certainly limited, the processes underlying the linguistic knowledge are finite and allow, in theory, the understanding of any sentence from a specific language, irrespective of its degree of complexity. The speaker's use of

---

<sup>64</sup> Generativity refers to the fact that speakers of a language can compose sentences to represent new ideas that they have never before been exposed to.

them is limited by available time, memory, and so forth. For example, written sentences may be understood that could not be understood spoken. Written the whole thing does not need to be stored in memory to go back and check the beginning. Memory aids increase the number of sentences a person can understand, but they do not increase the number of sentences in the language. They do not change the processes that produce linguistic knowledge.

Evans and Levinson (2009) surveyed the world's languages and found that none of the presumed underlying features of the language acquisition device were entirely universal. Although the basic assumption of a universal grammar is that all languages should share these features in their research, they found languages that did not have noun or verb phrases, that did not have tenses (e.g., past, present, future), and some languages that did not have nouns or verbs at all.

Although Chomsky's (1965) theory proves efficient in establishing the framework of syntactic and logical rules governing language organization, especially for first language development, it seems insufficient from the standpoint of the foreign language learner confronted with a language system and line of thought different from his/her own, even if we take into consideration the universals of language. Communicating competently, regardless of the language of communication, implies knowledge surpassing the linguistic level of language.

Language development occurs through principles of learning, including association, reinforcement, and the observation of others (Skinner, 1965). I strongly agree with Skinner's fundamental principle that language is learned. Because children learn the language that they hear spoken around them rather than some other language, language is learned, and gradual improvement of linguistic skills come with time. Children modify their language through imitation, reinforcement, and shaping, as would be predicted by learning theories.

## 4.5 Linguistic Competence

I examined linguistic competence by the production of knowledge and understanding of the language using grammatically correct sentences. How is the knowledge and understanding of the language demonstrated through the written and oral discourse according to the following key criteria: (This concept was introduced by linguist Noam Chomsky)

- Grammar: Linguistic competence involves knowledge of the rules governing the structure of sentences in a language, including syntax (word order), morphology (word formation), and semantics (meaning).
- Syntax: how to form phrases and sentences with proper word order and agreement.
- Lexicon: Linguistic competence includes knowledge of the vocabulary of a language, including word meanings, usage, and appropriate contexts. Competent speakers have a wide-ranging lexicon and know how to select and use words effectively in communication.
- Pragmatics: This aspect involves understanding the social and cultural conventions governing language use, including politeness strategies, conversational implicature, and speech acts (such as requests, commands, promises, and apologies).
- Discourse Competence: This involves understanding the rules and conventions governing larger units of language such as conversations, narratives, and written texts. Competent speakers can produce and interpret coherent and cohesive discourse, including organizing ideas logically, maintaining coherence, and signaling relationships between different parts of a text.

#### **4.5 The Communicative Competence**

Research in linguistics, philosophy, and psycholinguistics has expanded the set of phenomena encompassed by language in the perpetual effort of unfolding its mechanisms. By this process they have designed a range of different meanings for the term ‘competence’, diverging from, or elaborating Chomsky’s original theory. In theories of speech, the concept of linguistic competence has been broadened by integrating semantic and pragmatic perspectives. Empirical results were integrated psychological, sociological, and ethnological ones, important models attesting this evolution being the theories of communicative competence and communicative acts. Communicative competence growth can also be observed “both at the level of expanding one’s range of communicative activities and at the level of performing them in increasingly more complex and sophisticated ways” (Hulstijn, Alderson, and Schoonen, 2010, p. 12). For a learner to fully develop his or her communicative competence, both breadth and depth must take place in the classroom activities and L2 speaker’s experiences.

An essential aspect for communication in a foreign language is represented by the capacity of appropriately using linguistic knowledge in a wide array of sociocultural contexts, proving that dealing with the pragmatic aspects of communication is compulsory so as to allow foreign language speakers to comprehend and to accurately transmit messages when communicating with target language representatives. As a response to the competence-performance dichotomy proposed by Chomsky, research in applied linguistics supporting a communicative approach (e.g. Savignon, 1972) claimed that, in what concerns languages learning methodology, the use of the theory of an ideal entirely linguistic competence was inappropriate as the foundation for a theoretical framework. Savignon (1972) expands the place of performance in the framework of communicative competence. She argues the intrinsic connection between performance and

competence, stating the importance of strategic competence as a speaker's capacity to handle both the sufficiency and the insufficiency of their linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Applied linguistic approach on the study of language found a more substantial basis in Hymes' concept of communicative competence. His perspective seemed more anchored in the reality of the actual use of language as it introduced the sociolinguistic angle into Chomsky's linguistic approach of competence. Chomsky's theory offers a methodological instrument which allows the definition of a limited set of rules governing language.

(The clarification of the dichotomy of competence/performance in linguistics from a methodological point of view asserts that in the processes of language the linguist must resort to the information provided by the performance of speakers. Along the line of Chomsky's assumptions about performance and its unreliability for the study of language, the highlight is that the speaker's utterances are limited and arbitrary from the linguistic standpoint and that pertinent structural relations often lack representation in actual communication, leading to generalization that would negatively influence a theory of the language. Secondly, they argue that it is important to take into consideration the speaker's intuitions about the grammaticality or ambiguity of utterances and which are not discernable from the corpus available to the linguist.)

Dell Hymes (1972) initially postulated that the Chomsky's linguistic competence dealing with an idealized "speaker/listener in a homogeneous speech community" fails to include ability for language use because it does not consider the sociocultural dimension. From his perspective as a linguist, but also of the anthropologist, Hymes cannot ignore performance, the application of language in actual communicative contexts, considering the variations that the study of an ideal speaker/listener cannot account for. Hymes argues that Chomsky's narrow concept of competence by consigning them to the area of performance.

Dell Hymes opposed the attribution of sociocultural and contextual elements to performance and “the distorting effect of using one term ‘performance’ for two distinct things: a theory of performance and a theory of language use “. Hymes argued: “We have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner... a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivations concerning language, its features and uses (1973, p.37)”.

However, I posit that in both Chomsky’s and Hymes’ views, the focus on the process of communication relies majorly on knowledge about the language (formally possible and socially appropriate structures), but not on the speakers' ability to make use of the knowledge. For example, learners may have general knowledge of the language, but they may lack appropriate linguistic or cultural means to convey their message, thus the strategic or sociolinguistic knowledge would allow them to communicate even in the absence of sufficient knowledge about the language. Since Hymes, numerous researchers have explored the communicative competence, expanding the notion with a variety of definitions. It is argued that, as a difference from linguistic competence, communicative competence involves interlocutors understanding the transactional process taking place during the communicative action. Thus, competence is closely connected to performance, and the context of communication is given a major place.

Bachman (1990), a language learning theorist, gave language use a special attention in his research, analyzing the way language is utilized by speakers aiming at achieving a particular communicative purpose depending on the context of the speech event. Thus, to highlight the

essential position occupied by language use, he put forward the term “communicative language ability” as a substitute for communicative competence, claiming that it comprised both the meaning of language proficiency, and that of communicative competence. Supporting his approach especially on the theories of Hymes, and Widdowson, Bachman described communicative language ability as composed of knowledge and ability to use knowledge appropriately, depending on the context of communication.

#### **4.6 The Pragmatic Competence**

From the broader definitions of pragmatics, one of relevance for the purpose of this study, of analyzing competence from the perspective of the language learning theory, is “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.<sup>65</sup>”

From the analysis of theories on pragmatic competence, three major approaches: a componential approach, a functional approach, and a meaning-oriented approach. These categories are merely an attempt to delimitate among the variety of frameworks proposed, but this does not entail that any of the models can be strictly delimited to one category or that there aren't other perspectives which could fall under any category. The functional and meaning oriented approaches belong mainly to the applied linguistics domain, particularly to acquisition theories. They will be largely described in the next part of the chapter.

Primarily, I must address the issue of the componential approach. From the componential perspective, pragmatics is envisaged as the study of the reflection of the interconnections between knowledge constituents into actual language ability. Theorists in this approach do not focus on the

---

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pragmatics>

mechanisms of interrelation between the components of knowledge, however they identify the components and the processes underlying this activity.

The following grouping of the studies proves enlightening: [...] they can be grouped according to three consecutive phases: (a) the early groundwork (Hymes, 1972), (b) the sociolinguistic competence phase (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983; van Ek, 1986), and (c) the pragmatic competence phase (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006).

Pragmatic linguistics concerns the strategies used to adjust communicative acts to the context of communication. These strategies involve shifting between straightforwardness, indirectness, and routines and so on. Kasper (1979) offers an illustration of this tuning in line with suitability by means of an example of two modes of expressing the same apology, and the definite outcome they noticeably have in communication: “Sorry” and “I’m absolutely devastated—could you possibly find it in your heart to forgive me?” Although the meaning is practically the same, the form is determined by context and altered by means of pragma linguistic strategies. The second field of research is socio pragmatics.

Leech (1990) defines pragmatic linguistic through the lens of socio-cultural awareness which influences both the process of conveying meaning and of interpreting utterances. He argues that socio-pragmatics encompasses “the sociological interface of pragmatics”. He concludes that behavior from a socio-cultural standpoint is at the core of socio-pragmatics entailing the necessity of raising students’ awareness of the outcome of their pragmatic choices.

Pragmatics is concerned with decoding the speaker's intentions. The process of decoding implicatures is only possible due to the shared presupposition about the adequate linguistic behavior in a particular communication context. Grice (1975) termed the set of underlying



conversational presuppositions ‘cooperative principle’ which refers to: “Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (1975, p.45)”. Grice (1989) detailed this principle in a set of maxims:

- The maxim of quantity: Give the most helpful amount of information as is needed, and no more.
- The maxim of quality: Do not say what you believe to be false.
- The maxim of relation: Be relevant and say things that are pertinent to the discussion.
- The maxim of manner: Put what you say in the clearest, briefest, and most orderly manner.

The maxims proposed by Grice are principles for the speaker directing the discourse actants as they follow each other's intents. He starts from the observation that there are different types of meaning: linguistic meaning and intended meaning (Grice, 1969); Purpura, (2004).

Among the functional frameworks of communication, it is Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) who further specify in their model the necessity of the interactive element in conveying meaning. Taking into consideration Bachman and Palmer’s ideas, I believe that a conceptualization of pragmatic competence must be set within a framework of interactive communicative action. The main grounds for this hypothesis are that the interactional standpoint synthesizes the negotiation of intended meaning that happens between interlocutors in the communicative event. From this point of view communication is viewed as a dynamic process of creating discourse and pragmatic competence that enables the speaker/hearer to express, interpret, or negotiate intended meanings. This process of negotiation involves surpassing the literal meaning

of the utterance and requires from the utterer to take into elements derived from the relation established between utterances and the specific features of the communication context.

In summary, to have successful communication, from a pragmatic standpoint, it is essential to consider the interdependence relationship between the contextual variables, intention and reciprocal assumptions of logical organization and collaboration. Therefore, pragmatic competence encompasses “understanding the meaningful functioning of language, i.e., to trace the dynamic construction of meaning in language use” (emphasis in the original). Returning to the analysis of the theories on pragmatic competence the central point Hymes’ (1972) and Campbell and Wales’ (1970) pointing out that Chomsky’s approach on the dichotomy competence – performance ignores the suitability of sociocultural significance of an utterance and the verbal context in which it is used.

Campbell and Wales (1975) asserted that Chomsky has omitted “the ability to produce or understand utterances which are appropriate to the context in which they are made” Hymes’ objection was responded to by Chomsky in 1980 with the acknowledgement of the existence of ‘pragmatic competence’ as a complement to ‘grammatical competence’. Chomsky accepts that language is used purposefully. In later writings he introduced the term pragmatic competence - knowledge of how language is related to the situation in which it is used. Pragmatic competence “places language in the institutional setting of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand.”

Supporting the communicative competence approach, Cook and Newson (1996) offer an exemplification of what communication would be if language competence would be reduced to grammatical competence, ignoring pragmatic competence. They assert that communication is possible based solely on grammatical competence, but they stress that conveying meaning would

be limited in the lack of pragmatic competence. They also argue that the two are complementary and non-replaceable. Hymes (1972) argues that a speaker cannot ignore the contextual restrictions when uttering a sentence; if he were to produce a solely grammatical utterance he would fail to engage properly into a communicative exchange. Language is governed by “rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless.” He continues: “just as rules of syntax can control aspects of phonology, and just as semantic rules perhaps control aspects of syntax. So, rules of speech act as a controlling factor for linguistic form as a whole.” Therefore, he adds to the notion of competence elements such as appropriateness and acceptability, derived from variables such as socio-cultural factors, stance, and goals, which he defines as the “several sectors of communicative competence, of which the grammatical is one.”

Leech (1990) has proposed, pragmatic competence includes the following basic features: 1) the language level of compliance with the pragmatic language rules; 2) the level of focus on pragmatic social and cultural differences; 3) the level of attachment mechanism of cognitive constraints; 4) time and space situational context of the level of stress constraints. Hence the variables governing pragmatic competence can be delineated as cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and contextual. Transposed to the speaker’s use of language for specific communicative goals, these variables can be illustrated in the model proposed by Leech:

1. Addressers or Addressees: Addressers are the other term used to refer to speakers or writers, whereas addressees refer to listeners or readers.
2. The context of an utterance: Context is any background knowledge assumed to be shared by speaker and listeners and which contributes to the listener's interpretation of what the speaker means by a given utterance.

3. The goal(s) of an utterance: In Leech's view, the goal of an utterance is to talk about the intended meaning of the utterance, or the speaker's intention in uttering it. The term goal is more neutral than intention because it does not commit its user to dealing with motivation but can be used generally for goal-oriented activities.
4. The utterance as a form of act or activity: a speech act
5. The utterance as a product of a verbal act.

## **Chapter 5: Learner Identity in the Language Class**

### **The connection Between Identity and Language**

Identity has been a major point of discussion in the study of culture and second or foreign language acquisition. Learner identity rearranges the traditional categories among the academic and political thoughts. Identity is worth investigating as the changing conceptions of the individual, the language, and learning impact Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Each of these areas is associated with broader trends in the social sciences. These disciplines represent a shift in the field from a predominantly psycholinguistic approach to include a greater focus on sociological and anthropological dimensions of language learning. Particularly, with reference to sociocultural, post- structural, and critical theory (Norton & Toohey, 2001; Block, 2007b; Morgan, 2007).

Many scholars (Ricento, 2005; Zuengler & Miller, 2006; Block,2007a; Swain & Deters, 2007; Menard-Warwick, 2009) cite Norton's theory of identity (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) as central in framing a contemporary approach to identity and language learning.

Scholars' focus on identity is not only about the linguistic input and output, but also in the relationship between the language learner and the broader social world. They question the view that learners can be defined in binary terms as motivated or unmotivated, introverted, or extroverted, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed, changing across time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways within a single individual.

Although identity is a complex construct, in which conceptualization is contingent upon the researcher's theoretical position (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014), a learner's identity in second language (SL)/foreign language (FL) learning has been generally understood as "the different subjectivities and subject positions they inhabit or have ascribed to them within particular social,

historical, and cultural contexts" (Block, 2013, p. 18). Specifically, it consists of the way the learner understands their relationship to the target language, other languages, and the world; how this relationship is constructed across time and space; and how they understand opportunities for the future (cf. Norton, 1995, 2010b, 2013, 2014). This accounts for the nature of this construct as "a diverse, dynamic, often contradictory, multiple rather than unitary concept" (García-Pastor, 2017, p. 39). The learner develops agency through constructing, negotiating, rejecting, or striving with other social agents in typically inequitable social contexts (Block, 2010, 2013; Norton, 2010a, 2010b, 2013, 2014; Norton & Toohey, 2011). The learner develops a sense of control and capacity to act—through various interactions with others within social contexts that are often marked by inequity. In the realm of language learning and social interaction, learners undergo a transformative process where they not only acquire linguistic skills but also cultivate a sense of agency and identity. According to Block (2013), this process involves learners actively shaping their identities through interactions with others and using language itself.

In many educational and social contexts, power dynamics can be pronounced, creating environments marked by inequities (Foucault, 1977; Freire, 1970). Within these settings, learners navigate a complex landscape where they encounter various challenges and opportunities. They may find themselves negotiating their identities, rejecting imposed roles or expectations, and striving to assert their agency to influence and shape their learning experiences. In such settings, learners navigate a complex landscape where they encounter various challenges and opportunities. They may find themselves negotiating their identities, rejecting imposed roles or expectations, and striving to assert their agency to influence and shape their learning experiences. For instance, learners may assert their agency by actively participating in classroom discussions, challenging conventional norms, or advocating for their perspectives. These actions not only demonstrate their

linguistic competence but also reflect their growing confidence and ability to navigate social structures. Moreover, interactions with peers, teachers, and community members provide learners with opportunities to explore different facets of their identities.

In contexts where power imbalances are prevalent, learners may employ diverse strategies to assert control over their learning journey. This might include seeking out supportive networks, advocating for inclusive practices, or engaging in critical dialogue to challenge inequitable norms. Ultimately, the integration of language learning with social interaction empowers learners to develop a nuanced understanding of their capabilities and responsibilities within broader societal contexts. By actively participating in the construction of their identities and navigating complex social dynamics, learners not only enhance their linguistic proficiency but also cultivate a sense of agency that empowers them to contribute meaningfully to their communities. This process fosters a transformative learning experience where language acquisition becomes intertwined with personal growth, social awareness, and the pursuit of equitable participation in diverse environments. Based on my extensive experience teaching students at various levels over two decades, I firmly assert that through language use, learners articulate their cultural backgrounds, personal beliefs, and aspirations, thereby constructing a multifaceted identity that evolves over time.

## **5.1 The Foundation for Learner's Identity**

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides valuable insights into how learner identity is shaped and supported in acquiring a new language. The sociocultural theory, as originally conceived of by L. S. Vygotsky, during the years immediately following the Russian Revolution led to a view of learning and teaching which in many respects is very different from theories

currently in favor in the mainstream SLA. The most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is mediated. In opposition to the orthodox view of mind, Vygotsky argued that just as humans do not act directly on the physical world but rely, instead, on tools and labor activity, which allows us to change the world. Sociocultural theories draw on L. S. Vygotsky's (1978, 1987) insights into the social nature of learning but also on the work of more contemporary theorists who have extended and modified his ideas (e.g., Wertsch 1998; Rogoff 2003).

Vygotsky (1978) argued that humans behave in the world with tools (both physical and symbolic), among symbolic tools are numbers and arithmetic systems, music, art, and above all language. He emphasized the symbolic tool of language, proposing that children gain 'increasing control over the mediational means made available by their culture, including language for interpersonal (social interaction) and intrapersonal (thinking) purposes' (Lantolf 2000: 8). As with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, or mediated, relationship between us and the world. According to Vygotsky's view, the task of psychology is to understand how human social and mental activity is organized through culturally constructed artifacts.

One aspect of mediation is regulation. When children learn language, words serve to reconstruct biological perception into cultural perception and concepts, rather than as a function to separate specific objects and actions. For children, thinking and actions at early stages of ontogenetic development are at first subordinated to the words of adults (Luria & Yudovich, 1972). According to Luria and Yudovich, subordination of the child's actions and thinking to adult speech raises the child's mental and physical activity to a new stage of development. It signals the onset of a "long chain of formation of complex aspects of his [sic] conscious and voluntary activity" (p. 24).



Vygotsky (1978) reasoned that humans have the capacity to use symbols as tools, they can't control the physical environment, but they can mediate their own psychological activity. He proposed that while physical tools are externally directed, symbolic tools are internally or cognitively directed. Physical tools serve as auxiliary means to advance the ability to control and change the physical world, symbolic tools serve as supportive means to control and reorganize our biologically endowed psychological processes. This control is voluntary and intentional which allows humans to inhibit and delay the functioning of automatic biological processes.

This perspective suggests that learning is a social process in which culturally and historically participants engage in culturally valued activities, using cultural tools. They can develop the specific behaviors required for participation, and by doing so, change the activities and the tools. This foregrounding of dynamic social activity and the tool mediators of that activity are special features of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) formulated the idea that the human mind has a functional system in which the properties of the natural, or biologically specified, brain is organized into a higher, or culturally shaped, mind through the integration of symbolic artifacts into thinking. Some of the higher mental capacities include voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thought, and problem solving, learning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes.

Physical or symbolic artifacts often being modified as they are passed on from one generation to the next. Each generation reconstructs its cultural inheritance to meet the needs of its communities and individuals. For example, the cumbersome early computing machines which we were in awe of during the 1950s, today have become sleek and much more powerful devices that have increasingly found their way into the daily lives of communities in many parts of the world. Likewise, languages are continuously remodeled by their users to serve their

communicative and psychological needs (Lantoff, 1980). A remarkable example is in the impact of new metaphors on the way people think and behave. For instance, for nearly four decades researchers have conceived of and studied human minds as if they were computational devices, a perspective that would have been impossible until the development of computers during the middle years of the twentieth century. As often happens throughout history, a development in one domain gives rise to a ‘spin-off’ in another (Wertsch 1998: 58–9).

Olson (1994) shows how our commonly accepted view that ‘writing maps onto pre-existing models of language’ (Wertsch 1998: 62) is misleading, since in fact, the relationship between writing and language models is the reverse. That is, the categories and structures (for example, sentences, words, phonemes) that are the focus of much linguistic theorizing are, in fact, spin-offs of alphabetic writing systems. For example, while early pictorial writing systems brought meaning into consciousness because these scripts ‘provided a notion of saying the same thing each time they were scanned or recited’, the graphemic or alphabetic system brought verbal form into awareness (Olson 1994: 258).

Different communities (and nations) inherit cultural artifacts from their ancestors, who in turn inherit these artifacts from their ancestors, Vygotsky reasoned that the most appropriate approach to the study of higher mental abilities was historical. He proposed four genetic domains for the proper study of higher mental functions: phylogenetic domain, concerned with how human mentation came to be distinguished from mental processes in other life forms through the integration of mediational means over the course of evolution; sociocultural domain, concerned with how the different types of symbolic tools developed by human cultures throughout the course of their respective histories affected the kinds of mediation favored, and with it the kinds of thinking valued, by these cultures (for example, the impact of such artifacts as numeracy, literacy,

and computers on thinking); ontogenetic domain, where focus is on how children appropriate and integrate mediational means, primarily language, into their thinking activities as they mature; micro genetic domain, where interest is in the reorganization and development of mediation over a relatively short span of time (for example, being trained to criteria at the outset of a lab experiment; learning a word, sound, or grammatical feature of a language).

In my opinion It is important to rely on Vygotsky's significant contribution to the cultural context in shaping individuals' cognition and behavior. He emphasized the significance of social interaction in cognitive development, suggesting that language and thought are closely intertwined. Language is not only a tool for communication but also a means through which individuals construct meaning and shape their identity within social contexts.

In language acquisition, social interaction provides learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning, practice language skills, and develop a sense of belonging within the language community, contributing to the formation of their language identity.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underscores the crucial role of social interaction, scaffolding, and cultural context in supporting learner identity in acquiring a new language. By engaging in meaningful interactions, receiving structured support, and exploring diverse cultural perspectives, learners develop their language skills and construct a dynamic language identity within sociocultural contexts.

## **5.2 The Framework of Learner's Identity Theories**

In the 1970s and 1980s a great deal of language learning research conceptualized the 'identities' of language learners as their fixed personalities, learning styles, and motivations. However, recent work on language learner identities adopts post-structural understandings of identities as fluid, context-dependent, and context-producing, particularly historical and cultural

circumstances. According to this perspective, personalities, learning styles, motivations, and so on are not fixed, unitary, or decontextualized, and while context ‘pushes back’ on individuals’ claims to identity, individuals also struggle to assume identities that they wish to claim. Constructs of investment and imagined communities/imagined identities have been particularly important in these discourses.

The general argument of evaluating learner identity was set off in 1998 by the sociolinguist Susan Gass. She made an important argument about the theoretical relevance of identity categories to L2 learning that needed to be established. The new theories of identity and language learning permit a conceptual shift in research about L2 learning and offer important insights about the language learning process. Over the past 15 years, there has been an explosion of interest in identity and language learning, and ‘identity’ now features in most encyclopedias and handbooks of language learning and teaching (Norton & Toohey 2002; Ricento 2005; McKinney & Norton 2008; Norton 2010; Morgan & Clarke 2011). In the broader field of applied linguistics, interest in identity has also gained considerable momentum. There is work, for example, on identity and pragmatics (Lo & Reyes 2004; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009), identity and sociolinguistics (Joseph 2004; Omoniyi & White 2007; Edwards 2009); and identity and discourse (Benwell & Stokoe 2006; Wodak et al. 2009; Young 2009).

### **5.3 The Post-structuralist Theoretical Framework**

Post-structuralist theories of language have become increasingly interested in identity and language learning researchers (Norton & Morgan in press). Structuralist theories of language, cited as originating with the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), emphasized the study of the linguistic competence that allowed idealized speakers to use and understand language forms

and structures. From this perspective, actual instances of language performance, which could be affected by memory lapses, fatigue, slips, errors, and so on, were not seen as revealing of idealized patterns, and thus were of little interest in the scientific study of language.

However, post-structuralist theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) viewed language not as a set of idealized forms independent of their speakers or their speaking, rather as situated utterances in which speakers, in dialogue with others, struggle to form meanings.

“He used the metaphor of speech communication as a chain, an ongoing conversation that new speakers (for example, children or newcomers to speech communities) strive to join (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 416)”. Structural theories viewed language learning as a gradual individual process of internalizing the set of rules, structures, and vocabulary of a standard language, Bakhtin (1981) claimed that language learning is a process of struggling to use language in order to participate in specific speech communities. Using language meant using a tool other had used before, and Bakhtin saw speakers as constrained by those past usages. However, he also saw speakers as able to use language to express their own meanings (with both custom and innovation characterizing language use). Further, Bakhtin pointed out how social positions outside language might affect any individual’s speaking privilege.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu addresses the post-structuralist study of the politics of language (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1991; Albright & Luke 2008). While post-structuralists are not the only theorists interested in language and power, Bourdieu explicitly pointed to the importance of power in structuring discourse, with interlocutors seldom sharing equal speaking ‘rights’. For Bourdieu, ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ speakers were distinguished by their differential ‘rights to speech’ or their ‘power to impose reception’ (1977: 648). According to Bourdieu, using language was a social and political practice in which an

utterance's value and meaning was determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the speakers. Recognizing that the ascribed value of a person or group can vary, depending on circumstances or contexts (in Bourdieu's terms, 'fields'), he saw linguistic discourse as 'a symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is offered' (1977: 651). Additionally, he noted that dominant usage is associated with the dominant class.

At the center of the post-structuralist theory of SLA are the view of language as symbolic capital and the site of identity construction (Bourdieu, 1991; Gal, 1989; Weedon, 1987), the view of language acquisition as language socialization (Ochs, 1993; Wenger, 1998) and the view of L2 users as agents whose multiple identities are dynamic and fluid (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2000). This theory examines how linguistic, social, cultural, gender and ethnic identities of L2 users, on the one hand, structure access to linguistic resources and interactional opportunities and, on the other, are constituted and reconstituted in the process of L2 learning and use.

The post-structuralist view of language differs significantly from the traditional views of language as consisting of grammar, phonology, and the lexicon, or of language as an ethnic identity marker, post-structuralism views language as an array of discourses imbued with meaning. While the traditional view of language assumes a chain of signs without a subject, produced and seen from an 'objective' position or from nowhere in particular, 'discourses' are viewed as 'practices which form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49) and serve to reproduce, maintain, or challenge existing power and knowledge structures. Discourses may develop about a particular topic, such as gender, class, or linguistic competence, and compete, creating distinct and often incompatible versions of reality.

Post-structuralists suggest that not all languages, discourses or registers are equal in the linguistic marketplace: some are 'more equal than others'. Many post-structuralist linguists build on Bourdieu's (1991) view of linguistic practices as a form of symbolic capital, which can be converted into economic and social capital. The notion of language as symbolic capital has a significant advantage over the notion of 'instrumental motivation', as it allows us to link the individual and the social, tracing the process by which particular linguistic varieties and practices become imbued with values or devalued in the linguistic marketplace (Pavlenko, 2001).

Bonny Norton's (2012) concept of investment in language learning highlights how learners invest their time, effort, and emotions in the language learning process. Learner identity is closely connected to motivation and investment, while learners develop a sense of ownership and personal attachment to the language being learned, which in turn influences their willingness to engage in language learning activities.

#### **5.4 Identity Perspective on Second Language Acquisition**

Norton (2007) emphasizes the learner identity as a flexible paradigm is a post-structuralist perspective on social reality and second language learning. She argues that language learners navigate complex social landscapes marked by power differentials, cultural norms, and institutional structures. Learners draw on their linguistic resources and negotiate their identities within these contexts, actively engaging in processes of meaning-making and identity construction. Baxter (2016) claims that this approach about learner's identity stands in opposition to traditional positions, in which identity is clearly delimited, fixed, coherent and is expected to be similar among individuals (Baxter, 2016). Norton's post-structuralist perspective challenges traditional views of identity in language learning and underscores the dynamic and contingent nature of learner

identity, emphasizing the importance of social context and agency in shaping language learning experiences.

Pennycook (2003) states, "it is not that people use language varieties because of who they are, but rather that we perform who we are by (among other things) using varieties of language" ( p. 528). In the process of identity construction there seems to be a tension between the impacts of the individual's own agency and the societal structure (Dewi, 2007). Cauldron and Smith (1999 in Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 113) tried to elucidate the tension by providing definitions for both concepts. They explained that the term 'agency' denotes the 'personal dimension', whereas the term 'structure' covers what is 'socially given' (Cauldron & Smith, 1999, in Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 113).

Throughout history, identity has been defined differently, although with common ideas. Among the various definitions, there seems to be an evolutionary process. In general terms, identity can be defined as the way we understand and view ourselves in relation to the world, other people, time, and space.

Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder (2001) proposed a framework of identity consisting of four dimensions: personal, social, collective, and relational identity. Personal identity refers to an individual's perception of themselves as individuals with distinct attributes, characteristics, and experiences. Social identity pertains to the aspects of an individual's membership in social groups. These groups can include various categories such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, etc. Collective identity involves the belonging and identification to a larger social entity such as communities, nations, or cultural groups. It encompasses the shared beliefs, values, symbols, and practices that define the group and contribute to individuals' sense of belonging to it. Relational identity refers to how individuals define themselves in relation to others, including their roles and



positions within interpersonal relationships such as family, friends, and romantic partners. It involves aspects such as one's roles as a parent, sibling, friend, etc. These dimensions highlight the complexity of identity and the multiple factors that contribute to how individuals perceive themselves and their relationships with others and society at large.

Identity has both a social and personal dimension. As a personal dimension, on the one hand, humans are considered as agents; and agents can think, decide, and choose. This agency is a self-conscious process which requires us to decide on which self to activate while contradictory multiple selves are negotiating simultaneously. On the other hand, subjectivity constitutes an integral part of identity, which refers to our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions. Regarding the social dimension, identity reflects an individual's relationship with the environment, which is reconstructed through interaction with society. Thus, membership of the community constitutes the social aspect of identity (Hitlin, 2003).

## **5.5 Identity and Community**

Identity has two aspects; one is the attempt to differentiate oneself from the community and the other is the attempt to integrate. One forms his or her identity by adopting different social and personal dimensions such as: gender, age, race, occupation, gangs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class, nation states, or regional territory (Bamberg, 2010, p. 1). When we define a certain identity for ourselves, we are in some way assimilating ourselves to a particular group, and at the same time, we are differentiating ourselves from others who do not belong to that group, although the differentiating role played by identity far outweighs its integrating one. That is why Woodward (2002) claims that identity is essentially about differentiation. There are other scholars such as

Joseph (2004), who argue that the process of identity construction can be two edged which can work partially against individuals and yet connect them together.

Traditionally, identity was perceived as a unitary phenomenon. Yet recently it has been addressed and explored from a post-structuralist perspective. In a globalized, post-structuralist, postmodern world, identity consider to be a subject to change, fluid, diverse, dynamic, shifting, and contradictory. Identity can be socially constructed, co-constructed, and continually reconstructed through language and discourse (Zacharias, 2010; Omoniyi & White, 2008). Rather than being fixed and coherent, identity is considered as "a process" by social theorists (Block, 2007b). Some authors (e.g., Hall, 1995), prefer to use *identification* in an attempt to imply this processing sense. For Harr'e (1987), identity was about the constant and ongoing engagement of individuals in interactions with others (Block, 2007). Identity, while being linguistically constructed, is thought to be fluid '(Pablé, Haas, & Christe, 2010).

The discourse about identity permits rethinking the terms *History and Memory*. Shenhav (2012) claims that identity discourse is not a new phenomenon. Block, Gray & Holborow (2013) posit that one aspect of identity has developed as an individualistic discourse that is anchored in the social sciences and developed because of liberalism. This is a result of methodological liberalism, a world view that assumes that to understand a particular phenomenon one must consider the individual point of view. In the case of language and identity, the forces of neoliberalism, which entail deregulated markets, heightened individualism, and the marketization of activities, have had concomitant effects on the identities of language learners and teachers.

Post-structuralist theories of language have become increasingly attractive to identity and language learning researchers (Norton & Morgan in press). Structuralist theories of language, often cited the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1966), emphasized the study of linguistic

knowledge (competence) that allowed idealized speakers to use and understand language's subtle patterns and structures.

Foucault's (1980) insights about the relationship between *knowledge and power*, and the subtle and complex ways in which power circulates in society has been at the forefront of language. Foucault's conceptualization of power as discursively produced and reproduced is of special interest to language educators as they investigate certain learning environments and how they privilege or stigmatize learners. Pennycook (2007: 39) noted that "Foucault brings a constant skepticism towards cherished concepts and modes of thought. Taken-for granted categories such as man, woman, class, race, ethnicity, nation, identity, awareness, emancipation, language, or power must be understood as contingent, shifting and produced rather than having some prior ontological status". This approach encourages language education researchers to reject 'grand theories' and methods, and to focus on the particularity of the persons, environments, and processes they wish to examine.

The post-structuralist's perspective of identity is considered as being unstated, contextually driven, and emerging within interactions of a given discourse (Miyaharay, 2010). Identity is not only a category or a personal characteristic, but also actually a kind of "becoming", it is social, a learning process, a nexus, and a local-global interplay (Wenger, 1998, p. 163).

Additional focus in research on Identity and SLA examines the relations of power within classrooms and communities whether it promotes or constrains the process of language learning. It is argued that the extent to which a learner speaks or is silent, or writes, reads, or resists, is connected to the extent to which the learner is valued in any given institution or community. In this regard, social processes marked by inequities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation may serve to position learners in ways that silence and exclude. At the same time,

learners may resist marginalization through both covert and overt acts of resistance. What is of central interest to researchers of second language identity is that the very articulation of power, identity, and resistance is expressed in and through language (Norton,2013).

Identity concerns "negotiated experience", which means people experience different identities through their social participation and then make a choice among the identities within them (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). Researchers Pierce (1995), McKay and Wong (1996), and Armour (2004) note that negotiating multiple identities is a site of struggle. For example, one of the participants in McKay and Wong's (1996) study was "Michael Lee" who resisted the way he was treated as an ESL student. Michael Lee refused to write about the suggested topic of family or school when he was asked to in a language examination. As an alternative, he chose to write about his hobbies as he felt much more comfortable with this aspect of his identity. The conclusion McKay and Wong (1996) reached was that any person or any language learner experiences social negotiations within his or her learning environment in order to finally form identities he or she prefers (Zacharias, 2010).

In addition to continually negotiating identity formulation, especially national identity, as Puri (2004) and Smith (2003, 2004) note, that is no longer regarded as a fixed concept attached to one 's native land. Rather, identity formulation is a continuing process, re-created daily through ceremonies and influential historical events (Block, 2007). Therefore, the notion of race as a way of classifying and attributing identity to people can also be questioned (Ali, 2004). Abdi (2004) contributes to ongoing discussions within academia and society at large about the complexities of race, identity, and social justice. By questioning the traditional notions of race, Abdi encourages critical reflection and dialogue aimed at promoting inclusivity, equality, and respect for diversity.

Norton (1997) argues that language learners are continuously engaged in a process of identity construction every time they speak. She further suggests that learning a new language can be a stimulating experience that involves the whole person: physically, cognitively, and emotionally. According to the post-structuralist perspective, identity is viewed as being unstated, contextually driven, and emerging within interactions of a given discourse (Miyaharay, 2010).

Norton's construct of "investment," which complements the concept of motivation in SLA (Dornyei, 2001), is inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1991), and signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners with the target language. Learners are often ambivalent about learning and practicing the language. If learners "invest" in the target language, they understand that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and linguistic and cultural material resources, which will increase the value of their cultural capital. While psychologists might ask, "To what extent is the learner motivated to learn the target language?" the identity theorist asks, "What is the learner's investment in the target language practices of this classroom?" A learner may be a highly motivated language learner, but may have little investment in the language approach of a given classroom or community, which may, be racist, sexist, elitist, or homophobic. There may also be important discrepancies between a language learner's conception of good teaching, and the practices of a given classroom. The construct of investment has gained considerable interest and research in the field of SLA (McKay & Wong, 1996; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Pittaway, 2004; Haneda, 2005; Cummins, 2006; Potowski, 2007; Arkoudis & Davison, 2008; Norton & Gao, 2008).

## 5.6 Learners Negotiate their Identity in the Process of SLA

Norton (2012) claims that in the language classroom, learners negotiate their identities as language learners through interactions with peers, instructors, and authentic language use situations. They may draw on their existing identities, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic repertoires to shape their identities as language learners. Identity construction and negotiation theory explores how individuals construct and negotiate their identities through interaction with others and engagement in various social practices. Learner identity in the language classroom is shaped by language ideologies, including beliefs about language proficiency, native speaker norms, and cultural authenticity, attitudes, and assumptions about language and its use within society. Learners may internalize and negotiate these ideologies as they navigate their language learning journey and construct their identities as language learners.

Norton (2000) observed inconsistencies in the predictions made by studies of motivation in SLA, on the one hand, and what she found from careful ethnographic observation of language learners, on the other. Her work on the framework of identity in language learning has contributed significantly to the understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of learner identity. Her work underlines the importance of considering learners' investment, agency, and sociocultural contexts in promoting inclusive and empowering language learning environments.

Norton (2010) argues that language learners possess a linguistic repertoire that consists of multiple languages, varieties, and styles that they use for different communicative purposes. Learners' linguistic repertoires reflect their diverse language experiences and identities, which may include elements of their native language(s), heritage language(s), and the target language being learned. She highlights the importance of affiliation with language learning communities and the role of social relationships in shaping learners' identities. Learners' sense of belonging and

inclusion within language learning communities influences their motivation, confidence, and willingness to engage in language learning activities. Norton proposes that language learners have access to various identity options or ways of positioning themselves within the language learning context. Learners may adopt different identities (e.g., as language learners, language users, cultural insiders/outside) depending on their social interactions, experiences, and goals.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2001) consider the powerful role that personal narratives play as mediating artifacts as people undertake to reform an identity. The engagement in language learning is an investment that suggests different sets of questions about a learner's commitment to learning the target language. In addition to asking 'To what extent is the learner motivated to learn the target language?' The teacher or researcher can also ask 'What is the learner's investment in the language practices of this classroom?' A language learner may be highly motivated but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community, which may, for example, be racist, sexist, elitist, anti-immigrant, or homophobic.

Alternatively, the language learner's conception of good language teaching may not be consistent with that of the teacher, compromising the learner's investment in the language practices of the classroom. Thus, the language learner, despite being highly motivated, may not be invested in the language practices of a given classroom. The learner could then be excluded from those practices or choose not to participate in classroom activities. In time, the learner could be positioned as a 'poor' or unmotivated language learner by others (Norton & Toohy 2001). As people participate in different culturally specific activities, they enter different social relations and encounter, and learn how to employ and ultimately appropriate, different mediational means. Furthermore, in my case studies, I have observed that the decision to invest time and effort in learning a new language prompts significant reflections on the motivations and commitments of

the learners involved. This decision initiates a transformative process that leads learners to contemplate what drives them to engage in language acquisition, how they envision their future selves with enhanced language proficiency, and which personal and cultural values they aspire to express and uphold through their language use. Exploring personal narratives within language learning contexts unveils a complex interplay between linguistic acquisition and identity construction. It highlights that language learning is not merely about acquiring new words and grammar rules, but also about reshaping one's sense of self and cultural identity. Learners actively participate in this dynamic process, continually shaping and reformulating their identities through meaningful engagement with the target language and its associated cultural contexts. For instance, learners may find themselves navigating linguistic and cultural boundaries, negotiating between their native identity and the identity they cultivate through language learning. This negotiation influences how they perceive themselves and are perceived by others within diverse linguistic communities. Moreover, language proficiency becomes a tool for expressing cultural values, beliefs, and experiences, thereby enriching interpersonal interactions, and fostering cross-cultural understanding. The process of learning a language becomes a journey of self-discovery and personal growth, where learners develop not only linguistic competence but also a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and global interconnectedness.

Overall, my observations underscore the multifaceted nature of language learning as a dynamic and transformative process. It emphasizes that learners are active agents in shaping their linguistic and cultural identities, contributing to their personal growth and broader societal understanding. Additionally, language learning is a journey of self-discovery and personal empowerment. Which empowers the learners to actively shape their linguistic and cultural identities while enhancing their ability to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. The



learning of Hebrew contributes to the learner's personal growth by adaptability, and intercultural competence. It encourages them to step outside their comfort zones and to explore new ways of thinking and communicating.

In this research, the learners immersed themselves in the cultural and religious traditions associated with Hebrew. Non-Jewish learners reported that learning the Hebrew language facilitated intercultural dialogue and deepened their understanding of their own cultural heritage. Exploring Hebrew added a new dimension to each learner's life and practice, leading to a shift in how they perceived themselves. For instance, Jas, who practices a religion, found that delving into Hebrew language and understanding phrases from books like "Psalms", "Song of Songs", and Ecclesiastic enriched her religious practice. This understanding provided insights into religious practices, beliefs, and the historical contexts in which these texts were composed. Jas emphasized that understanding phrases like "Praise God" deepened her grasp of Hebrew language nuances and fostered a stronger connection to Jewish tradition and heritage. She expressed heightened enthusiasm for learning Hebrew, seeking parallels, and exchanging ideas between Christianity and Judaism. This exploration enriched not only her personal spiritual journey but also broadened her cultural understanding and appreciation of Israeli culture and history. Her visits to Israel added another layer of appreciation and connection to her Christian identity. The Hebrew language became a vital tool for Jas to explore and deepen her religious practice and study. It also motivated her to continue studying Hebrew independently and in small groups.

Al who converts to Judaism, the learning of Hebrew facilitated a connection to Jewish communities worldwide and promoted a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. When he

attended service at the synagogue, he felt that Hebrew enabled him to engage more deeply in religious services, understand prayers, and participate actively in synagogue service. Al majored in comparative literature, and he is versed in several languages and textual study, Hebrew provided him an access to many important Jewish texts, such as the Torah, Talmud, and prayer books, are primarily in Hebrew. Proficiency in Hebrew allowed Al to study these texts directly, fostering a deeper understanding of Jewish law, ethics, and tradition. He felt that understanding the texts in their original language allowed him to connect with generations of Jewish scholars.

Sin began his journey to study Hebrew initially as a tool to enhance his research in political science, focusing on the Middle East. However, his exploration of the language soon transcended its purely linguistic aspect. He delved into Israeli music and culture, which significantly amplified his understanding of Hebrew beyond academic boundaries. For Sin, learning Hebrew became more than just an academic pursuit—it became a means of connecting with Jewish communities worldwide. This newfound connection inspired him to enroll in a Jewish study certificate program alongside his graduate studies in political science. By doing so, he sought to deepen his cultural understanding and engage more meaningfully with Jewish traditions and heritage. In essence, what started as a pragmatic approach to academic research evolved into a personal and cultural journey, enriching Sin's academic pursuits and broadening his horizons beyond his original intentions.

Lee who grew up in a secular Jewish home, Hebrew was always in the background and the language that was reserved for the special time with his grandmother.

## **Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis**

### **6.1 Learners Identity and Language Acquisition**

In the following section I introduce an analysis of language learner identity based on a range of factors, including linguistic background, attitudes and beliefs, cultural identity, language learning experiences, social context, and the dynamic process of identity negotiation.

Understanding these factors provide insights into how learners perceive themselves in relation to the languages they are learning and how their language identities evolve throughout the language learning journey.

The relationship between the language, the learner and the larger community has been an instrumental objective in my research. I am interested in investigating the participants' identity formation because of the interaction with Hebrew language and culture. In the case studies that I am presenting the participants described their identity in multiple layers. Primarily they indicated their birthplace and their ancestral background, they viewed identity as an amalgam of nationality, race, knowledge, culture, and customs.

The participants were given a questionnaire about identity and the role of Hebrew language in their life. The following descriptions reflect their thoughts, feelings, and personal information about identity and their connection to Hebrew. (See Questionnaire: Appendix B)

Analyzing language learner's identity involves examining how individuals perceive themselves in relation to the language(s) they are learning, as well as how these perceptions influence their language learning experiences and behaviors. Based on a survey and interview I conducted with my students I consider the following key aspects in analyzing language learner identity. For each area of analysis, I included the reasoning and explanation for selecting the category.

## 6.2 Hebrew Language and Identities - Case Studies' Reflection

1) Al is a 23-year-old, white male from Ashkenazi background who currently lives in California. His primary motivation for studying Hebrew stemmed from personal interest, family heritage, religious reasons, and academic requirement. He has been studying Hebrew for six years and has achieved an advanced level. According to Al he has a familial tie to Hebrew, Israel and his Jewish heritage. However, no one in his family speaks Hebrew or grew up speaking Hebrew. Al claimed that “studying Hebrew has brought me closer to Judaism and has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of our culture and history.” He also believes that the languages spoken by people are connected to their identity in the case of Hebrew, Al feels that “it allows me to be more confidence and nuance study into the background of my identity. It has also influenced my sense of self, more responsible because I feel more responsible knowing about current events.” Al feels a stronger connection to the Jewish culture and tradition as a result of studying Hebrew “I can better understand the culture past and present”. According to Al the study of Hebrew deepened his religious and spiritual identity, and he has a better understanding of the prayers, ritual, and religious texts. The study of Hebrew helped Al to have a stronger sense of belonging. Al believes that studying Hebrew is interconnected to his identity, because as a B.A student “Hebrew defined my entire undergraduate experience”.

The symbols that Al identified as Jewish and Israeli culture were the olive tree, Torah scroll and pomegranate.

Al’s main goal is to pass down Hebrew knowledge to his future family. He is still unclear whether he will be able to use Hebrew in his expected academic career and to what extent. He would like to raise his child speaking Hebrew. He is now in the process of applying to a Ph.D. program in comparative literature.

2) Jas is a 27-year-old female American Eurasian who is currently residing in Singapore. Her main reasons for studying Hebrew are for religious reasons, career opportunities and personal interest. She studied Hebrew classes at the University of Southern California and joined USC Hillel<sup>66</sup> organization Hebrew Language Table semi-regularly. She continues to explore and participate in groups and independent learning of modern and biblical Hebrew. During Covid-19 in the summer of 2020 she moved with her mother to Singapore “I thought that moving to Singapore would mean that I would no longer have a community of people to speak Hebrew with. But I'm thankful for long-distance learning made possible through Zoom.” Jas is part of an online Hebrew class that meets once a month in Singapore. She is currently a Ph.D. student in public diplomacy.

Jas feels connected to Hebrew because of her religious affiliation “I am a Christian, which heavily influences my cultural practices and values. Studying Hebrew allows me to see Christianity's Jewish historical roots, which reinforces my faith as I witness the revival of the language in modern times. I can also better appreciate my faith because of how many Hebrew words are derived from the Bible and display a depth of meaning connected to God's original design.”

She feels that Hebrew has impacted her sense of cultural identity. “As someone who is half-Polish, studying the language has encouraged me to spend more time examining the lived experiences of Jewish populations that lived in my father's province in Poland before WW2.” This has reinforced her identity as an American of Polish descent. Before learning Hebrew, she had a

---

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.uschillel.org/>

shallow connection to her Polish ancestry. But understanding that Poles and Jews shared the same fate during the Holocaust years allowed her to identify with Jewish suffering. `

Jas believes that the language(s) a person speaks are connected to their personal identity because from her “Speaking Hebrew helps me to feel accepted in Jewish society, especially when I am in Israel. I have been able to make more friends this way. This has given me more confidence”. Jas feels a stronger connection to Jewish culture and tradition because of studying Hebrew. “When I am in Israel, I can read street signs and restaurant menus. I can even understand some contemporary Israeli music, which has allowed me to listen to more Israeli bands where most band-members are Jewish. I follow their members on social media, and I feel increasingly part of their world”.

“Learning Hebrew helps me to connect with the Jewish patriarchs. Reading the Tanakh in Hebrew has been an empowering experience. When I read what prophets like Abraham and Moses said in Hebrew, I feel as though they are speaking directly with me. As Christians, we believe we are the 'spiritual' children of Abraham. He is the spiritual father of my faith. Speaking Hebrew enforces that identity I have as a Christian.”

She identified several symbols as part of Israeli and Jewish culture: the pomegranate, the old city of Jaffa, olive trees and the mountains surrounding Jerusalem.

The connections she has been able to make with others who are either Hebrew-speaking or Hebrew-learners has been incredibly rewarding for Jas. She made friends with Jews in America, China, Singapore, and Korea because of the study of Hebrew.

Jas envisions herself as a professor in Israel, teaching students in English but having conversations with them in Hebrew.

In her community in Singapore, she sometimes participates in an online Hebrew Language Tables in where Hebrew students from all around the world convene on Zoom to practice speaking Hebrew with teachers that are based in Jerusalem. “Hebrew teachers are always very friendly and kind, so I have always enjoyed meeting new people there. I also recently participated in a Sukkot Celebration held by a prominent Jewish synagogue in Israel. I was very happy that I could explain some of the Jewish customs to my non-Jewish friends who attended, all because I learned these in Hebrew classes! I find the Jewish community very embracing of other peoples, races, and religions.”

Because of her Hebrew skills Jas feels “I feel much more involved in Israeli current events now that I know more Hebrew speaking friends in Israel, which enables me to feel a sense of belonging and solidarity with the Jewish people. I also feel that my friendships with fellow learners of Hebrew is a deeper, stronger bond because we share such a unique interest in a language that isn't considered mainstream.”

Her current engagement with Hebrew is by being a Bible-study teacher. She wants to continue to understand the Hebrew language so that she can share the 'treasures' to fellow lovers of the Bible. She also would like to advise the Israeli government on public diplomacy policy in the future. Jas sees herself writing articles and delivering speeches in Hebrew. Ultimately, she would like to write a book in English that will be translated into the Hebrew language as well!

“I believe that the Hebrew language and identity are interconnected for me. I cannot continue living a complete existence without the study of this language. In fact, I feel as though my life would be missing a significant piece if I stopped learning or using the language altogether. This language connects me to the modern state of Israel, and this language connects me to the

ancient nation of Israel. This language connects me to God, for I could not understand His nature if I did not understand what His names in Hebrew meant.”

As a PhD student of public diplomacy, learning Hebrew has positively reinforced Jas’s studies, especially when she encounters Hebrew terminology in academic articles “I feel that learning the language helps the world of academia to take me more seriously, and it has helped foster trust between the Israeli academic world and myself.”

3) Sin is a 28-year-old, Albanian Turkish male, who is currently living in Los Angeles to complete his Ph.D. studies at University of Southern California in Political Science. He studied Hebrew for his personal interest, career opportunity and academic requirement. He has been studying Hebrew for the past three years and visited Israel in the past summer 2023. Sin does not have any tie to the Hebrew cultural world. His perspective about cultural identity is that “people in Turkey and Israel still share some remnants of this culture. He sees the cultural distance; however, the studying of Hebrew helped him connect to a distant culture, “I identify as a secular Turkish person. Learning Hebrew helped me see distant cultural connections with my identity and Israeli culture as well as Turkey’s connections to the region of the Middle East.” Sin claimed that prior to taking Hebrew he used to have little background and understanding about Israel and overall, the Middle East,” there is much stigma about this region among secular Turks in my social circle. The stigma is partly related to the state of contemporary Turkish politics, and many people in my cultural group have a reactionary position in the sense that they associate everything that they do not like about Turkey’s current regime with the Middle East, a region associated with fundamentalism and militarized conflicts. Israel, a country located also in this region, suffers from such associations.”



In the immediate future, Sin hopes to use Hebrew for his research about Israeli culture and politics. “I use Hebrew when reaching out to professors of Israeli origin sometimes to maintain my language skills [...] in case of an academic opportunity coming my way, I am open to move to Israel temporarily, for which I can take advantage of my Hebrew for daily chores.”

In the meantime, Sin participated in various talks in the Jewish Studies Department. The vocabulary he acquired and familiarity with the Jewish culture has become useful. “I visited Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as a cultural experience. I went to concerts in Turkey, where the singers sang in Hebrew. I joined Reddit, Instagram, and Twitter groups about Hebrew language where I have interacted with Israelis in Hebrew, and I participated in Hillel Center talks about Hebrew language and Israeli culture.”

“I follow many Hebrew language-related accounts on Instagram and Twitter like Hebrew Verbs with Rut Avni, ProHebrew.com, Hebrew by *Inbal*. These are the ones whose content I regularly follow. I also follow a political party, *Yesh Atid* and politicians like *Idan Roll* and *Yair Lapid*. I also follow many pop singers on Instagram like *Harel Skaat* and *Ran Danker*. I listen to a podcast, the Israel Story. I also have an online subscription in the Haaretz newspaper. I also subscribed to Hebrew-Verbs.co.il for help with word conjugation and pronunciation.... signed up to the Jerusalem Film Center online. Whenever I run into other learners of Hebrew that I know from the courses I took, I try to interact with them in Hebrew even for a few words. I think this gives us something to connect with”.

Sin’s Future goals or plans related to Hebrew language learning and its connection “I am mostly focused on finding ways to integrate Hebrew into my research” ...However, Sin states that studying Hebrew has helped him overcome this mental barrier and explore many cultural connections between Israel and Turkey as well as between Turkey and the wider region. “This

realization helped me better appreciate parts of my identity, from my dietary habits to my taste in music, shared with Israelis, and to a lesser extent, with the broader Middle East. While I study Hebrew, I also read about the history of Turkey's own Jewish community. This helped me to trace the impact of Jewish culture in the making of the modern Turkish nation and identity. I have started to see that there is a link between secular Turkish culture and the urban culture of non-Muslim groups under the Ottoman Empire, one of which was the empire's Jews. As Turkish culture underwent secularization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the non-Muslim urban culture, inherited from the Ottoman Empire, expanded among middle-class Turks and is, to some extent, perpetuated among my social circles".

As a result of studying Hebrew Sin's connection to Jewish culture and heritage expanded and he became more interested in exploring Jewish heritage "I do feel emotional affinity to people who speak Hebrew. For example, I get excited when I overhear people speaking Hebrew in places where I do not expect to hear conversations in Hebrew. This happens when I visit places in Los Angeles, or when I visit Greece on vacation and run into Hebrew-speakers, or when I hear tourists in my hometown."

"As I was learning Hebrew, I educated myself about Jewish experiences throughout history. I have read extensively about the history and the government of Israel, and I read a little bit about Judaism. That certainly led to a stronger connection to Israeli/Jewish culture on my part. Whenever I run into symbols, stories, and practices associated with Jewish culture in other spheres of life outside my language training, they do not feel alien/foreign to me at all.

With the establishment of the *Yishuv* and the State of Israel, the non-Muslim urban culture in the Ottoman Empire, to a limited extent, may have been transferred to Israel through Jewish migrants. Arguably, it is as if middle-class people in Turkey and Israel still share some remnants of this

culture. I see this cultural, albeit distant, connection between two countries thanks to studying Hebrew”.

Sin believes that the language one speaks helps connect to identity. “Geographically speaking, I never traveled to the east of my country of origin before I visited Israel; therefore, I did not know how much Turkish culture was shared with other cultures in the Middle East. My brief visit to Israel, which happened only thanks to my training in Hebrew, gave me the chance to reflect on Middle Eastern aspects of Turkish culture as well as its commonalities with Israeli culture.”

Studying Hebrew and learning about Israeli culture also gave him access to the Israeli public sphere and cultural landscape. As a result of this ongoing experience, he realized that his country of origin and Israel share common problems related to issues of culture, ethnicity, religion, and politics. “These are problems that, I have previously thought, were only Turkish idiosyncrasies. Learning about Israel as part of my Hebrew language training helped me realize that these issues may have to do with the neighborhood that Turkey and Israel share, which made him more strongly identify with the region”.

“The most rewarding experience is the prestige that comes with being able to have some command of a language that is not English or one’s mother tongue. Secondly, I can now appreciate and understand Semitic etymological roots of many words in my native language, which never ceases to surprise me. I also benefit intellectually from my access to political discussions within Israel.”

The challenges that Sin faces are related to sounds in Hebrew that do not exist in his native language, for example: the *chet* sound or the difference between *kaf* and *qof*. “I usually have a hard time remembering how words including these letters are written. As a remedy he tries to memorize

how to write them instead of going by their pronunciation [..]Moreover, he feels that the lasting influence of the *Tanakh* in Hebrew sometimes makes its grammar and vocabulary less structured. His perspective about connection to Hebrew with non-religious background and with zero familiarity with ancient religious texts is a challenge. However, Hebrew is likely to remain in his life and have a part in his professional career. He is also planning to apply to be part of the Turkish-Israeli Civil Society Forum in the near future, where he can use his training for something constructive like to promote friendly relations between two peoples. “I also have a plan of starting a Hebrew-language Instagram account in Turkish since individuals in Turkey do not have access to Hebrew language material in Turkish. That would be a perfect platform to use to introduce Israeli culture for Turkish audiences in a positive light.”

When Sin was asked whether he believes that the Hebrew language and identity are interconnected for him personally, his reply was “Despite that I am not a highly advanced speaker of Hebrew, the learning process has been transformational in terms of how I saw my identity and my own culture. I wonder if I would have a similar experience with a different language from Hebrew, and I wonder how much of my experience is related to the unique history and culture behind Hebrew language.”

4). Lee is a 21-year-old white Jewish American Israeli man. His father is Israeli Jew, and his mother is a Jew by choice. His primary motivation to study Hebrew is to connect to family heritage and for personal interest. “I have studied Hebrew at USC, namely, to increase my communication capabilities with my family in Israel and to connect with them on a deeper level. Many of my family members abroad speak English fluently, but there is so much about communicating in Hebrew that enables a more intimate and emotional connection, especially between Jewish people.”

Studying Hebrew enabled Lee to understand the words of prayers that he used his entire life in a more meaningful way. He has been able to connect with his grandmother in a language that she feels more comfortable speaking in, despite living in the United States for more than three decades. “I also feel that speaking Hebrew with my Israeli peers at school allows us to find a deeper, more meaningful sense of community, especially in times of heightened antisemitism and hatred towards Israeli nationals.”

Speaking Hebrew influenced Lee’s sense of self and identity by connecting to his ancestral background. “I feel more connected to my ancestors because it is the language of the country that offered them asylum after they fled the grip of the Nazis in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s. When I speak Hebrew, I feel like I am communicating in the language that enabled me to be here today, decades later.” As a result of studying Hebrew, he feels a stronger connection to Jewish culture and heritage. By speaking Hebrew Lee feels he is part of a larger Jewish movement that shows to the world that our presence here on Earth is permanent and unwavering. “Time and time again, the Jews have been persecuted, driven out of their homes, and murdered as scapegoats for overlying social issues, often only inflamed by rhetoric incited by narcissistic leaders and terrorist organizations”.

Studying Hebrew has played a role in Lee’s religious identity. He grew up in a non-traditional Jewish home most of his life. By speaking Hebrew, he now feels more spiritually uplifted and excited to practice Judaism. The most rewarding part of studying Hebrew for Lee was the development of his relationship with his grandmother. “I get to see her communicate with me in her most comfortable way, not needing to search for a moment for the right words.”

Some of the challenges he experienced is that he reached a plateau, and he doesn't feel he progressed as he would have liked due to the lack of a daily Hebrew speaking environment. “I

need to now move to Israel to strengthen my Hebrew speaking abilities. I hope to live in Israel! So, I see it encompassing my daily life as my main tool for communication”.

Interacting with other Hebrew learners and speakers has been nothing but exciting for Lee. When he speaks Hebrew, he feels an immediate and deep connection with whom he is speaking, because it makes him feel safe. “I know that they will understand me and will listen to me and my story with Judaism as I will theirs.” If everything goes as planned, Lee’s goal is to live in Israel one day and solidify his Hebrew speaking abilities. “It has always been a dream of mine to make Aliyah and live closer to my family abroad. I have wanted for a long time to spend significant time in Israel and connect with my roots”.

Lee strongly feels a deep connection to Hebrew language and his Israeli identity because he is Jewish by blood and was raised an Israeli Hebrew-speaking household. “I feel safest when I am in Israel and able to be proudly myself and proudly Jewish without the constant fear of being scoffed at or hated for simply being me. The people of Israel love deeper than any group of people I have ever been amongst, and so it would be hard for me to not spend time there and be with the people that love me the most”.

### **6.3 The Approach Towards Hebrew**

As part of my study, I explored the connections each of my participants has to the Hebrew language; what makes them feel attached to Hebrew and how they manifested this in their life. Each participant received and replied to a questionnaire about their relationship with Hebrew (see Appendix B).

AL responded that he feels that his attachment to Hebrew is manifested during religious services and Jewish social events. He likes to speak Hebrew rather than English when he wants privacy, discusses Hebrew art/literature, or when he is comforting somebody. He reads Hebrew poems, songs, occasionally the news, social media, and religious material. He uses Hebrew words a lot when he is thinking about his family *“I like to speak Hebrew with my husband, my future children, and other Jewish people”*.

Jas’s attachment to Hebrew language is defined by her connection to the Bible, both Old and New Testament. She feels that learning Modern Hebrew is a more intimate and spiritual experience. She also likes that it has a grammatical structure that is very different from English and Chinese. It challenges her to think in a different way. Jas views Modern Hebrew as unique to the Jewish people and the language of the Bible as close to a "pure" language from antiquity. When she uses Hebrew in any form, she feels close to God. According to her perspective, certain biblical concepts cannot fully be understood without Hebrew proficiency. She likes the Hebrew Aleph Bet because each letter evolved from a pictogram, and each letter carries a numerical value. *“This is very unique. There are only 22 letters, and each letter is easy to write and easy to identify.”*

Jas likes to speak Hebrew rather than English when she explains Biblical concepts to her Bible study community, because she thinks that there are ideas that can only be communicated through a deep dive into the Hebrew language. Her main interaction with the language is when she reads the Hebrew *Tanakh*, posts from an Israeli friend's social media, street signs, and menus in Israel, and from newspapers such as Haaretz. Additionally, she reads simple poetry and stories and uses a translator for words she doesn't know.

Sin’s attachment to Hebrew language stems from his motivation to become a fluent speaker. He feels that a person who speaks the native language of a country comes with an elevated

social status and gives a deeper access to a culture. Sin claims that when he speaks Hebrew he feels accomplished and a skillful scholar. Speaking Hebrew during courses opened an opportunity for Sin to encounter Jewish and Israeli friends. Hebrew became very useful when he talks about Israeli culture and politics. He likes speaking Hebrew with his Israeli friends in America and in Turkey because the language helps to solidify the connection and create a unique bond. Additionally, Sin likes the Hebrew Aleph Bet because *“it gives me privacy when I want to make sure that what I write would not be understood and deciphered easily by others around me. It is better than using any other language with the Latin alphabet.”* He mainly reads Hebrew from grammar books, song lyrics, newspapers, from posts on Twitter (X) and Instagram.

Lee regrets he didn't have more courses in Hebrew during his early years in Junior-High school. He is grateful that USC's Hebrew program is more developed than most schools' and he can learn Hebrew in college. He likes to attend Hebrew classes more than any other language and would not want any other foreign language to take its place. As for pronunciation he feels that speaking with an Israeli accent gives him a sense of pride. he strongly believes *“a person who speaks Hebrew very well has a better social status and respect in the Israel society.”* Lee feels that when he speaks Hebrew he is connected to his ancestors. He is using Hebrew when he goes to temple/synagogue, when meeting Israelis, his family and in class. *“I use Hebrew words a lot when I am speaking to family or traveling. I like to speak Hebrew rather than English when I am with my family, and especially with my grandparents.”* Lee likes Hebrew because it is efficient and beautiful to write. *“It is efficient because it is written and read in an “interpreted manner.” Which to me means that the word is pronounced based on a combination of knowledge AND reading.”*



#### **6.4 Case Studies' Identity - Summary**

The participants in this study share similarities and differences in their journey of incorporate their identity with the process of acquiring Hebrew. Every participant started the process of learning Hebrew with a different background. For each participant the components included their geographic region and culture, family tradition, style of living and philosophical perspective about society. However, because Language and culture are deeply intertwined, the participants attested that the learning of a new language exposed them to cultural themes, traditions, and values associated with Hebrew. This exposure led to a greater appreciation for the culture and influenced how they perceived themselves within their own cultural context. The four cases reported that the Language was a key marker of social identity. As they became proficient in a Hebrew, they felt that they gained access to new social groups and communities. Additionally, they felt that the access to a new language led to shifts in self-concept as they adopted new linguistic patterns, cultural norms, and ways of thinking associated with the Hebrew that they haven't thought about it before.

#### **6.5 Case Studies Analysis - Linguistic Competence**

My study shows that a larger and sophisticated vocabulary correlates with the learner's level of communicative competence. A richer vocabulary developed because of the use of selected paintings in my study. Empirical studies have also demonstrated the relationship between vocabulary richness and the skill to express ideas, opinions, and emotions in Hebrew as a foreign language and have suggested that vocabulary repertoire is fundamental to comprehension and communication (Staehr, 2008). Although vocabulary richness is not the sole indicator of a learner's

communicative competence, the number of words and phrases a learner attains corresponds to his or her communicative competence (Milton, 2010).

A sample of Activity recorded the use of vocabulary associated with paintings of Rubin and Gutman in oral presentation:

How many x the word was used in oral discourse	AL	Jas	Sin	Lee
homeland מולדת	xxx	xxxxx	xxxxxx	xxxxxxx
state מדינה	x	x		x
Landscape נוף	xxxxxx			
Agriculture חקלאות		x	xx	x
Pomegranate רימון	xxx		xxxx	xxxx
Olive זית	xx	x		xxx
Beach חוף	x	xx	x	xxxx
Family משפחה	xx	x		xx
Tradition מסורת				
Pioneers חלוצים	xx	xxx	xxxxx	xxxxxxx
Life חיים	xx	x	xx	x
Body גוף				
Face פנים				
Beginning התחלה				
Ancient עתיק	xxx			
Friends חברים				
Bust עסוק				
Environment סביבה				xx
City עיר	x	x	x	x
Nature טבע	x			
feeling הרגשה	x	x	xx	xxxxx

### *Case Study 1 – Al's Analysis*

In case study #1, the participant demonstrated the ability to describe in writing items presented in art image 3.1 by Maurycy Gottlieb. Al used the present tense to describe the place, time, and the characters. “ [...] עם הרבה גיילים, גברים ונשים [...] ” מראה אחד ימי הנוראים. יש הרבה יהודים. [...] the large items in the visual art were identified using plural nouns and adjectives in agreement with the gender שלה הגברים לובשים “את הטליתות שלה”. In image 5.1 by Chagall, he used verbs and adjective “ענייים פקוחות” [eyes opened]. The participant used

conjunction words such as: yet, maybe, even though, but, “although they are separated they are important”, “the men talk about Torah, but this woman knows” אבל האישה הגברים מדברים על התורה, אך על פי כן הן מופרדות הן חשובות. הזאת יודעת [...] אף על פי כן הן מופרדות הן חשובות.

In image 1.2 by Reuven Ruben “*The Pomegranates*”, the participant correctly used irregular plural nouns with matching gendered adjectives [בתים לבנים] “white houses”. In another instance he used an irregular plural noun correctly [רחובות] “streets”, the word street in Hebrew is masculine yet the plural has a feminine suffix. The following two examples demonstrated his inconsistently use of infinitives with helping verbs, for example: “this neighborhood in the painting makes me think that she is ancient and was always there without tensions” [השכונה בציור עושה לי] [מרגיש שהיא עתיקה ותמיד הייתה שם בלי מתחים]. However, in the following sentence the participant used “the streets in the painting causing me to feel that maybe this painting is Shabbat” [הרחובות בלי אנשים עושים לי לחשוב שאולי בתמונה היום זה שבת].

In his oral discourse the participant clearly described the facial features in Chagall image 5.2 *The Green Violinist*, “Chagall’s style doesn’t have depth, the body and face in his art are always peculiar and interesting [הגוף והפנים באומנות שלו מעניינים ומוזרים]. In this image the participant immediately recalled the green face in the image [פנים ירוקים], he used the description of the houses “small houses” in agreement with the adjective [בתים קטנים]. In the discourse the participant intuitively used phrases such as: I don’t see, I don’t know, I was sad. He also used the appropriate adjective describing the characters “adult woman and young child” [ילד צעיר, אישה מבוגרת].

The participant showed strategic competence by paraphrasing his description of the image *The Green Violinist* by Marc Chagall. The description “a purple man with violin, very green face, he is playing” [איש סגול עם כינור, אני תמיד זוכר פנים ירוקים מאוד, בתים קטנים]. During the oral discourse,

the speaker used the phrase “green face” and projected the potential location of the scenery in the painting. Al said that he always associated the violin with Jewishness.

In painting 1.2 *The Pomegranate* by Rubin the participant interpreted the pomegranates as a sign of tranquility, symbolizing Jewish history, faith, and agriculture. The painting embraces the connection between traditions and work for the Jews in Israel. The feeling of quiet because the houses in the background are white, and it is not possible to see them clearly due to the light background, but peace is ubiquitous in the streets, and the houses are opened in between the mountains and the trees [עץ הרימונים ... מזכיר לי על ההיסטוריה של היהודים על מזל וחקלאות]. This description showed the use of imaginative strategy “there is only one man in the house, but I cannot see him... there is peace in the streets” [יש רק איש אחד בבית ואני לא יכול לראות אותו/אותה.... יש שלום] [ברחובות].

In the oral discourse about the painting of Chagall “The Birthday”<sup>67</sup> (Head over Heels in Love Marc and Bella Chagall), Al sees a bride and a groom, a couple, he thinks it's Shabbat because of the food and the flowers. Al associates the painting with Shabbat because of the flowers and the bride and groom. “It is interesting that the woman has flowers, he asks: are the flowers from the groom? The woman wears black.

Al recalled that Chagall's painting style was very unique. His paintings always included narrow figures and the theme was fantasy. In this particular painting the groom (the male) is in the air but not the woman”.

---

<sup>67</sup> Head over heels in love: Marc and Bella Chagall's spectacular romance, Chagall's ecstatic paintings of his wife <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/may/27/marc-and-bella-chagall-the-flying-lovers-of-vitebsk-emma-rice>

[מה אתה רואה בתמונה? אני רואה בתמונה הזאת חתן וכלה... אני חושב שזה עדיין שבת, כי אני רואה את האוכל בשולחן והפרחים. זה מעניין שלאישה יש פרחים. הפרחים מהחתן? ממי הפרחים? הוא חתן והיא כלה. מעניין שהיא לובשת שחור, זה סמל שהיא עצובה.

מי הצייר? שאגאל. אני לא יודע הרבה עליו. אני יודע שהוא צייר יהודי צרפתי וצייר הרבה. הסגנון שלו מיוחד מאוד, כי הגופים של האנשים בתמונות שלו צרים מאוד והסיטואציות הם פנטסיה. כמו הגבר החתן באוויר אבל לא האישה.]

Al described the body parts and clothing of the male in the painting with the appropriate adjectives, “green shirt, black pants, black shoes, the legs not long and not short”. He pointed to the woman’s facial expressions “she looks worried, she is not smiling, her eyes are open, and the groom’s eyes are closed”.

[החולצה ירוקה, מכנסיים שחורים, הרגליים לא ארוכות ולא קצרות. הפנים שלה נראים כאילו היא דואגת, היא לא מחייכת והעיניים של החתן הם סגורים. העיניים של האישה פתוחות. היא באוויר, היא רואה את הסיטואציה האמיתית, היא לא בפנטזיה].

In Al opinion Chagall painting the body and face is always interesting and peculiar; for example, in the painting of the purple violinist, the green face stood out. Al recalled immediately green face [פנים ירוקים].

### *Case Study 2- Jas’s Analysis*

This Participant described verbally the painting by Reuven Ruben 1:1 *The Artist Family*. She used nouns in possessiveness form correctly (in one word) “his mother, his brother and his sister” [משפחה של צייר: הוא עם אמו, אחיו ואחותו]. The use of nouns and adjectives in agreement “his skin and hair are dark, the black dress” [עורו ושיערו כהים, השמלה השחורה]. By using comparison, the participant described the scene “he (the artist) wears a different style, while his family is wearing a conservative and religious style, he wears comfortable clothing that suits an artist” [הוא גם לובש סגנון לבוש אחר. בעוד שבני משפחתו לבושים מאוד רשמי ודתי, הוא לבוש בבגדי פשתן נינוחים יותר, חילוניים,

[המתאימים יותר לצייר]. Jas expressed her view about the mother as a dominant figure, “the mother looks like a powerful matriarch” [היא נראית כמו מטריארך רב עוצמה].

Jas used the word outsider/banished [מנודה] showing the ability to use vocabulary that has a biblical reference<sup>68</sup>. The participant analyzed the painting using a religious perspective; noting that in the Old Testament the goat symbolizes sin, making the inference that the artist fears being an outsider, “the goat in the picture symbolizes the artist’s feeling, the artist feels abandoned by his family” [של משפחתו, הצייר מרגיש נטוש העז בתמונה מסמל את ההרגשה של הצייר. כמנודה]. Her description of the background used the metaphor “the olive trees in the background...trees are a symbol for families, the olive trees represent the many generations that arrived at the land of Israel before the artist was born.”

[רקע התמונה הוא מטע זיתים בישראל...עצים הם גם סמל למשפחות, ועצי הזית הרבים מייצגים את הדורות הרבים שהגיעו לפני חייו של הצייר ב"עץ המשפחה" שלו].

She accurately used singular and plural compound nouns describing the scene grammatically and thematically.

In the painting 2:1 by Yohanan Simon *Shabbat in the Kibbutz*, the participant initially described the colors in the image and inferred that these colors are dominant in the Israeli culture “Blue and gold” [כחול וזהב]. The description of the scenery in the *Galil*<sup>69</sup> in Northern Israel on a tranquil Shabbat afternoon, “it looks like a kibbutz in the Galil...many young people with little children, everyone looks happy...everyone is happy when they are playing...everyone is doing the same activities...men and women are resting...holding hands... no one is working...everyone is

---

<sup>68</sup> Outcasted מנודה- “משנעשו מנודים לא היו יכולין להקריב שום קרבן שלא בא לריח”  
[https://www.sefaria.org/Haamek\\_Davar\\_on\\_Numbers.9.1.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Haamek_Davar_on_Numbers.9.1.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en)

<sup>69</sup> The Galilee is a fertile mountainous region in northern Israel. It’s known for the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus said to have walked on water.

relaxed. [ הוא נראה כמו קיבוץ יהודי באזור הגליל... הרבה צעירים וצעירות עם ילדים קטנים, וכולם נראים מאושרים ].  
מאוד כשהם משחקים... כולם עושים את אותן הפעילויות... גברים ונשים נחים... מחזיקים ידיים זה עם זה... אף אחד  
[לא עובד. כולם רגועים]. In this description the participant is showing the use of singular and plural  
nouns in agreement with the verbs and the adjectives, as well as the use of a connector “when”  
[כש]. The concluding sentences demonstrated the interpretative/imaginative competence with  
which the participant expressed her own idea “I think the parents are telling the children stories  
from the Bible, because they would like them to grow and appreciate the Promised Land”,  
[אני חושב שהם גם מספרים לילדיהם סיפורים מהתנ"ך כדי שילדיהם יגדלו ויעריכו את הארץ המובטחת].  
Additionally, the participant added her opinion about the type of families. She envisioned that if  
this was in the modern time maybe the painting would have looked very different. The parents  
would not look so optimistic, and they might seem more worried, they might be complaining about  
the weather or the cost of living and be looking at their phones instead of playing and reading. She  
is using an interpretive or imaginative competence “it might be possible that they would complain  
about...” [ייתכן שהם מתלוננים].

### *Case Study 3 - Sin's Analysis*

The participant identified the colors and objects in the painting 2:1 by Yohanan Simon *Shabbat in the Kibbutz* describing the scenery of nature and jubilee. He described “the children in  
different colors, the background is green with different trees, when looking at the picture you can  
be reminded how it was to be a child.” [ יש הרבה ילדים בצבעים שונים. הציור מספר את השמחה הילדות. יש  
[גן ירוק ויפה ברקע עם הרבה עצים שונים. כשאת רואה את התמונה הזאת, את יכולת לזכור איך היה להיות כמו ילדים

In the painting 1:4 by Reuven Rubin *Jesus and the Jew*, Sin described the feeling of each  
character and his appearance. “The traditional Jew ...he looks sad and old because of hardships”  
[הוא נראה עצוב וישן...כי היהודים הרבה זמן בתפוצות וקשה להם].

He wrote what each character symbolized in the light of the beginning of the 20th century in Pre-Mandate Israel. “The Jew could be a symbol of the Jews in the diaspora, but he is a symbol of a new beginning for the pioneers.” [היהודי בציור, הוא יכול להיות סמל ליהודים בתפוצות, אבל הוא סמל] [להתחלה חדשה לחלוצים ציונים]. Sin noted that Jesus' rebirth parallels the Zionist ideology - the rebirth of the Jewish homeland after 2000 years of exile. The flowers represent the spring which is another sign of rebirth and a new beginning. The young tree in the background is similar to the young pioneers and the new Jewish life in Pre-Mandate Israel, “the flowers look spring” [פרחים, הם נראים] [אביב],” the young trees” [עצים צעירים]. Sin analogized, “the trees look like the young Jewish pioneers” [לחלוצים והחיים היהודים בפלשתינה דומים]. Additionally, the participant used the adjective “traditional” [מסורתי] alluding to the diaspora Jew who stands in opposition to the new image of the strong pioneer. The use of adjectives is apparent in the description of the image as well as for the characters feelings. The use of compound nouns possessiveness form was used appropriately for the description. For example: blue clothes, happy people, their mother, schedule [בגדים כחולים, אנשים שמחים, אמה שלהם, לוח זמנים].

In the painting 1.1 by Ruben *The Artist's Family* the participant described the scenery by naming the colors and intuitively the feeling the image is portraying. “The colors of nature, blue, red and brown, the trees in the background are green, these are popular colors in the Mediterranean” [הצבעים האלה הם נפוץ ביום תיכוני. צבעים הטבע. השמיים הם כחול, האדום הוא חום, ועצים ברקע, ירוק]. He explained his idea about the painter Ruben and the painter's family by describing each characters' position in the image. “The family is the artist's family, his mother, and maybe in the center his brother and sister” [אנשים בתמונה הם משפחה של רובין. במרכז, יש אמו. האישה והאיש יכולים להיות אח ואחות] [שלו]. He sensed that the painting is static and not moving, “Ruben placed himself in the painting” [בשדה או] [כדמות הצייר שם עצמו לתמונה]. The family is out in nature “maybe in their field or garden”



הם [בגן שלהם]. The vocabulary used to describe the image indicated use of possessive nouns and appropriate adjectives and interpretation of their emotions “they almost look expressionless, and their faces look tired especially the grandma” [ במיוחד , לי עייף, כל הפנים שלהם נראים לי עייף, במיוחד ] הם כמעט בלי הבעות. Additionally, he interpreted the goat as a symbol for the land [ העז יכול להיות סמל ]. [הסבתה הפנים של]. [לארץ].

In painting 4.2 by Gutman *Gymnasia Herzliya* Sin recalled that Gutman painted the very first pictures of Tel Aviv, he painted the landscape.

[The photo of Tel Aviv first avenue, the beach, sunny day, people, old city in the background, stores. He thinks it's a happy time because the people are shopping].

אני זוכר שגוטמן צייר את התמונות הראשונות של תל אביב. גוטמן צייר נופים של תל אביב. אני רואה חוף אולי תל אביב או יפו, יום שמש, יש פרח, יש אנשים עיר עתיקה, רחוב, חנותים. יש רגש של שמחה, אנשים קונים. גוטמן צייר על אנשים מקומיים, על ערבים- על מוסלמים.

In another painting by Gutman of mountains and caravan of camels, Sin identified what he saw: [landscape, forest, local people, people working in agriculture, maybe the people are immigrants. I feel comfortable looking at the painting (he meant to say relaxed) very good feeling].

נופים, גמלים, אנשים מקומיים, אנשים עובדים בחקלאות, אולי בתמונה האנשים מהגרים. אני מרגיש נוח, הרגשה טובה מאוד.

#### *Case Study 4 - Lee's Analysis*

The participant created a narrative of the painting 1.1 by Reuven Rubin *The Artist's Family* using verbs in the past tense. The sentence form is accurate and includes nouns and adjectives in agreement. “The family immigrated to the land of Israel from Egypt to start a new life” [ המשפחה ]. [לארץ ממצרים... להתחיל חיים חדש הזאת עלתה עלתה]. The garment and the clothing items are described in detail by applying compound nouns “their son wore a buttoned shirt and white linen pants” [ ובן ]

[לבנה ומכנסי פשתן שלהם לבש חולצה מכופתרת לבנה]. Lee used possessive nouns, adjectives, and verbs in agreement with gender in his description. Lee interpreted the art as a story of a family who is immigrating to the Promised Land “Israel”. He imaginatively expanded the family’s new life beyond the scope of the painting. In their new life the family maintained an olive orchard and produced olive oil. [עשר שנות, כשהם גרים] הם גרו בהרי חיפה כדי לגדל זיתים ולהכין שמן זית. אחרי [בחיפה וכבר היה להם דונם אחד של עצי זיתים הם לובשים בגדים מערבי. אבא] He continues projecting that the family modernized their clothing style because it's more comfortable for the agricultural life. [ובן שלו לבשו מכנסי ג'ינס וחולצות טי. הם הבינו מכנסי ג'ינס הכי נוחים לחקלאות].

”מציירת עם צבע שמן. היא סיפרה לנו שבאמנות שלה “אתה יכול לראות ששום דבר לא ריק, הכל נושם

## 6.6 Pragmatic Competence Analysis

### *Case Study 1 - AL*

Al demonstrated the ability to identify objects with ease in each painting. He was able to state the major items pertaining to Judaic and Israeli culture symbols such as: olive, pomegranate, kibbutz lifestyle, agriculture, pioneers. He was clearly stating facts and important historical and cultural information connecting to the establishment of Israel in the early 20th century. Al’s functionality was seen through his description of the family of the Artist Reuven Rubin. He was able to introduce several characters and present a sequence of events. Additionally, during the interaction with Al, questions such as: *what do you think of the family root and heritage? What are the feelings involved and why? The family in Israel, what are some of their challenges? Why is the image of the painter on the side of the painting?* Al was able to deliver answers that clearly indicated his imaginary ability by stating that the difference between different demographics could have contributed to the challenges and feelings involved in the family. The painter is an observer and feels as an outsider from his own family. “There are different demographics in Israel that

influence...Jews with different roots influence the nature of the country. They are all important for Israeli society...” [יש הרבה אנשים מדמוגרפיים שונים בישראל שמשפיעים את האופי של הארץ מחוץ רק ] יהודים עם שורשים שונים מיזרחים, אשקנזים, וספרדים יש גם עוד זהויות חשובות בחברת ישראל. כמה הדמוגרפיים [הם מיעוטים או יש פחות ישראלים עם הזהויות האלה].

- *Linguistic Competence*

Linguistically Al was showing progression from his first year taking Hebrew. With each semester Al expanded his linguistic repertoire and was able to form coherent sentences. Through the written reflections about variety of Art, Al was using verbs in past tense accurately in the painting of Reuven Ruben the family portrait; he used the verb “was born” (נולד) according to the gender. He was able to associate vocabulary to context and preform discourse in the appropriate tense.

The chunk phrase “it’s like” (זה כמו) “I don’t know but I think that” (אני לא יודע אבל אני חושב) (אני לא יודע אבל אני חושב) was used very frequently as well. He explained how certain symbols and expressions in the painting he often associated with Israel’s landscape “the pomegranate is a Jewish sign for multiplicity and many good deeds” (הרימונים זה סימן יהודי למזל והרבה מצוות). Al expressed the feeling portrayed in the painting and his opinion about how the painting made him feel by observing it. He was clear and concise, use the adjectives in agreement with the nouns “legs not long and not short” (רגליים לא ארוכות ולא קצרות). Al’s linguistic competence showed a strong area for identifying and conjugating the verbs in agreement with gender. His strategic competence was apparent in his oral discourse, he used different words to describe a word that he could not come up with in Hebrew. He interpreted his ideas about the painting that evidently were seen through the historical prism of the Jewish culture. In the painting of religious Jews in the synagogue by Gottlieb he instigated the feeling of the women by stating that “although the women are separated from the men, they are important...the men are talking about Torah.”

(אף על פי הן מופרדות, האישה יודעת) his idea of excluding the women from the main congregation consorted by recognizing their importance. Al demonstrated precision in using nouns and in agreement with adjectives “white house” (בתים לבנים). He strongly admits the Hebrew grammar interests him and sees it as a matrix. Linguistically, Al used past tense when asked about family history, the verb “was born” [נולד] used accordingly for every member presented on the painting by Rubin “The Artist’s Family”.

- *Pragmatic Competence*

Al’s pragmatic competence brought his talent to circulate ideas that he gathered from his exposure to Jewish studies and the many languages he speaks. He often expressed his fascination with the pattern of roots in Hebrew and how it made him think of more words and ideas around the thematic meaning of the root. He was able to make suggestion, recommendation and prediction while engaging in oral or written discourse, for example: “if you will visit the western wall or if you are interested to travel to Israel” [אם תבקר בכותל... אם אתה מעונין לטייל לישראל]. As a speaker, Lee used semantics to convey layers of meaning, nuance, and context in their language. He was able to see beyond the first layer of the canvas and ask questions, request for repetition, and clarifications for words or phrases he was not familiar.

- *Ideational*

Al classified the images in categories pertaining to Jewish identity, nationalism (Israel), religious life, modern city - Tel Aviv, tradition [מסורת, חקלאות, חתונה, בית כנסת, התיישבות]. He distinguished between religious symbols that appeared in paintings that cross over as cultural and national symbols such as the Rabbi holding Torah scroll by Rubin and Chagall violinist as a symbol of identification of Jews in eastern European villages. Al felt a sense of joy every time he saw the painting of the violinist, he identified all the parts of the face. He also asked why the face is green?

What does it stand for? In this painting Al was interested to learn more about the Jewish village in eastern Europe because he felt some of his roots from his father's side have historical roots there.

- *Heuristic*

In paintings consisting of Israel landscape and city views Al expressed his opinion about the focal point of homeland. He stated that: “the country is the heart and culture of our people. I cannot imagine the pain if you are forbidden for walking around Israel, seeing the old city (in Jerusalem) to pray in the Western Wall” [הארץ זה הלב של ההיסטוריה ותרבות של האנשים שלנו. אני לא יכול לדמיין את הכואב אם אסור לי לטייל לישראל, לראות את העיר העתיקה, להתפלל בכותל]. He expressed his belief that “the establishment of a state (Jewish State) is a popular topic...because the stories influence the recognition for identity” [הקמת המדינה היא נושא פופולרי...כי סיפורים על הקמה משפיעים]. Although Al never been to Israel, he grasped the geopolitical and nationalistic view of the Jewish people.

- *Imaginative*

Al described the painting without any prior experience visiting the county. He often imagined scenes that alluded to the surreal world without contention. In the painting with Rubin Pomegranate viewed in the center and a window framing the painting, Al imagined that there is a man in the visual, but he cannot see him. He sensed a peaceful atmosphere, in his view the trees and mountains as a sign of tranquility. [הבתים פתוחים- בין בני סימני טבע: העץ וההרים]. “The neighborhood in the painting makes me feel that it's an ancient place and that it was always there ...and maybe it's Shabbat”.

In the interaction discourse with Al, he was motivated to describe his ideas and to use words to interlocutor his ideas. He used full sentences and often stated the sentences “I think that...” he felt comfortable asking back the same questions that he was asked or elicit another idea. He

wanted to know more information about words from the same root family and how they connect to the biblical text. He demonstrated active listening by giving their full attention to the speaker, made eye contact, nodded to show understanding, and responded appropriately to the speaker's verbal and nonverbal cues. Al is a very thoughtful learner; he chose his words carefully. He knew when to speak and when to listen which is crucial in any conversation. He captured the dynamics of turn-taking in conversations and knew how to contribute meaningfully without dominating or interrupting excessively.

While Al interacted in a conversation, he demonstrated the ability to empathize with and understand new perspectives, that included recognizing and validating the emotions expressed by the other partner. Al was aware of cultural differences in communication styles and norms. He adapted phrases such as “what a fun, great [יופי, איזה כיף]” and behavior accordingly to avoid misunderstandings and show respect for diverse cultural practices. When we talk about Torah and items pertaining to holiday and shabbat, he always showed respect and asked questions for clarification. In Chagall paintings Al gained the perspective of a Jewish village and saw the difference in the painting of Ruben and Guttman of early days in Tel Aviv.

Al used nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language to convey messages. He nodded and smiled big when he affirmed an idea or situation, and when he found the exact terminology or words to use.

*Interactional competence (IC)- enable individuals to communicate effectively, build relationships, and navigate social interactions successfully in various personal, professional, and cultural contexts.*

Al's life story was fascinating and had few turns. He came from a non-religious affiliated home without any prior knowledge about Hebrew and the state of Israel. He was very open and

willing to improve and enhance his Hebrew skills, especially the grammatical paradigms of the verb system that he found fascinating. Al was very expressive and knew how to explain his view and opinion even when some words were missing from his vocabulary. He used several words to explain a word that he didn't know. The paintings by the various artists helped Al find the Jewish path that he seemed to long for. His family background traced back to central Europe but only the one aunt is sharing stories about Jewish life. Throughout many conversations with Al about the art, he seemed to be attracted to the idea of an enclosed community striving to survive whether in the diaspora or in Israel. He expressed his desire to connect to his Judaism that was left behind in Europe by his ancestors. His journey is yet to be discovered as he is planning to pursue his academic career in which Hebrew takes a major role.

I had other interactions with him outside of this study as well, such as meeting for lunch, helping me with students (Assistant Lecturer).

### *Case Study 2 - Jas*

Jas described and explained what she saw in the paintings and identified certain symbols and their relationship to the historical background of the Jewish people or Israel culture. From the very first painting that was introduced to Jas, she looked for symbols that were tied to the biblical narrative. Her knowledge about the bible and her religious practice came across through her interpretations of the paintings. In the early stage she was able only identify colors and objects, Jews came to Israel, and they built a modern city [ יהודים - הרבה אנשים מאירופה - יהודים ] הם עליה לישראל והם בונים תל אביב - עיר מודרנית

The goat as a sign of peace. [אני חושבת... עז לשלום].

They are pioneers. [ אני חושבת התמונה סמל ישראל- מדינת ישראל בימים מוקדמים. הסירה זה סמל שאנשים ] 2 מהרבה מדינות הם באו לישראל. הילדים בנו מודל בחול, הם רוצים בנו ישראל – חלוצים

In the painting of Gutman 2:2, children building a sandcastle in the sand, Jas projected that the idea of the children (that looked the new generation Israeli born) was to build a model of a home in Israel. A home that is on the golden sand of beach of Tel Aviv, is symbolically representing the climate and the atmosphere of the time.

- *Linguistic competence*

Jas (did not use past tense inflections), she used verbs in present tense in her description. She used nouns and prepositions like for and in for actions, such as: with, declination, of, before, after. [ הוא עם אמו, אחיו ואחותו. הצייר יושב משמאל, הרחק ממשפחתו. הצייר רואה את עצמו כשונה משאר בני ] after. [משפחתו] “the painter sees himself different from the rest of the family, the painter sits on the left distance from his family. She used possessive noun and compound nouns correctly which made her sentence coherent and well-formed [האחרים. הוא גם לובש בני משפחתו כהים יותר משלושת עורו ושיערו] נינוחים יותר, חילוניים, [ לבושים מאוד רשמי ודתי, הוא לבוש בבגדי פשתן משפחתו סגנון לבוש אחר. בעוד שבני ] “his skin and hair darker from the three other family members. He is also dressed in a different style. While his family dressed religiously and formally, he dressed in linen clothing”. Jas described the photos that were associated with religious symbolism in an ease. She connected the characters and objects in the painting to the Old Testament [השעיר מסמלת "בתנ"ך] “in the bible the goat is a sacrifice animal who carries the sin of the Israelites and once a year stays in the desert to die, the goat symbolizes the feeling of the artist”. She drew from her linguistic resources by adding possessive nouns and using adjectives to emphasize colors and feelings.

She expressed her idea about how Jews were wandering in the world as refugees and now coming back to their homeland [פליטים נודדים חוזרים לארץ מולדתם]. In some paintings Jas saw associated the biblical narratives of the Israelites winning the wars and the rejoicing after, she



compared it to the army band nowadays in Israel singing and performing in army bases, [זה מזכיר , לי של סיפורים מתנ"ך על איך ישראלים ניצחו מלחמות

- *Interactional competence*

While speaking with Jas she viewed Rubin's painting, *The Artist Family*, sad and longing for unity. She felt that the artist placed himself on the side of the painting to emphasize his estrangement to the family, yet his longing for being together with his family.

*In Which region is this painting referring to?* The olive trees were clearly an indicator for Jas that this must be in Israeli and particularly in Jerusalem “near Jerusalem, Olive Mountain” [על יד ,ירושלים, הר הזיתים].

#### Pragmatic Competence

- *Ideational*

Jas classified the paintings by religious and Zionist themes. She saw that every biblical story manifested itself in the modern Zionism narrative. In Gutman's paintings of Tel Aviv and Jaffa Jews coming from Europe to build a new city Tel Aviv, Jas sees this act of return from years of wandering in foreign lands. The boat is a symbol of Aliyah (Hebrew word for immigration to the homeland), the children building sandcastles symbolizing the rebuild of a country, while the camel in the painting is identified as a transportation and labor of the current local means.

- *Heuristic*

Jas quoted the phrase from the Torah about the state of Israel “The Land of Milk and Honey”. She claimed that Israel's abundance in agriculture is tied to this blessing from the Torah. She added that the Israeli innovations in agriculture and the aid they give to underdeveloped countries in conserving energy and agriculture is seemingly connected to the rich soil. She expressed her opinion about the reason Israeli cuisine is rich with fruits, vegetables, cheese, milk products and

bread, because Israel was blessed with the *Shivat Haminim* seven types of species. Therefore, the Israeli diet includes a variety of grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Jas also envisioned the wave of immigration to the Jewish homeland as a step towards the fulfillment of the destiny people returning to their homeland. She wishes to see many other displaced populations in the world find their peaceful land so that they can thrive and build their home.

- *Imaginative*

In Rubin's painting about the Artist Family, Jas imagined a death in the family. The black garment is an indication for mourning, and she thinks that the goat is a sign for peace that was sent by God to comfort the family.

In the painting of Simon *Shabbat in the Kibbutz* Jas imagined that some of the discussions among the young families will be pertaining to how to expand the kibbutz, create new families, give tips about child rearing, and tell them biblical stories.

אני חושב שהזוגות הצעירים מדברים ביניהם על הילדים שלהם ואיך להקים משפחה בישראל. עבור רבים מהם, זו הפעם הראשונה שלהם. ייתכן שהם חולקים טיפים להורות, דברים שלמדו מהוריהם שלהם כשגדלו. אם הם לא מדברים על הילדים שלהם, הם מדברים על איך הקיבוץ שלהם עשוי להתרחב בעתיד. אני חושב שהם גם מספרים לילדיהם [ך כדי שילדיהם יגדלו ויעריכו את הארץ המובטחת החדשה הזו"סיפורים מהתנ"ך]. Despite the modern culture portrayed in the painting of the kibbutz, Jas added the importance of telling biblical stories to the young generation on Shabbat in order for the children to value the promised land being revived after two thousand years.

Jas was able to make predictions and draw from her biblical knowledge ideas to connect to the current Israeli culture. She claimed that the historical knowledge she gained through the painting of the young pioneers coming to settle the homeland helped her to understand the various

styles of living in Israel (kibbutz, town, city). She felt that she was able to effectively engage in communication within a particular linguistic and cultural context, which involved not only understanding the linguistic aspects of a language but also grasping the social and cultural aspect of the communication.

### *Case Study 3 - Sin*

Sin is a graduate student who originally came from Turkey to pursue his Ph.D. in the USA. During ethnographic observation and face to face interviews I noticed that his vocabulary usage was very impressive and solid. His first visit to Israel was in the summer of 2023, he has no Jewish background or any affiliation. In his description that reminded him of his home and culture in Turkey. He shared the similarities he found of various iconic symbols that appear and reappeared among various artists. For example: the scenic view with olive trees in the Jerusalem mountains and the Galil mountains, the pomegranate that was seen in Rubin and Gutman paintings were also a reminder for Sin about the custom for the new year in Turkey. Sin described in detail using adjectives such as colors and feeling to deliver his ideas in the most concise and clear way. When he was missing words, he was explaining the idea for example: for the Torah he said “it's a religious book that Jewish people read from” [ספר דתי שאנשים יהודים קוראים]. Sin demonstrated creative ways to explain words when he struggled to find the exact word. He picked up from the paintings the historical moments for the state of Israel. The kibbutz concept was a completely foreign concept for him. However, he described the pioneers and the life of the kibbutz very clearly and was able to transmit the ideological drive that the firstcomers had by looking at the art (e.g., Yohanan Simon). Although Israel was a distant culture for Sin, he found several common threads that connected him to Hebrew and Israeli culture and history. He added that acquiring Hebrew helped him by “overcome this mental barrier ...and explore the many connections between Israel and

Turkey and between Turkey and the wider region”. As a result of learning historical and cultural anecdotes and perspective, Sin became curious to explore the history of the Jewish people in Turkey. He stated that this learning helped him to trace the impact of the Jewish culture in shaping the Turkey nation and identity.

Evidently, for Sin the opportunity to study Hebrew through the prism of culture and history using visual art brought to fruition the exploration of learning Jewish history. He expressed curiosity which led him to join a graduate certificate program in Jewish Studies at the University of Southern California. Currently Sin is a PhD studies in Political Science with an emphasis on the Middle East.

Sin expressed his emotion of sadness and happiness while he discussed the paintings of Rubin’s family portrait. He felt that in Pre-mandate Israel the European Jewish immigrants were presented as serious and rigid with a sense of duty. While in later years after Israel became an independent state, the characters in the painting looked carefree and happy.

- *Linguistic Competence*

Sin described the paintings by using the correct form of verbs according to the gender. For example, in Ruben’s family portrait, he used he or she and the matching verbs when he discussed the painter's mother versus other family members. He used adjectives in agreement with the nouns, for example: he used the word pioneers or immigrants and added the noun young [חלוצים צעירים] או מהגרים]. He interacted with the ideas and topics presented and demonstrated word choices pertaining to specific details. He summarized the content in past tense describing artist biography and life achievements [היא נולדה בישראל בעיר פתח תקווה...היא למדה על אמנות...במשך החיי שלה היא עשתה]. In the writing Sin used the tenses carefully, he navigated between the present and past tense with an ease, as if he was not making a conscious effort. In his earlier writing the

use of possessive nouns was not precise however, with times he demonstrated more accuracy with nouns in possessiveness and compound nouns. Sin Identified characters in the painting and described their look and emotions, in certain paintings he questioned the position or specific symbols, he was showing curiosity to explore the language and the relationship to the land of Israel. He was able to use variety of verbs and formed coherent sentences describing scene in full detail “women taking care...they are resting during a warm day, sitting under the trees and talking with other families...it is interesting that only the girls are held in their mothers’ hands” [הן נחות הן ביום חמים אחד תחת העצים ומדברות עם אנשים ממשפחות אחרות. נשים מטפלות בילדים זה מעניין שרק ילדות הן [אמא שלהן בידיים של].

Sin demonstrated sufficient control of speech using the appropriate tense, agreement between noun and adjective including the irregular nouns, and comprehensible sentences with appropriate conjunctions.

- *Interactional Competence*

During a conversation and language exchange with Sin I noticed that he selected his words carefully and was sensitive to a particular linguistic concept. He used words and phrases such as: “it sounds good to me, I am ready, I am not sure, with pleasure, no problem”. He wasn’t only using the words but rather grasped the social and pragmatic aspects of communication by showing politeness, patience and understanding nonverbal cues. Some of the nonverbal cues included facial expression (smile, shocked, surprised), body language and gestures. These cues seem to be aligned with similar cultural cues that sin experienced in his homeland. During class interaction with other students conducting role play he often grasped the ideas quickly and was able to play his part very accurately. He used body language like many Israelis, sitting comfortably on the chair and seeking to reply by asking “so, what do you say?” [נו, אז מה אתה אומר] he nodded for agreement and

approval. Sin loves listening to Israeli music, he picked up chunks of language from songs and implemented them in the conversion. Sin was aware of the social factors that influence the Hebrew such as: the use of fewer words and combining the nouns with suffixes that indicate possession. His awareness towards gender was apparent throughout the discourse, he corrected himself and asked for reaffirmation when he was not sure.

He knew how to initiate, maintain, and end conversations effectively. This includes using appropriate conversational repair strategies when communication breaks down, such as asking for clarification or repetition.

### *Pragmatic Competence*

- *Ideational*

Sin was able to generate and express his ideas effectively about the different scenarios he observed in the painting such as: the first Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus and the Jew, the early days of Tel Aviv. His ideas demonstrated conceptualization and synthesis pertaining to the cultural symbols and ideas presented in the paintings. In one of the paintings by Ruben of Jesus and the Jew he compared the idea of Jesus' rebirth with the idea of Zionism of rebirth of a nation.

Jesus was born again after he died, it is similar to the concept of the Zionist movement about the land of Israel.

[ישו נולד עוד פעם אחרי שהוא נפטר, זה דומה לתפיסת של התנועה הציונית על ארץ ישראל].

Additionally, Sin noted that the young trees in the background symbolize the young pioneers who ideas that homeland, the land of their forefathers, his contributed came from Russia to settle their capacity to evaluate critical thinking by showing He used .were well informed and meaningful and analyze ideas, and information critically. Sin articulated his ideas coherently and persuasively through various modes of expression such as writing, speaking, and visual representation. In one

of the paintings of Ruben he compared the idealism of the new pioneers with the Christian ideology. His claim that the painting attests the Zionist ideals of collaboration, togetherness, and community, although the painting is about the pioneers it has a religious aspect of rebirth -- Maria and baby Jesus [הציור על אידיאלים ציוניים כמו ללמוד ביחד עם חברים... למרות שהציור על חלוצים יש משמעות דתית]. Sin grasped the historical aspect of rebuilding the homeland through communal farming and agriculture as being a paramount of Zionism. In many of the paintings he observed, Sin associated the idea of fertilizing the land and bringing vibrant life to the desolated land. Although Sin came without cultural or Jewish background, he demonstrated readiness to adapt, refine, and revise ideas in response to new information.

[יש לבגדים כהולים שיכולים להיות סמלים לעבודה. יש לאנשים אותם בגדים באותם צבעים. זה גם נראה לי שהם ממעמד הפועלים.

לדעתי, הציור מתאר כמה זמן אחרי הקמה של מדינת ישראל. יש משפחות גדולות שגרות בקיבוץ אחד בתמונה. זה [נראה לי שהם לא חלוצים צעירים או מהגרים בהתחלת המדינה

- *Heuristic*

From experiences in and outside class Sin gained experiences of various ritual symbols and historical themes connected to Israel's culture and Hebrew language. Sin recognized and internalized grammatical patterns and structures within the language. This enables him to predict how sentences are formed and comprehend new language inputs more efficiently. He made educated guesses about the meanings of words or phrases based on the context in which they appear. Sin used contextual clues from surrounding words, and visual cues to infer meaning without consulting a dictionary.

Sin was able to make predictions about different scenarios based on the knowledge he gained through his Hebrew courses. For example: one of the questions that he was asked to think

about was what the people in the early to mid-1900 would be talking about in Israel. His idea was that in the painting by Simon *Shabbat in the kibbutz* the people would be likely talking about work in the fields, agriculture, relationships in the kibbutz, their family outside the kibbutz, work schedule, and daily matters.

[בתקופה הזאת הם יכולים לדבר על ילדים שלהם, על עבודה בשדה, על חקלאות, על יחסים בקיבוץ, על משפחה].  
[שלהם לחוץ מקיבוץ, על דברים יומיומיים, על לוח זמנים שלהם בקיבוץ].

When talking with Sin about the different ideas and thoughts pertaining the paintings, he was able to navigate the complexities of the new language efficiently. He describes words and feelings by expressing his genuine interest in the culture, he adopted phrases “such as” [[למשל] to explain his thoughts. He felt empowered by actively engaging with the language, draw connections between linguistic elements, and developing communicative competence in real-world contexts.

- *Imaginative*

Sin showed capacity to mentally visualize and imagine scenarios, concepts, and possibilities, by exploring ideas and generating possible scenarios or outcomes. He often suggested metaphorical and symbolic thinking to draw connections between seemingly unrelated concepts and ideas which fostered creativity and insight. [אם הציור היה משקף את הזמן עכשווי, הם היו מדברים יותר, יותר על לנסוע למדינות אחרות, יותר על בתי ספר של ילדים הם היו מדברים על פוליטיקה, יותר על עתיד, יותר על דת, יותר על לנסוע למדינות אחרות, יותר על בתי ספר של ילדים הם היו מדברים יותר על אוכלים עולמיים, על הדשות עולמות].

Sin expressed ideas that could have happened or might have happened, he elaborated on ideas based on the circumstances, the historical era, and his personal wish. His matured thinking as a doctoral student was expressed through given different scenarios and absorbing the sensitivity for the historical events that shape the Israeli culture. He pointed in many of his description and oral



discourse the local people [אנשים מקומיים] for Jews and non-Jews as influencers for the new life that was growing and flourishing in a pre-state.

#### *Case Study 4 - Lee*

Lee was a participant during his undergraduate year at USC, he is 21 years old. Lee embarked on learning Hebrew formally during his college years to pursue academic and professional opportunities. Despite his basic proficiency in Hebrew, Lee has made significant progress through formal instruction, immersion experiences, and self-directed learning. He expressed his ideas coherently during my face-to-face interview with him and ethnographic observation. He used present tense and past tense alternatively according to the specific prompt and produced meaningful ideas using vocabulary that he associated with the historical development of the state of Israel and the cultural symbols. Lee's multi-cultural background has been a paramount in his life. His colorful and diverse family background has led him to appreciate the multi nationalities and languages around the world. He appreciates multi-faceted communities and takes pride in sharing his colorful and diverse background. During high school he studied abroad in China and became a fluent Chinese speaker that the native Chinese people were flabbergasted to hear and see a tall young blond speaking fluent Chinese. His love for his paternal grandparents and their history of immigration to the land of Israel instill in him the passion for the Israeli culture and language. In every sentence he spoke his eyes were glistening with passion. He reminisced on many visits in Israel that were memorable.

In one occurrence during a class visit of an artist, Ruth Weisberg, who shared her upbringing and love of painting Jewish art. He found the encounter with her very meaningful. "I am big fan of her... her father changed his name (to hide his Jewish name in Chicago in 1930) to be become an architect" [אני מעריץ גדול שלה... האבא שלה שינה את שמו כדי להיות אדריכל]. Lee loved

her idea of painting mainly Jewish themes that were influenced by classic art “you can see that nothing is empty...everything is breathing” [אתה יכול לראות ששום דבר לא ריק, הכל נושם]. Lee appreciated the many exposures to study Hebrew and culture through art. He gained new perspectives through his curiosity to explore the language and all the aspects pertaining to its history and culture.

- *Linguistic Competence*

Lee's writing and oral discourse demonstrated the ability to use syntax and semantics appropriately. In the following example Lee described the emotions of the people in the painting and used the verbs (present tense) and nouns and adjectives appropriately. He used compound noun “border cities” [ערי גבול]. Lee showed solid language command while he was engaged in writing or in conversation, he was able to control his word choices as well as navigating between the present and past tense.

הם מאותו כפר. הם גם לא עושים משהו בתמונה, במרום זאת הם רק (בתמונה הזאת משפחות ועולי(אולי בערך צויר עומדים ומסתכלים עלינו. כל האנשים בתמונה גם לא מחייכים, ועולי מרגישים עצובים. לו התמונה הזאת שאין להם בתים עכשיו כי המלחמה מערי גבול היום, תהיה על הפלטים ישראלים.

In this example Lee constructed sentences according to the rules governing the structure of sentences in Hebrew, which included the correct syntax (word order), morphology (word formation), and semantics (meaning). In the painting small girls, without parents, can see how good friends they are and enjoying their childhood. They just stand with flowers ...it's hard to see their faces, but it's possible to see that they are blushing...maybe with happiness. It reflects their good life in the Kibbutz, and the life without fear. [בתמונה ילדות קטנות, בלי הורים, ורואים כמו הן חברות]. טובות נהנות הילדות שלהן. הן רק עומדות עם פרחים יפים... קשה לראות את הפנים שלהן, אבל, אפשר לראות שהן [מסמיקות, ... עם שמחה. זה משקף את החיים טובים בקיבוץ, ואת החיים בלי פחדים

correct word order and embedded phrases such as: “it's hard to see their faces... it's hard to say when the picture is... maybe it's during famine or hunger” [קשה לומר באיזה שנה את הסצנה של תמונה קשה לומר]. Lee showed understanding of how to use syntactic rules including how to form phrases and sentences with proper word order and agreement. His description of the painting was cohesive with complex structures such as subordinate clauses “the refugees from the border cities that don't have houses now” [להם שאין הפליטים ישראלים מערי גבול]. During interviews with Lee, I observed that he self-corrected his speech, in one incident he switched between the words listening and hearing. He maintained a coherence and signaled relationships between different parts of the text by organizing his ideas logically. In his interpretation of Yossel Bergner's painting, he demonstrated syntax and lexical knowledge by selecting words that maintained a cohesive discourse. “This picture was painted in light and happy colors. “In the background there are few rounded trees and houses just like kibbutz houses” [התמונה הזאת ציורה בצבעים בהירים ושמחים. ברקע יש כמה עצים עגולים ובתים כמו בתי [הקיבוץ]]. Lee's oral and written discourses signaled his linguistic competence, which was fully represented in his knowledge and abilities to effectively communicate ideas through the different paintings.

- *Interactional Competence*

During interviews with Lee, I noticed that he was initiating questions and asked for clarification appropriately. He was careful about turn-taking and repairing misunderstandings. He grasped the social norms governing politeness and respect in communication when discussing sensitive topics and asking for his personal opinion “how was [...] when you grew up?” he was, expressing gratitude, and empathy which maintain the positive interactions. Some nonverbal Communication such as: facial expressions, body language, gestures, and eye contact to convey meaning and regulate interactions were common during all my interactions with Lee and his

classmates. Additionally, Lee showed understanding cultural differences, he compared the different cultures he was accustomed to and learned about. Topics such as: work ethics, hospitality, food, and social life came in several of Lee's discourses while he expressed appreciation for cultural differences.

Lee willingly participated in interviews and language activities. He worked in class with various partners, and always volunteered to assist any student who wanted to engage in Hebrew conversation. His flexibility and adaptability to any scenario or situation was evident through the several interviews, cultural sensitivity towards others when negotiating time and places for meetings, and his passion to advance his Hebrew skills so he can have a lengthy conversation with his grandparents.

Lee is an effective speaker. He always paid attention to different cues and reposed appropriately to messages and prompts.

Interactional competence involves the ability to understand and empathize with others' perspectives, feelings, and emotions. Lee's interview evidently reflected his sensitivity to the emotional tone in the conversations, and his appropriate responses with empathy and support. In painting of kibbutz lifestyle, he connected to the current event of the atrocity of October 7th, 2023, in Israel, and added that if it was in today's world the kibbutz's families in southern Israel would have been talking about the safety of the children and those who perished.

Lee's understanding of cultural norms, values, and customs were reflected in his description of Reuven Rubin's painting. He addressed his Interactional competence by incorporating cultural sensitivity statement such as people from all background that are willing to share space together. He demonstrated ability to navigate cultural differences in communication styles, norms, and taboos when he discussed the various nationalities of Jews and non-Jews as they all gathered

around the table for the *First Passover in Jerusalem*. He carefully depicted the dress codes of every religion; Jewish, Christianity and Islam. He described the clothing and the differences in styles.

### *Pragmatic Competence*

- *Ideational*

Lee espoused a mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax to express and to convey information. He shared knowledge, described experiences, and discussed abstract concepts in a clear and coherent manner. In a story about a girl who works in the dining hall in the Kibbutz, he included information that he absorbed about the lifestyle in a kibbutz. He visited a kibbutz in Israel and was very inspired by the lifestyle of the kibbutz, “Early morning ... and starts her day. She has a busy day....” [ מוקדם בבוקר, בשעה שבע, טליה קמה ומתחילה את היום שלה. יש לה יום עסוק מאוד. היום ] Lee’s [יום שישי - ערב שבת. היא צריכה לבשל ולנקות לפני שכל האנשים בקיבוץ באים לאכול ארוחת ערב ביחד]. Lee’s visit to the kibbutz in Israel shed a tone in his writing and oral discourse about the dedication and devotion for work and the community. He described the workers as tirelessly working and not complaining, willing to give the utmost that they can. Lee effectively communicated ideas he shared about a variety of Art content that was presented to him. He used compound noun such as “the kibbutz houses” בתי הקיבוץ, “from every corner of the world. Lee was using מכל פינות העולם. while in words with the appropriate semantic meaning such “old city of Jerusalem” העיר העתיקה, while in beginning he was applying familiar sound on Hebrew words – he transferring sounds such as : העיר האנטיק (antique instead of ancient).

- *Heuristic*

In Rubin’s painting ‘Family Portrait’ (image 1:1) Lee suggested that the characters might be feeling sad and despair because of the historical context during early 1900 in the world and in

Pre-mandate Israel. He possessed sensitivity toward this historical era due to wars, persecutions, and displacement. Lee was able to utilize the strategies to interpret, understand, and produce ideas about the characters and events in the paintings. He absorbed the idea of a family who was uprooted from Europe and settle in a new land. He grasped the ideology of the pioneers (image 2.1, 2.2) who flees persecution and came to fulfill a dream – rebuild their ancestral homeland. In the painting of Rubin describing the first Passovers (image 1.3), Lee depicted the life in Jerusalem in the early 1900 - The multicultural demographic that was present at the time in Jerusalem.

Lee was showing flexibility as he was navigating through different tasks, orally, written and listening. He made comments about songs he listened to and how some of the knowledge he acquired in Hebrew helped him understand the music more precisely. He was posing question during interviews and class participation without hesitation. Moreover, Lee was willing to experiment with the language use and take risks in order to test check for understanding and improve his proficiency. Lee's writing evidently reflecting on his ability to demonstrate creativity, employ novel or unconventional strategies to overcome communication barriers and express himself effectively.

Outside the formal classroom teaching, Lee was seeking opportunities to engage in Hebrew. He attended different speaker events such as: Israeli descendent of the revivor of modern Hebrew, Jewish artist presentation - life story and art collection. During these events he inquired and reflected on the biography and stories of the speakers. In his reflection about the Artist's presentation he wrote "Ruth studied Art in in Italy and she experienced the European culture...when she was a young girl her family had a house in the plains of Indiana in a socialist community just like a Kibbutz" [ רות למדה אומנות באיטליה ..ולחוות את התרבות האירופאית...כשהיא ילדה, ], [הייתה למשפחה שלה בית בקהילה סוציאליסטית כמו קיבוץ ...היא אמרה שהזיכרונות שיש לה שם הם הטובים ביותר].

Lee transferred knowledge and skills from other learning experiences, leveraging similarities and differences between languages to aid comprehension and production. He took initiative in his learning process, for practice and exposure to the language outside of formal instruction settings by following tv shows in Hebrew, watch Israeli films, and keep a strong connection with his family in Israel.

- *Imaginative*

Lee Imaginatively wrote and told a story about a girl who lived in the kibbutz by describing her duties on Friday as she prepared a big Shabbat dinner. He imagined her making ten big loaves of Challah [בכל ימי שישי, היא צריכה לאפות עשר חלות]. For Lee the painting sparked a thought that led to write a creative story. He interpreted linguistic input creatively through the painting and found the painting igniting his imagination. In another painting he saw a green field with flowers and was inspired to write a story about people living harmoniously under olive tree. The olive tree symbolizes the land of Israel and the Mediterranean. He hypothesized a situation and used future tense to describe his plans whether one day he could live in such a place.

Lee used Chagall's paintings to write a love story based on the image that portrayed two faces looking at each other at night. He used his imagination to create a short story between two lovers reminiscing on the past. The story included two different periods of time in the lovers' life. He wrote "when you died so do I, today I can see you only in the dreams...last night we laid down under a fig tree ...the moonlight danced on your face...I love you" [כשמתת, גם אני. היום רק ] בחלומות...אתמול בלילה שכבנו מתחת עץ התאנה...אור הירח רקד על [פנייך...אני אוהב אותך]. It is evident that Lee's imagination sprouted through looking at the art, he was able to imagine situation and stories. The following sample coded according to the criteria of functional approach and how the writing exemplifies pragmatic competence.

## 6.7 Cultural Competence Analysis

In the painting by Ruben *Madonna of Unhoused* from 1922 Sin described the characters as farmers in the field during rest time in the of Israel [ציור שמתאר חקלאים בשדה בזמן שהם נחים]. The warm colors of the painting help feeling the warmth of the sun employs [צבעים בציור הם חמים תוססים]. Sin expressed his idea of pioneers in the land of Israel that are a national symbol. However, he claimed there is a religious symbol presented in the painting which is the baby below the Madonna. In his opinion the baby symbolizes Jesus [הציור על חלוצים יש גם]. [משמעות דתי לדמויות]. He claimed that the boats in the background serve as a sign of immigration to Israel, therefore these are pioneers that work the land. His idea expressed through the lens of Zionism and community in the land of Israel. He said “this painting is about Zionist ideas...being together with friends” [הציור על אידיאלים ציונים כמו ללמוד ביחד בארץ עם חברים], but he gives it a religious annotation.

In the painting by Ruben 1. *A Jew and Jesus*, Sin expressed the idea of rebirth for people and homeland by using Jesus as a symbol of rebirth and the Jew as a symbol for a diaspora Jew. The two characters in the painting are manifestations of rebirth. The view of a Jew in traditional clothes that look sad and old [עצוב וישן בגדים מסורתיים]. From a heuristic approach Sin compared the Zionist approach with early Christianity, the rebirth of Jesus and the rebirth of a Jewish nation in 1900 [ישו נולד עוד פעם אחרי שהוא נפטר, זה דומה לתפיסה הציונית]. He widened the idea from pioneering as a sign for beginning to Jesus as a sign for a new religion. The historical background that is used to express and discuss the images by Sin reflected on the Jewish narrative of 1900 of new immigrants coming to farm the promised land.



In the painting by Yohanan Simon *Shabbat in the Kibbutz* Sin described the feeling of exuberant and calmness. He elaborated that the feeling of tranquility as a style of living is portrayed in the painting. The characters in the painting might be discussing their lifestyle in the kibbutz, the daily schedule, friendship, relationship, work in the field and agriculture [הם יכולים בתקופה [הזאת] לדבר על ילדים... עבודה בשדה, חקלאות, יחסים בקיבוץ, משפחה, לוח זמנים].

In painting 1.2 *Pomegranates* by Rubin Sin described the painting by seeing [the pomegranates by Ruben doesn't give a good feeling clouds, it doesn't look like sunny day, can't see the sky (he wanted to say it's foggy), it's not a good feeling the background is not clear,, pomegranates symbol for family in this home].

רימונים של ראובן רובין רגש לא טוב, זה לא נראה כמו יום שמשי, יש עננים. אני לא יכול לראות את השמיים, דברים ברקע הם לא ברור. רימונים סמל למשפחה בבית הזה.

2). In the painting by Maurycy Gottlieb *Torah Scribe* 1876 AI described the scenery related to the Jewish festivities. In his view the event in the visual is during the days of awe, the crowd that gathered for praying included children and women from all ages that alludes to a holiday time. In his opinion the congregants are *Ashkenazim*<sup>70</sup> because the way they are wearing their *Tallit*<sup>71</sup>. He used nouns and adjectives to describe the people and the place “There is sunlight from the windows but not a lot, the synagogue is full and crowded. Everyone has a tired face. And maybe

---

<sup>70</sup> refers to a people and a country bordering Armenia and the upper Euphrates; listed in [Genesis 10:3](#) and [I Chronicles 1:6](#) among the descendants of Gomer. The name Ashkenaz also occurs once in [Jeremiah 51:27](#) in a passage calling upon the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz to rise and destroy Babylon. Scholars have identified the Ashkenaz as the people called Ashkuza (Ashguza, Ishguza) in Akkadain.. According to Assyrian royal inscriptions the Ashkuza fought the Assyrians in the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.E.) as allies of the Minni (Manneans). Since the Ashkuza are mentioned in conjunction with the Gimirrai-Cimmerians and the Ashkenaz with Gomer in Genesis, it is reasonable to infer that Ashkenaz is a dialectal form of Akkadian Ashkuza, identical with a group of Iranian-speaking people organized in confederations of tribes called Saka in Old Persian, whom Greek writers (e.g., Herodotus 1:103) called Scythians. They ranged from southern Russia through the Caucasus and into the Near East. Some scholars, however, have argued against this identification on philological grounds because of the presence of the "n" in the word Ashkenaz. In medieval rabbinical literature the name was used for Germany...

<sup>71</sup> A prayer shawl. The *tallit* is worn by males during the morning prayers. The custom of wearing the *tallit* differs in many communities. In the Ashkenazi ritual, small children under bar mitzvah age dress in *tallitot* (prayer shawls) made according to their size, whereas in the Polish-Sephardi ritual only married men wear them. In most Oriental rites, unmarried men wear *tallitot*. Before putting on the prayer shawl, the following benediction is said: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to wrap ourselves in the fringed garment."

יש אור שמש מהחלונות, אבל” [ they are thirsty because of the fast and they were there for a long time”]. Al [לא הרבה, ובית הכנסת חשוך וגדוש. יש לכל האנשים פנימות עייפים. אולי הם צמאים כי הצום והיו שם זמן ארוך used of the verb see [רואה] when he made a reference to looking at [מסתכל], although the distinction between the two verbs was not use accordingly, Al used pragmatic knowledge to express his ideas about the type of gathering, the congregation is possible topic for discussion among themselves, and the women position in the visual image as a symbol for their status. “There are many women above the men's section. They talk together, with their opinions and feelings. Although they are separated, they are important to the visual.

[יש גם הרבה נשים מעל הגברים בסעיף שלהן. הן מדברות ביחד, עם הדעות וההרגשות שלהן. אף על פי הן מופרדות,] [חשובות לתמונה הן חשובות לתמונה הן

3). In the painting by Reuven Ruben 1.1 Family *Portrait* 1926 Jas expressed her idea about the artist position as it relates to the rest of the family. Based on Jas’s biblical background she expressed her pragmatic knowledge and claimed that the gray goat in the visual is a sign for a sacrifice. The goat is staring at the artist specifically which might be a sign that the artist is the sacrifice in his own family. In her opinion the goat reflects on the artist’s feeling as an outsider and abandoned. Yet, the artist finds comfort that this is according to God’s will. Jas interpreted the idea in the painting by using her biblical knowledge and undoubtedly belief in God. “The most important ...the fact that the goat concentrates on the artist...the goat symbolizes the sacrifice of the nation of Israel...and the feeling of the artist...”

[הדבר החשוב ביותר שמייחד את הצייר ממשפחתו הוא העובדה שעז אפורה בוהה בו בריכוז ולא בבני משפחתו האחרים. בתנ"ך, השעיר מסמלת את חיית הקורבן הנושאת את חטא העם הישראלי פעם בשנה ונשארת למות במדבר. העז בתמונה מסמל את ההרגשה של הצייר. כמנודה של משפחתו, הצייר מרגיש נטוש. עם זאת, הוא מתנחם בידיעה שהוא נבחר על ידי אלוהים לתפקיד ייחודי זה.]

Jas thinks that the olive grove background is alluding to the artist family, trees represent family and the many olive trees might be a sign for the future growth of the artist's family. The idea of family is central in Jas's description, she defined the symbols and their relationship to the artist's life. The familial theme and the biblical theme are clearly expressed to define the artist's melancholic expression.

[רקע התמונה הוא מטע זיתים בישראל. אולי הסצנה הזו מזכירה לצייר היכן גדל עם משפחתו. עצים הם גם סמל

למשפחות, ועצי הזית הרבים מייצגים את הדורות הרבים שהגיעו לפני חייו של הצייר ב"עץ המשפחה" שלו.]

4). In the painting of Reuven Rubin, *The Family Portrait* Lee composed a story about a family that immigrated to the promised land and seek to establish a new life. His idea about the daily business was inspired by the olive trees, he imagined that the family opened an olive oil business. In his story he compared the changes that the family have gone through living in Israel through the style of clothing. Lees expressed the change from a traditional family to a westernized family by comparing the style of clothing; the traditional clothing that the grandmother is wearing versus the western style clothing the painter is wearing. "They lived in the Haifa Mountain in order to grow olive trees and prepare olive oil" [הם גרו בהרי חיפה כדי לגדל זיתים ולהכין שמן זית]. In his story Lee imagine that after ten year the daily has prosper and became westernized, his imaginative idea is reflected through the type and style of clothing seen in the painting, "they wear western clothing.... jeans and tee shirt.... jeans are easier to work in agriculture...mom wore pants and tank top because of the strong Sun. But grandma wore dresses since she is traditional" [הם לובשים בגדים מערבי. אבא ... לבשו מכנסי ג'ינס וחולצות טי. הם הבינו מכנסי ג'ינס הכי נוחים לחקלאות. אמא לבשה מכנסיים In another painting וגופיה כי השמש בישראל חזקה... אבל סבתא יותר לבשה שמלות כי [היא הייתה יותר מסורתית Lee expressed his wishful thinking to buy a small house in the nature with his lover, and to walk under the stars eat cheese and drink wine. He created an imaginative scenario that the painting

נטייל על ההרים כל, אם אני אגור בעיר הזה ואדע איך ללכת שם אני אקנה בית קטן עם אהבה שלי].  
[יום לראות את הפרחים סגולים כל לילה אנחנו נאכל גבינה נשתה יין אדום תחת הכוכבים

In the painting of Rubin, *The First Seder in Jerusalem* Lee described the facial expression in the painting as gloomy/despondent. He sees the mix of religions in the painting as a symbol of unity and a reminder that Jesus was a Jew. Lee interpreted the background of Jerusalem as the root of Jewish culture and history. "So, I think the background of Jerusalem is to remind ...the root of the Jewish people as our cultural center. To have a Seder in Jerusalem its out merit" [הרקע של הרי ירושלים מתאר את המרכז של התרבות שלנו, לעשות סדר בהרי ירושלים זאת זכות של האנשים היהודים

Samples:

#### Case Study #1 A1

הציור הזה מראה (גוטליב) תמונת חג בבית כנסת. אני מזהה את הציור הזה, אז אני יודע שזה מראה אחד ימי הנוראים. יש הרבה יהודים בבית כנסת, עם הרבה גילים, גברים ונשים. אני יודע שהם אשכנזים בגלל איך הגברים לובשים את הטליתות שלהם.

יש אור שמש מהחלונות, אבל לא הרבה, ובית הכנסת חשוך וגדוש. יש לכל האנשים פני מות עייפים. אולי הם צמאים כי הצומוהיו שם זמן ארוך. הרב מחזיק את התורה, אבל הוא לא מלמד, וגבר יושב בבימה קורא בלי האנשים האחרים שומעים. ישגבר אחד שלובש צבעות, אז אולי הוא כוהן. הוא מסתכל בקהל, רואה שלא הרבה קורה עכשיו. יש ילד אחד לפני הבימה שלובש שמלה זהובה. הוא עם הגברים, אבל הוא לא לובש שחור כי הוא עדיין לא חלק לחוכמה של הגברים.

יש גם הרבה נשים מעל הגברים בסעיף שלהן. הן מדברות ביחד, עם הדעות וההרגשות שלהן. אף על פי הן מופרדות, הן חשבות לתמונה. אחת מהנשים גם רואה לקהל, כי היא רואה בהיר למרות הפרוד והרעש, מסמל שהיא גם חשוב לדת. הגברים מדברים על התורה, אבל האישה הזאת יודעת יותר בלי הרעש שלהם.

Codes:

1. Identify and describing information – there are many Jews in the synagogue from all ages, there is sun light seen through the window, but not a lot, the synagogue is dark and full.
2. Expressing Knowledge – I know they are Ashkenazi because of the way they wear their prayer shawls.

3. Expressing thought – there are many women above the men...I know they important even though they are separated.
4. Expressing emotion – the people seem tired
5. Constructing Discourse – express opinion about the situation of women and men role in the painting.

## Case # 2 Jas

### Painting by Reuven Rubin 1.1 the Artist Family

זו משפחה של צייר: הוא עם אמו, אחיו ואחותו. הצייר יושב משמאל, הרחק ממשפחתו. הצייר רואה את עצמו כשונה משאר בני משפחתו. למרות שחלק מתווי הפנים שלהם נראים דומים, עורו ושיערו כהים יותר משלושת בני משפחתו האחרים. הוא גם לובש סגנון לבוש אחר. בעוד שבני משפחתו לבושים מאוד רשמי ודתי, הוא לבוש בבגדי פשתן נינוחים יותר, חילוניים, המתאימים יותר לצייר. מה שמפגיש את המשפחה הזו היא אמו של הצייר, שיושבת במרכז התמונה. היא נראית כמו מאטריארך רב עוצמה, והשמלה השחורה שלה עשויה לסמל רוח של מוות. נראה שנוכחותה מביאה פחד לבני המשפחה האחרים, לא אהבה.

הדבר החשוב ביותר שמייחד את הצייר ממשפחתו הוא העובדה שעז אפורה בוהה בו בריכוז ולא בבני משפחתו האחרים. בתנ"ך, השעיר מסמלת את חיית הקורבן הנושאת את חטא העם הישראלי פעם בשנה ונשארת למות במדבר. העז בתמונה מסמל את ההרגשה של הצייר. כמנודה של משפחתו, הצייר מרגיש נטוש. עם זאת, הוא מתנחם בידיעה שהוא נבחר על ידי אלוהים לתפקיד ייחודי זה.

רקע התמונה הוא מטע זיתים בישראל. אולי הסצנה הזו מזכירה לצייר היכן גדל עם משפחתו. עצים הם גם סמל למשפחות, ועצי הזית הרבים מייצגים את הדורות הרבים שהגיעו לפני חייו של הצייר ב"עץ המשפחה" שלו.

## Codes:

1. Identify and describing information- The artist's family: him with his mother his brother and his sister.
2. Expressing Knowledge – the family members are dressed officially and religiously, the artist is dressed in linen clothes, more comfortable and secular, better fit for an artist.
3. Expressing Opinion/ thought – the black dress might symbolize the spirit of death

## Case Study #3 Sin

### Yohanan Simon Painting

הצבעים הבולטים ביותר בציור זה הם כחול וזהב, סמלים לישראל. זהו עידן החלוצי זמן קצר לאחר עצמאותה של ישראל ב-1948, והוא נראה כמו קיבוץ יהודי באזור הגליל, שבו החלו להקים משפחות רבות. יש הרבה צעירים וצעירות עם ילדים קטנים, וכולם נראים מאושרים מאוד כשהם משחקים וקרובים זה לזה. בתמונה יש יותר נשים מגברים, אבל כולם עושים את אותן הפעילויות. כמה גברים ונשים נחים. גברים ונשים אחרים מחזיקים ידיים זה עם זה ועם ילדיהם. אף אחד לא עובד. כולם רגועים. ביטוייהם מראים שהחלוצים שלווים. הם לא חוששים מכל סכנה או אי ודאות בעתיד. הם מתמקדים בהנאה מהרגע עם משפחותיהם.

אני חושב שהזוגות הצעירים מדברים ביניהם על הילדים שלהם ואיך להקים משפחה בישראל. עבור רבים מהם, זו הפעם הראשונה שלהם. ייתכן שהם חולקים טיפים להורות, דברים שלמדו מהוריהם שלהם כשגדלו. אם הם לא מדברים על הילדים שלהם, הם מדברים על איך הקיבוץ שלהם עשוי להתרחב בעתיד. אני חושב שהם גם מספרים לילדיהם סיפורים מהתנ"ך כדי שילדיהם יגדלו ויעריכו את הארץ המובטחת החדשה הזו.

אם אלה היו הורים מודרניים, אני חושב שהפנים שלהם היו נראים הרבה פחות אופטימיים. ייתכן שהם מתלוננים על מזג האוויר, על יוקר המחיה או על הממשלה! ובמקום לדבר או לשחק, חלקם עשויים להיות בטלפונים שלהם ולכתוב הודעות טקסט לילדים שלהם במקום זאת!

Codes:

Transmitting information – children, modern parents, young people with small children, the colors in the painting

Expressing knowledge, memory, faith – it's a pioneering era, shortly after the establishment of Israeli in 1948.

Expressing will, expressing hope – I think the couples are talking about raising families in Israel.

Expressing emotion - Relaxed, Optimistic

Constructing discourse - express opinion about the situation of women and men role in the painting.

## **6.8 The Learner's Connection to Cultural Symbols and Images (See: Appendix F)**

The participants AL, Jas, Sin and Lee come with multi-ethnic backgrounds; however, Jas, Sin and Lee all grew up in a multiethnic and cultural home speaking more than one language. Negotiating these complexities requires a nuanced understanding of identity and a willingness to embrace the fluidity of cultural affiliations.

According to the participants responses collected, I observe that recognizing the cultural symbols reflected on several factors; attachment to Israel, visit to Israel, Jewish cultural practice, religious practice. For Lee the cultural symbols serve as tangible representations of shared history, values, and traditions within his immediate family from the father side. He has a from diverse

ethnic backgrounds that come together and enriched his life experience. These symbols become bridges that connect him to his cultural heritages while he also fostered a sense of belonging to the broader community. These symbols provided Lee a sense of continuity and connection to ancestral roots, even in the face of cultural assimilation or acculturation to his other side of the family (the mother side that are Christians).

Si, Jas, and Lee expressed their attachment to certain images and experience to cultural symbols in a multi-ethnic context can be multifaceted. It was involved a process of exploration, where they engage in some interaction through visits to Israel. For Jas various cultural symbols were connected to her religious practice and biblical context primarily. This exploration allowed her to understand and appreciate the nuances of each culture while also forging a unique identity that integrates multiple cultural influences. The cultural symbols and images served as affirmation for the knowledge they gained while they acquired Hebrew. They validate individuals' experiences and provide a sense of validation for their multi-ethnic identities. For Al some of cultural symbols in a multi-ethnic accompanied by feelings of ambiguity or conflict. Al never been to Israel and the symbols and images were theoretical and distance form his day-to-day reality. For Sin some of the images such as the Jewish food did not seem to address any connection while the photos of Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem immediately clipped a memory from his summer trip to Israel.

Symbols and images often embody the values, beliefs, and social norms of a culture. Through careful analysis and interpretation of these symbols, learners gained valuable insights into the cultural mindset and worldview of native speakers. This understanding empowered participants to navigate social interactions effectively and mitigate potential cultural misunderstandings. These cultural symbols hold significant importance as they serve as points of reference for navigating the complexity of identities and comprehending the intricate tapestry of one's heritage. Participants

reflected on how specific symbols within Israeli and Jewish culture resonate within their own cultural context or find equivalents to them.

In the Chart below I coded each participant and input their ideas, thoughts, and association for each image. The objective of this activity was to assess the ideational and imaginative competence. The answers presented in the chart indicate the connection the participants established with the Israeli culture and history. The cultural symbols and images provided context to associate personal experiences and religious belief. They help learners associate words and phrases with specific cultural contexts, making the language more meaningful and memorable. For example, seeing images of traditional foods, clothing, or landmarks help learners understand how language is used in everyday life within Israeli and Jewish culture. The visual representations of cultural symbols helped recall vocabulary that appeared in art such as: pomegranate, olive, pioneers, beach.

The learners corresponded to the images, objects, activities, or concepts showed that they all associated them with Hebrew, and they could easily connect the visual representation with the corresponding words or phrases. The exposure to the cultural symbols and images fostered cultural competence and cultural awareness, which is essential for effective communication and interaction with native speakers. The symbols and images evoked emotions and associations that enhanced the cultural competence of the learners. The learners developed a personal connection to cultural symbols, such as Israel flags, religious symbols- Torah, or iconic landmarks- Kibbutz, they were motivated to engage in a conversation and seek more information.

This activity indicated that visual representations provided an opportunity for the learners to engage in a discourse and to develop their language skills while expressing their own cultural identities and perspectives. In some instance the symbols merely were recalling the Hebrew words



and in other instances the image or symbol triggered elicitation, personal belief and reminding of past experiences in Israel. For Al (case study #1) who have never been in Israel, his ideas were based on the images and association with vocabulary, whereas for the other three participants the images alluded to time spending in Israel and the different experiences they share. However, the cultural symbols and images enriched the language learning experience by providing context, enhancing vocabulary acquisition, fostering cultural competence, facilitating emotional connections, offering authentic real-world context, and encouraging creativity and cultural expression. I strongly attest that by Incorporating these elements into language instruction helps learners develop a deeper understanding of the language and its associated culture.

(See appendix E for images and symbols description)

Image/Symbol	What do I see in the image	What comes to my mind when I see this photo or symbol	I associate this with _____	How is this related to my life? if at all?	Participant
	הטלית היהודית Prayer Shawl	תקווה (Hope)	ישוע, הוא נולד בישראל לשבת יהודה (Jesus)	דגל ישראל קשור לאמונה שלי (Connect to my belief)	Jas
	דגל ישראל Israeli Flag	שמחה עתיד תקווה געגועים Happiness, hope for the future, longing	תקווה ליהודים Hope for the Jewish people	אבא שלי אני רוצה לטוס לשם קיץ מוזיקה	Lee
	דגל ישראל Israeli Flag	חופשה קיץ summer vacation		חופשה Vacation	Sin
	דגל ישראל Israeli Flag		חופש (freedom vacation)	סמל לחופש	Al
	הכינרת, עצים, תמרים, ושלושים ושמונה אנשים רוקדים בחוץ Date trees	החלוצים הישראלים, בשנים ראשונים, אשר סוציאליסטים The first pioneer in Israel	קשור לקיבוצים בגליל בצפון ישראל Kibbutz	אני מרגישה שמחה ומקווה כי אני ראוה אנשים חיי ביחד בשלום, זה דוגמה חשוב לעולם Feeling exuberant	Jas



אוהל נוף יפה Beautiful landscape	קיבוץ בזמן 1948 ילדים רוקדים ביחד kibbutz	מקום של טבע כמו ווימוניג Nature palace	זיכרונות מהקיץ Summer memories	Lee
אנשים רוקדים Dancing people	אנשים יהודים בניינים בקיבוץ Jewish people building a kibbutz	קיבוץ Kibbutz	ביקור בישראל visit in Israel	Sin
קיבוץ בהתחלה The beginning of a kibbutz	קיבוץ חברים רוקדים Friends dancing			Al
רימונים. Pomegranates	הראש השנה היהודית Jewish new year	רימון קשור לחוכמה וחיים חדשים Relate to wisdom and new life	כאשר למדתי את על השבעת המינים, ואיך הרימון בתוך האלה, אני התחלתי לאכול רימון אחד כול יום לבריאות!	Jas
ראש השנה התחלה חדשה New beginning	הרבה- פוריות Fertility	קשור לבישול ואוכל פרסי	אוכל טוב דת היהדות – אמא דיברה הרבה איתי בילדות שיש גרעינים סמל ביהדות מספר 8- שמונה ספירות	Lee
רימון Pomegranate	ראש השנה Rosh Hashanah	יהודים Jews	תרבות שלי גם אוכלים רימונים בתורכיה גם סמל לשנה חדשה שמים רימונים בדלת	Sin
Pomegranate רימון	ראש השנה Jewish new year	יהדות שפע Abundance	חג יהודי Jewish Holiday	Al
נוף של הגליל Landscape of the Gallil	חקלאות מושבים ראשונים Agriculture, first settlements.	ביקרתי בגליל עם אמא שלי בקיץ 2023	מקום רגוע, קשור לישו ששם הוא אסף את רוב תלמידיו Jesus gathers his disciples	Jas
נוף יפה – חקלאותי Agriculture landscape	חקלאות Agriculture	חושב על חום וקיץ Heat of the summer	צפון הארץ North in Israel	Lee
חקלאות Agriculture	אולי זה בנינים קרובים לים זה חקלאות ---מישמש Close to the sea - apricot			Sin



				Al
קריאת התורה בבית כנסת קטן Reading of the Torah in a small shul	יהדות Judaism	אמונה Faith	my own faith because it reminds me of a well-known story of Jesus being asked to read the appointed weekly portion of scripture in his local synagogue. When the scroll was opened, he read aloud the verses in Isaiah that said "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, to proclaim good news to the poor, the recovery of sight to the blind, to heal the wounds of the brokenhearted, to set the captives free."	Jas
תורה Torah	זמן של הבר מצווה שלי My Bar Mitzvah	התרגשתי מאוד והיה לי קשה בבר מצווה I was very nervous	משפחתי מישראל באה מישראל קריאת הפרשה שלי והיא הייתה ארוכה	Lee
ספר דתי של יהדות	אנשים משתמשים להתפלל		אין לי קשר No connection	Sin
תורה Torah	קריאת התורה Reading of the Torah		כשהייתי בבית כנסת פעם ראשונה עם ההורים שלי בבת מצווה	AL
יפו העתיקה Old Jaffa	תל אביב המודרנית Modern Tel Aviv	There are beautiful remnants of the Roman hippodrome where the Apostle Paul would have stood as a	This is related to my personal life because I am called as a believer in Yeshua to remember those who have gone	Jas



		prisoner, making a bold proclamation of his faith in Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people	before me, dying for what they believed in.	
יפו Jaffa	געגועים מקום מעורב – תרבותי Longing	ההתחלה של האנשים שעלו לארץ לפני 1948 הכניסה של ישראל The beginning of immigration	זמן שביליתי בתל אביב אני רוצה לגור שם מקום שאני הכי אוהב בישראל דוקטור שקשוקה Love the restaurant DR. Shakshukah	Lee
יפו העתיקה Old Jaffa	המקום העתיק של ההתחלה של תל אביב Old place where Tel Aviv began		הייתי שם I was there	Sin
				Al
חוף הים Beach	מודרניות סקולריות קפיטליזם צעירים Modernism Secularism Capitalism, Youngsters	with 21 <sup>st</sup> century Israel, where young people are moving away from their religious roots.	This is related to my life because it reminds me of Professor Hagit, my Hebrew teacher who grew up in a suburb outside of Tel Aviv!	Jas
חוף תל אביב Tel Aviv Beach	חום קיץ כיף Summer, heat, fun	עיר מודרנית צעירים שמש Modern city Youth Sun	שורשים שלי המקום שאני הכי אוהב להיות	Lee
טיילת בית מלון Boardwalk		צבעים של קשת The rainbow colors	הבניין האהוב עליי My favorite place	Sin
				Al



<p>הכותל המערבי Western wall</p>	<p>אולטרה- אורתודוקס</p>	<p>sadness Jews feel that they no longer have a Temple like they did during Solomon and Herod's reign</p>	<p>This relates to my life because as a Christian, we respect the Western Wall since it is the closest we can get to Mount Moriah, where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac. We believe this is representative of God's future sacrifice of His son, Jesus, on Mount Calvary outside Jerusalem</p>	<p>Jas</p>
<p>ירושלים בכותל Jerusalem western wall</p>	<p>יהדות סמל של הקשה ליהודים Judaism Symbolizes hardship</p>	<p>בעבר לפני המלחמות In the p[ast before the wars</p>	<p>אני הייתי שם וכשאני שם אני בוכה על הקיר אני מתגעגע לאבא שלי הוא לקה אותי לשם להרבה פעמים והתחבקנו שם</p>	<p>Lee</p>
<p>כותל Western wall</p>	<p>תמונה מזמנים ישנים Old time photo</p>	<p>קיר קדוש וחשוב לאנשים יהודים Holy wall and important for Jews</p>		<p>Sin</p>
				<p>Al</p>
<p>חלה</p>	<p>שבת</p>	<p>מנוחה משפחה אחדות Rest, family and unity</p>	<p>I studied in a Christian university in Jerusalem in 2016, we used to have freshly baked Challah every Friday night for our Holy Communion sacraments. Those were very good times. ☺</p>	<p>Jss</p>





שבת	סבתא רבה שלי אופה חלות גדולות וטעימות My great grandmother bake big delicious challahs	זמן לבלות עם משפחה Time to spend with family		Lee
חלה	ניסיתי לאפות אבל בלי הצלחה	זה לא קל לאפות את זה לחם מיוחד שאנשים עושים בהגים		Si
				Al
מרק עוף Chicken soup	מטבח אשכנזי Ashkenazi kitchen	פסח	it reminds me of the soup that my Polish family likes to make and eat together.	Jas
כדורי מצה	חושב על סבתא Think of grandmother	סבתא אוהבת להכין את המרק הזה	קשור לאוכל חג ולא רק פסח Related to Holiday food not only Passover	Lee
מרק גפילטע- פיש			מזכיר לי אוכל של אמא remind me of mom's food	Sin
מרק מצה	אוכל אשכנזי Ashkenazi food	מסורת מנהגים Tradition, customs	הצד היהודי במשפחה שלא דובר	Al
סופגניות	מאפה יהודי	I associate this pastry with Ashkenazi culture, since they seem to prefer sweeter foods than Sephardic Jews	This relates to my Polish heritage, because we have something very similar that we eat on Christmas Eve.	Jas
חנוכה סופגניות Donuts	חנוכה Hanukkah	שמן כאב בטן Oil, stomachache	משפחה ביחד Family together	Lee
סופגניות	קינח	קונים או עושים להג	לא זוכר איזה חג	Sin



		ש קשר לאשכנזים מנהג	Don't remember which holiday	
סופגניות Donuts	חנוכה Chanukkah	אוכלים הרבה בחג Eat a lot during the holiday		Al
סלטים ישראלים	אוכל ישראלי מודרני which has adopted both Arabic and Mediterranean flavors	I associate this with 21 <sup>st</sup> century Israeli street food and restaurant food.	This relates to my life because I crave this kind of food all the time!	Jas
סלטים ישראלים Israeli salads	חומוס לא טעים	אני אוהב חומוס הם I love warm Humus	עפולה הישראל- יש מקום לפלאפל דוכן מצוין שאכלתי עם אבא	Lee
פלאפל וסלטים	יש סלט שאני תמיד קונה A salad that I always buy	פלאפל זה לא דבר גדול בתורכיה It's not big in Turkey		Sin
פלאפל Falafel	סלטים Salads			Al
עץ זיתים	ארץ ישראל	I associate olives with primarily olive oil, then with peace, since it was the turtle dove that first brought back an olive branch to Noah as a sign that God's judgement towards the earth had ended.	This relates to my life because I have a personal podcast and blog called <i>Joy &amp; Olives!</i> I included olives in the name of my podcast and blog because olives remind me of the Garden of Gethsemane (olive press) where Jesus knelt down and prayed until blood flowed from his head.	Jas



זיתים Olives	שלום peace ים התיכון יונה עם עלה של זית		הר הרצל Mount Herzel	Lee
זיתים עץ Olives on tree			אסוציאציה חזקה למדינה שלי Strong association to my country (Turkey)	Sin
זיתים Olives	ארץ ישראל ים התיכון The land of Israel Mediterranean	שמן Olive	יוון ים תיכון Greece Mediterranean	Al
ארוחת בוקר ישראלית Israeli breakfast	בית קפה ישראלי ביצים קפה קר סלט ישראלי לחם Israeli café	modernity and prosperity of Israel	This reminds me of an amazing bagel café I ate at in the German Colony of Jerusalem, where I ate very similar foods!	Jas
ארוחת בוקר	בית קפה ישראלי בריאות Israeli Café Healthy	בוקר בישראל סופשבוע Weekend		Lee
ארוחת בוקר בישראל	אנשים בישראל אוכלים סלט בבוקר וקפה בתורכיה אנשים שותים תה במקום קפה			Sin
ארוחת בוקר ישראלית				Al
שדרות רוטשילד בתל אביב I can also see the very first kiosk that still exists on Rothschild boulevard today.	the booming era of Tel Aviv in the 1920s and 1930s.	with the coming independence of Israel in 1948 and the hope that Jews felt about starting a new life in an "old new land."	This reminds me of my own personal desire to visit that very kiosk in Tel Aviv one day!	Jas



	<p>דרך רוטשילד קיוסק Kiosk Rothchild blvd</p>	<p>קיוסק גלידה "קורטוב" Kiosk</p>	<p>תל אביב בעבר תל אביב עיר זמן מרגש בישראל ועדיין היה שם עצים ופרחים מכוניות אנשים בחוץ Tel Aviv in the past</p>		Lee
	<p>תל אביב ישנה Old Tel Aviv</p>	<p>התחלה של תל אביב beginning of Tel Aviv</p>	<p>תל אביב התחילה כעיר גנים Tel Aviv as a Garden city</p>	לא הייתי שם	Sin
					Al
	איש דתי יהודי	ירושלים העתיקה	<p>I associate this with the many diverse practices of Judaism within Israel. There are so many different sects that dress differently. I believe this type of hat that the man is wearing is someone belonging to a Russian Jewish</p>	<p>This relates to my life because it recalls memories of my first time being in Jerusalem. It was my first encounter with people in long, black suits and big black hats! It was something I had never seen with my own eyes all my life, only in movies about the Jews in Europe during the Holocaust</p>	Jas
	יהודי ירושלמי	חומה בעיר העתיקה שער יפו	יהודי דתי Religious Jews	קשר למשפחה קשה לי לא להיות שם family	Lee
	איש דתי religious Jew	אשכנזי Ashkenazi			Sin
	יהודי מאוד דתי Religious Jew	דת religion	לא אוהבים אנשים לא דתיים		Al

From the data collected I drew the following conclusions:

- Linguistic Background:
  - Learners' linguistic backgrounds play a significant role in shaping their language identities. This includes their native language(s), dialects, and proficiency levels in each language.
  - Learners may identify with specific linguistic communities or cultural groups based on their language background, which can influence their attitudes and motivations towards learning additional languages.
- Attitudes and Beliefs:
  - Language learner identity is influenced by learners' attitudes and beliefs about the languages they are learning, as well as their perceptions of themselves as language learners.
  - Positive attitudes towards language learning, belief in one's language learning abilities, and a strong sense of motivation can contribute to a positive language learner identity.
  - Conversely, negative attitudes, feelings of inadequacy, or low motivation may hinder the development of a strong language learner identity.
- Cultural Identity:
  - Language learner identity is closely intertwined with cultural identity. Learners may identify with specific cultural groups associated with the languages they are learning.
  - Cultural identity includes factors such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic background, all of which can influence how learners perceive themselves in relation to the language and culture they are learning.

- Language Learning Experiences:
  - Learner identity is shaped by learners' experiences in the language learning process. Positive experiences, such as successful communication or cultural immersion, can strengthen language learner identity.
  - Conversely, negative experiences, such as language barriers or feelings of exclusion, may challenge a learners' sense of identity and motivation to continue learning the language.
- Social Context:
  - Language learner identity is also influenced by the social context in which language learning occurs. Interactions with teachers, peers, and native speakers, as well as exposure to authentic language use in real-world contexts, can shape learners' perceptions of themselves as language learners.
  - Social factors such as peer pressure, language attitudes within the community, and perceptions of language proficiency may impact how learners perceive their own language identity.
- Language Proficiency and Identity Negotiation:
  - Language learner identity is dynamic and evolves over time as learners gain proficiency in the language and negotiate their identities within different linguistic and cultural contexts.
  - Learners may experience language identity conflicts or shifts as they navigate multiple linguistic and cultural affiliations, especially in multilingual and multicultural environment.

## Chapter 7: Summary, Implications and Limitations

### 7.1 Summary

The summary of this research will address the questions presented in this research.

- ◆ What does student work from across Hebrew courses at USC beginner through intermediate reveal about the ways pairing language acquisition with Jewish and Israeli visual art influence the development of language competences among learners?
- ◆ What does student work reveal about the extent to which integration of Jewish and Israeli visual art into language acquisition enhances the language performance of oral competence?
- ◆ What does student work from across Hebrew classes at USC reveal about the role cultural knowledge conveyed through Jewish and Israeli visual art contributes to learners' language (linguistic and cultural) competence?
- ◆ What does student work from Hebrew classes at USC reveal about the role Jewish and Israeli visual art plays in encouraging learners to connect vocabulary and themes in communicating ideas, thoughts, and opinions?
- ◆ What does student work from across Hebrew classes at USC reveal about the extent to which the process of acquiring a new language and its associated culture through Jewish and Israeli visual art reshape the learners' identity?

My research was aimed at investigating the relationship between Israeli – Jewish Art and the development of communicative competence (e.g., linguistic, pragmatic – ideational, heuristic, and imaginative). It sought to discover to what degree the learner's identity is renegotiated in the process of acquiring a second language. From the four case studies I concluded that art served as a text that helped students associate vocabulary and context. My focus on meaning and function

rather than on grammatical accuracy allowed students to form a positive interaction during oral and written discourse. As “one should always bear in mind that... ‘accuracy growth’ and ‘interlanguage development’ do not represent the same construct” (Pallotti, 2010, p. 163).

The case studies investigated the linguistic competence of students in a multicultural setting, with the aim of understanding how the individual can gain communicative competence through exposure to Israeli and Jewish art; they also revealed how the individual began to reconstruct their identity. The case studies demonstrated the participants ability to navigate between cultures and languages in different contexts. The research was conducted through ethnographic observation, interviews, and language proficiency assessments in a diverse community comprising bilingual and some multilingual participants.

L2 speakers’ word choices revealed how broadly and deeply they interacted with topics. Beginning speakers demonstrated word choices concerning very specific, personal experience topics while advancing speakers also demonstrated word choices about less immediate topics. L2 speakers who developed communicative competence in the intermediate level were able to maneuver effectively in both languages and can be called multicompetence. The L1 (first language) knowledge influenced the L2 (second language) acquisition by transferring, using comparison, applying cognates. “No matter how advanced L2 users are in the L2, their L2 knowledge is different from that of native speakers of that language” (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006, p. 221). In the early stage of L2 the learners were seeking to find parallel structures. However, with time progression the learners were able to grasp the Hebrew verb system, which at the core of Hebrew verbs are roots, consisting of three consonants. These roots convey the basic meaning of each verb. The learners were able to imply from one pattern of the verb to another form while they used the verbs in present and past tense. An interlanguage, specific to the L2 learner, develops as the learner

navigates back and forth between the two languages. Interlanguage is not an expression of linguistic deficits but rather a demonstration of the process the L2 learner is going through as he or she develops Communicative Competence.

I observed my L2 learners' efforts on initiating and responding appropriately and successfully during interactional communication related to the painting presented. The paintings represented themes that were associated with vocabulary such as: homeland, pomegranate, olive, pioneers, beginning, beach, ancient, city, build, nature, kibbutz. These images served as a platform that helped learners recall specific vocabulary; this repetition also helped to refine pronunciation. The ability to refine the pronunciation encourage students to engage in discourse and to gain confidence while they speak "the ability to appropriately and effectively participate in conversations" (Todhunter, 2007, p. 605). The learners developed perspectives and beliefs about the roles associated with certain linguistic forms or concepts when they saw a similar visual theme presented, the verb "was born" was associated as they learned with the Rubin painting, "Family Portrait", this is an example of irregular verb that linguistically is challenging, but through interactional communication and visual association students were able to use it correctly. The same verb was used to describe a state "was born", the state of Israel. The painting helped students gain an understanding about a very different culture than their own, for example: the life in the kibbutz in the early 1920-30 which base upon a socialism model -a community shared values and every member had equal rights and duties to the community. The learners associated kibbutz with an agricultural lifestyle in order to settle a desolate land. The belief that life in the kibbutz was idealized in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century helped the learners to appreciate and absorb cultural and historical nuances, such as the type of clothing depicted in the paintings or that life in a kibbutz

fostered a strong sense of community and camaraderie among its members forming a close bond with one another by working together towards common goals.

Additionally, the learners developed a sense of the idealism and patriotism that those paintings portrayed as well as the painter's life story. Another example that offered a new understanding for the learners were the paintings of Tel Aviv in that they alluded to new beginnings. The word Aviv means spring, referring to a new beginning in the homeland. In Gutman's painting of "Tel Aviv of Gutman", the depiction of the kids looks 'Sabra'<sup>72</sup> new Israeli culture, and they are building a sandcastle representing modernity, an awaking of the ancient land. The city, Jaffa, in the background symbolizes the ancient. Thus, the painting visually compares the 'modern city' and 'ancient city' hence and the repetition of referring to this contrast helped the student to remember the irregular feminine nouns and match it with the correct adjective. The number of feminine nouns that take masculine plurals is small, the number of masculine nouns that take feminine plurals is very large.<sup>73</sup> Every word in Hebrew is defined by gender: the word city is an exception and takes the feminine category. The concept of 'antiquity' in the context of the art defined Israel as being a center of attraction for many empires and a strategic area in which to mobilize their conquest. Modernity was emphasized with the image of Tel Aviv reminding the

---

<sup>72</sup> According to Merriam Webster – a native born Israeli. The derivative came from the cactus fruit called *Tzabar* in Hebrew. The English name is prickly pear. The term alludes to a tenacious, thorny desert plant, The cactus is compared to Israeli Jews who are supposedly tough on the outside, but delicate and sweet on the inside.

<sup>73</sup> The Hebrew word for "gender" is מִיּוֹן (*miyn*, Strong's #4327) and is the word used in the following verse. *And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so.* (ASV, Genesis 1:11)

In Hebrew, there are only two genders, masculine, זָכָר (*zakar*, Strong's #2145), and feminine, נְקֵבָה (*ne-qey-vah*, Strong's #5347). While most nouns in English, such as land and sky, are neuter nouns, in Hebrew all nouns are either masculine or feminine. The Hebrew word אֶרֶץ (*e-rets*, Strong's #776), meaning "land" is feminine and the word שָׁמַיִם (*sha-ma-yim*, Strong's #8064), meaning "sky" is masculine. <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/modern-hebrew/gender.htm>

learners that waves of Jewish immigration to Pre-Israel built their homeland using their scholarly and professional expertise (Guttman Artist's family).

Hall (1995) suggests that L2 speakers need both the modeling and the opportunity for interactional practice to succeed in interactions with other speakers of the target language. In the case of my research the painting provided a visual representation of vocabulary, making it a strong mental image that helped the learners to connect words with their meanings. Additionally, the paintings helped develop the learners' narrative skills. The learners easily started a conversation when they saw a painting. They felt that they had something to say, whether it was a simple description or a thought they associated with the painting.

The paintings served as a gateway for exploring Israeli culture and traditions. Students painted in their mind scenes inspired by Israeli cultural practices, landmarks, festivals, and traditions. This helped foster a cultural awareness and appreciation while also providing opportunities for language practice. The paintings offered a creative and immersive way for the learners to engage with language creatively and to express themselves while developing their linguistic skills and cultural awareness. It helped them to explore various interpretations of words, phrases, or texts. The process encouraged learners to think critically about language and its cultural connotations, fostering a deeper engagement with the target language and go beyond superficial comprehension.

The paintings made the interaction with the language a tool for generating meaning(s). The conceptual, cultural, and ideological aspects were portrayed in the paintings created in Eretz Israel. The styles of other places and times depicting the way local scenery and events came to be defined as subject matter and were interpreted - aesthetically and ideologically. The learners developed a sense of styles and associated typology of images (seascapes and promenades, hills and valleys,



sacred groves and celestial cities, earthly sandy shores and winding paths, open windows, family portraits and figures of local people); this helped the learners use their imagination and sharpen their connection to Israel. They were able to associate major vocabulary pertaining to the historical and cultural images and turned their surroundings, ancient and new, into a local edition of the foundation myth.

Several other factors contributed to the development of linguistic competence among the learners. Exposure to multiple languages from an early age, interaction with peers and family members, and participation in culturally rich activities all played significant roles. Additionally, the community's supportive attitude towards bilingualism fostered positive language attitudes and facilitated language maintenance. Lee's exposure to multiple cultures, Israeli, American and Chinese, contributed to his curiosity to delve more into learning Hebrew and Israeli culture. He was very passionate to make progress in Hebrew and to expand his communicative competence and learn about the history of Israel. Jas who also came from a bilingual home and multi-cultural background (Chinese American and Russian-Polish) was showed curiosity and excitement when learning about Israel culture and history. She often compared her own culture, and she was very devoted to learning Hebrew because of her pious religious practice. Si, who came from Turkish and Albanian culture, found similarities with the middle east culture of Turkey. He was very curious to explore new words and customs and found similar sounds in words such as: date, olive, and pomegranate. Al was fascinated to see the linguistic structure for each word and especially verbs in different linguistic paradigms. The learners came from a variety of cultures; America, Turkish, Chinese and spoke more than one language; they were openly welcome of new knowledge and were ambitious to apply new words during oral discourse.

Learners employed multiple mediums to connect with their different learning experiences across time and space. Mediums included narratives and artistic images, short videos, and different soundtracks that students used to communicate their stories. Additionally, images and videos also contained more specific objects such as daily living inside and outside households (cars, buses, bicycles, planes, backpacks, reading lamps, desks, televisions, headphones, computers, etc.); print and media-based materials (books, textbooks, movies, series, posters, flyers, etc.); objects that are often recognized as linguistic, political and religious symbols (flags, banners, pamphlets); and different contacts related to students' lives (strangers, acquaintances, friends, family, and teachers).

Non-instructional settings included the learner's home, hometown, and other spaces in which they spent time with friends and family. The links students established across all these locations and physical spaces mainly revealed connections between four relevant learning domains: school, family and private life and the foreign language community, which was especially significant for them as L2/FL learners.

Students' learning experiences within the domains of the family and their private lives mainly involved their learning of Hebrew for practical situations. Students' practices varied among class activity, visits to Israel, listening to music, talking to natives, watching Israeli TV and films in Hebrew. All these experiences revealed that language learning requires oral production, interaction with other speakers, and self-perception as a Hebrew learner (Council of Europe, 2017).

The students primarily gained exposure to Hebrew outside of formal instruction through their community interactions. Each participant's connection to the community held unique significance. For Al, involvement in school activities and Jewish life on campus played a pivotal role in his exposure to Hebrew and Israeli culture. Jas, who spent a semester in Jerusalem, sought

to sustain her connection afterward by engaging with university Jewish clubs, maintaining friendships in Israel, and making return visits. For Sin, participation in events focused on Jewish life and Israel motivated him to eventually travel to Israel. His enrollment in a graduate program in Jewish studies further solidified his community ties. The visit to Israel enriched Sin's cultural understanding, enhanced by his appreciation for Israeli music and vocabulary acquired through songs. Sin initially formed a connection to Hebrew through an imagined community, fueled by visual and conceptual ideas gained in Hebrew courses. He stated that although he is not an advance speaker, the learning process was transformational in terms of how he perceived his identity and his own culture. For Lee, the family in Israel served as strong bond in diverse ways. His interactions with family members, especially his close relationship with his grandmother, and his fond memories from childhood visits contributed to his passion for advancing in Hebrew and the connection to Israel.

The term "imagined community" (Norton, 2002) illustrates how learners strive not only to master linguistic structures but also to integrate into communities where Hebrew is spoken. These communities are often imagined due to limited direct interactions with all members, yet they foster a sense of belonging and identity throughout the language learning journey. Cultural knowledge played a crucial role in shaping participants' perceptions of Hebrew speakers and communities. Language acquisition, therefore, encompasses not just mastering linguistic skills but also negotiating one's identity in relation to the language and its speakers. By adopting cultural practices associated with Hebrew, participants not only developed linguistic proficiency but also cultivated a sense of belonging to the imagined community of Hebrew speakers. Their motivation stemmed not only from linguistic goals but also from a desire to connect effectively and engage in cultural exchanges within this imagined community. In summary, the concept of imagined communities in

language acquisition highlights the social, cultural, and identity-related dimensions of learning a language. It underscores the significant role of community and belonging in motivating learners and shaping their understanding of language and culture.

Oral production through interaction, such as speaking and face-to-face communication, has been identified as "the best way to learn the L2/FL" (García-Pastor, 2017, p. 46). Learners engaged in real-life situations, actively using the language to convey meaning, understand others, and negotiate understanding. This dynamic environment promotes rapid acquisition and retention of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Immediate feedback from interlocutors enables learners to correct errors and refine their language skills in real time, leading to more authentic and effective communication.

For Lee, engaging in richer conversations with his family members in Israel contributed to his satisfaction with deepening his connection to both his family and the broader Israeli community. Through these interactions, he became more aware of various linguistic patterns and self-corrected his speech, particularly in areas such as past tenses, numbers, and gender.

In contrast, Al's oral production was primarily influenced by reading literature and finding connections to the themes in paintings. For Jas, oral interaction allowed her to connect more deeply with the biblical stories she studied, enhancing her religious studies and spirituality through Hebrew. Sin's focus was on integrating Hebrew into his research in political science, aiming to conduct interviews with Hebrew speakers. For him, Hebrew is likely to play a significant role in his professional career, particularly as he plans to participate in the Turkish-Israeli Civil Society Forum to promote constructive relationships between Israel and Turkey.

## 7.2 Implications

Implications of this study extend to language education policies and practices. Educators should recognize and harness the linguistic resources of bilingual children, promoting multilingualism as an asset rather than a deficit. Furthermore, interventions aimed at supporting foreign language development should consider the socio-cultural context and individual language trajectories.

Research on communicative competence using visual art has the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration, drawing on expertise from fields such as art history, cultural studies, linguistics, and communications. Research involving visual art, particularly when it pertains to sensitive topics such as Israeli and Jewish themes, requires careful consideration of ethical concerns. Researchers must ensure that their work respects the cultural, religious, and historical sensitivities of the subjects and communities involved. Visual art involves incorporating elements such as imagery, symbolism, color, and composition to convey meaning. Researchers need to develop frameworks and methodologies that account for the multimodal nature of visual communication and its impact on communicative competence.

In this research I was interested to see how painting from Israeli and Jewish culture promoted learners' communicative competences. I concluded that the four case studies offered a valuable insight into the dynamics of communicative competence. Linguistic competence was constantly evolving during the learner's engagement in various communicative tasks. It included incorporating a range of linguistic skills and knowledge, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse strategies, and sociolinguistic awareness. The skills developed over time through a

combination of natural language acquisition and formal language learning. As the learners were exposed to language input and engage in meaningful communicative tasks, their linguistic competence gradually improved and expanded. Studying Hebrew using paintings integrated various language skills such as reading (interpreting titles and descriptions), listening (discussing artworks with others), speaking (presenting interpretations), and writing (describing artworks or writing reflections). This holistic approach to language learning reinforced skills in interconnected ways. The participants gained competence in the interactional competence due to the vocabulary expansion and the ability to associated words with paintings, they didn't prove that grammatically challenged concepts could be necessarily attained with the paintings.

The paintings provided specific linguistic and sociocultural contexts, and because of the learner's familiarity of cultural norms, they facilitated interlocutor exchange. According to the learners their communicative competence was shaped by ongoing interactions with other language users, including peers, family members, teachers, and media sources. Through these interactions, they acquired new vocabulary, learned grammatical structures, and internalized sociolinguistic norms, all contributed to the dynamic nature of their linguistic competence. They felt that interaction with other interlocutors was a dynamic process that was more valuable than writing short texts. The cultural influences and contact with other languages resulted in improving their linguistic competence. The learners adapted to accommodate changes in language usage, including shifts in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The participants explored their own interpretations of cultural themes depicted in paintings, thereby developed their unique voice in Hebrew.

The Artworks served as windows into the cultural world of Hebrew. By associating paintings with specific vocabulary such as "kibbutz," "sand," "pomegranate," "beach," "olive," "mountain," "city," and "agriculture," which depict cultural themes, learners immerse themselves in the visual and symbolic language of Israeli and Jewish culture. This immersion helps learners appreciate nuances in Hebrew language use and cultural expression that may not be apparent through traditional language textbooks. For example, many paintings depict scenic views in Israel associated with the seven types of fruits and grains that the land of Israel was blessed with. Tel Aviv, the first Hebrew city founded by Western Europeans, reflects European architectural styles with wide streets, gardens, and coffee shops. The diverse population already visible in early 20th-century Israel continues to reflect today's multicultural society in Israel.

The participants attested that learning Hebrew indeed empowered their identity in various ways. As individuals who acquire proficiency in a new language, they adopted new ways of expressing themselves, thinking, and interacting with a new community. This transformation impacted their sense of self and how they perceived the world around them. Language learning broadened their cultural horizons, exposed them to new perspectives, customs, and values. This exposure led to a more nuanced understanding of different cultures and identities, fostering empathy and cultural sensitivity. Additionally, the participants in this study felt that mastering a new language boosted their confidence and self-esteem, as learners they overcame linguistic challenges and achieved milestones in their language proficiency. The confidence that these learners experienced may extend beyond language skills and empowered them to engage in new adventures and to engage more confidently in various social and professional contexts.

This language learning facilitated connections with diverse communities, both locally and globally. The participants stated that meaningful connections formed and that a sense of belonging to a wider linguistic and cultural community developed when they engaged with native speakers and language learners from different backgrounds. The local community was mainly the classroom, friends they met on campus, except for Lee who has an Israeli father and grandparents. All participants in the research are multilingual. Thus, their linguistic competence involved the dynamic interplay between multiple languages. The learners transferred Language knowledge of one language to another influencing their acquisition and use of Hebrew. The more proficient they became in Hebrew; fewer comparisons were made because they realized that they cannot transfer from their mother tongue language to Hebrew. The dynamics of communicative competence underscore the ongoing nature of language acquisition and use. This highlights the continuous adaptation and development of language skills and knowledge through exposure and interaction to culture and history presented in the art.

My research argues that language learners' identities are always multiple and in process, and that learners often have different investments in the language practices of their communities. Because there are so many types of language learners living in socially stratified worlds, future research on identity and language learning should further the goal of coming to understand and contribute to more equitable and agentive language teaching and learning practices for a variety of environments. As language learners in every region of the world claim the right to speak and be heard, their identities and investments will continue to generate exciting and innovative research.

Block (2007b) speculated that the absence of class identification in language learning research may be the result of contemporary discomfort about the perception portrayed in Marxist



rhetoric about class, and/or because economic structures have been so radically changed by globalization that ‘classes’ are no longer easy to distinguish. In any case, sustained attention to privilege in perhaps the nuanced way that Bourdieu writes about different kinds of capital is still to be applied to language instruction.

### **7.3 Limitations and Future Research**

The study's limitations include its small sample size and the specific context of the research community, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. The research was conducted with a relatively small group of participants, all of whom were university students enrolled in various programs and at different stages of their academic careers. This narrow focus limits the ability to extrapolate the results to larger, more diverse classroom environments or to different educational levels such as elementary, junior, and high schools.

Furthermore, all participants in the study had a bilingual background, which introduces a specific limitation: none of the students were monolingual prior to learning Hebrew. As a result, the study could not assess how a bilingual background might influence language acquisition compared to learners who begin with only one language. This means the research findings may not fully capture the dynamics of language learning in individuals who do not have prior experience with multiple languages.

To address these limitations, future research could benefit from exploring longitudinal studies that track language development over extended periods. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language skills evolve and how bilingualism or multicultural backgrounds influence language learning over time. Additionally, investigating how different

levels of education impact the development of communicative competences could yield insights applicable to a broader range of educational contexts. By including a more diverse sample of learners with varying linguistic backgrounds and educational levels, future research could offer a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to effective language acquisition and communicative proficiency.

In envisioning the future, this research explores the intricate intersection of identity, language acquisition, communicative competences, and visual art. It responds dynamically to the vibrant movement in our globalized world. Traditional perspectives (e.g., Chomsky) that viewed language merely as a system and language learning as a mere internalization of that system are now deemed inadequate. In today's world, characterized by boundary-crossing interactions, multilingualism, and the recognition of human agency, a more nuanced approach is imperative.

This research endeavors to transcend the traditional views, embracing the fluidity and diversity inherent in contemporary linguistic and cultural landscapes. By integrating visual art, it seeks to convey the richness and complexities of human communication in our interconnected global society. As I have mapped in this research the learner identity theories, there is a noticeable trend among language learning researchers towards incorporating insights from a variety of interdisciplinary fields to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts for language learning. This shift reflects a growing recognition that traditional linguistic frameworks alone are insufficient to endure the complex realities of language acquisition.

Researchers are increasingly drawing from anthropology to explore how cultural practices and social structures influence language learning processes. By examining language within its cultural context, anthropological perspectives shed light on how learners' identities and

interactions are shaped by broader societal norms and practices. The field of sociology contributes valuable insights into the social dynamics that impact language learning. Understanding social stratification, power relations, and community networks helps researchers uncover how learners' social identities and experiences influence their language learning journeys.

Post-colonial and cultural studies offer critical perspectives on the effects of historical power dynamics and cultural encounters on language learning. These fields provide a framework for analyzing how colonial histories, globalization, and cultural exchanges impact learners' experiences and perceptions of language.

Education theory and practice can further enrich this approach by offering pedagogical strategies and frameworks that consider diverse learner needs and contexts. Insights from education studies help in designing more inclusive and responsive language learning environments that acknowledge and address the varied backgrounds and identities of learners.

By integrating these diverse perspectives, researchers are better equipped to employ the multifaceted nature of language learning. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches theoretical frameworks but also informs practical applications, leading to more effective and contextually relevant language education strategies.

## References

- Ali, S. (2004). *Mixed-race, post-race: Gender, new ethnicities, and cultural practices*. London: Berg. <http://www.amazon.com/Mixed-Race-Post-Race-Ethnicities-Cultural-Practices/dp/185973765X>.
- Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (1994). Negative Feedback as Regulation and Second Language Learning in the Zone of Proximal Development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 465–483. <https://doi.org/10.2307/328585>.
- Anderson, L. (1990). *Research in classrooms: The study of teachers, teaching and instruction*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Atkinson. (2011). *Alternative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition*. In *Alternative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203830932>.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, Dawn. 'Art Integration and Cognitive Development.' In *Journal for Learning through the Arts. A Research Journal on Arts Integration in Schools and Communities* 9(1) (2013).
- Barber, S. (2013). *The Influence of Culture and Identity on Second Language Acquisition: a perspective from Egypt* [Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain. <https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/1413>.
- Barman, B. (2014). The Linguistic Philosophy of Noam Chomsky. *Philosophy and Progress*, 51(1-2), 103-122.
- Barraja-Rohan, A. M. (2011). Using conversation analysis in the second language classroom to teach interactional competence. *Language Teaching Research*, 15(4), 479-507.
- Batang, B. L. (2014). Communicative Competence and Language Learning Styles of Prospective Teachers of English. *Researchers World*, 5(4), 182-187.
- Becker, H. (1982). Culture: A Sociological View. *The Yale Review*, 71, 513-528.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bialystock, E. (1981). The Role of Conscious Strategies in Second Language Proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal*, 65(1), 24–35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/326204>.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Polity.

Butler, F. C. (1978). The Concept of Competence: An Operational Definition. *Educational Technology*, 18(1), 7–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44418395>.

Byram, P. M., & Grundy, D. P. (Eds.). (2003). *Context and culture in language teaching and learning*. Channel View Publications.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.

Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1989). *Research Methods in Education* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. (2006). *Language and mind*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CSEHIOVÁ, Agáta. 'Interdiszciplináris vonatkozások a művészeti és a zenei nevelés területén' A SJE Nemzetközi Tudományos Konferenciája – Medzinárodná vedecká konferencia UJS. „Oktatás és tudomány a XXI. század elején” – „Vzdelávanie a veda na začiatku XXI. storočia.” Komárom, 2014. szeptember 16–17. – Komárno, 16.-17. September 2014.

Dekel, T. (2014). Yigal Zalmona, A Century of Israeli Art. *Israel Studies Review*, 29(1), 158+. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A502508306/AONE?u=anon~9dbe1b8d&sid=googleScholar&xid=0cd98c23>

Descartes, René, 1596-1650. (1986). *Discourse on Method*. New York: London: Macmillan; Collier Macmillan.

Deters, Ping. *Identity, Agency and the Acquisition of Professional Language and Culture*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Plc, 2012.

Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dewi, A. (2007). Shifts in NNESTs' Professional Identity: An Impact of Language and Culture Immersion. *Asian EFL Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 4: Conference Proceedings, 111-125. [http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Dec\\_2007\\_ad.php](http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/Dec_2007_ad.php).

Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2012). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1970). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. *Social Science Information*, 9(1), 175–185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847000900108>.

Furko, P. (2016). 'A focus on pragmatic competence: The use of pragmatic markers in a corpus of business English textbooks', in N, Dobrical et al. (Eds), *Corpora in Applied Linguistics: Current Approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 33-52.

Gardner, R. C. (2010). *Review of motivation and second language acquisition*. Milan, Italy: Peter Lang AG.

Guss, S. M., & Guss, S. M. (1997). *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203053560>.

Hall, S. (1978). *Encoding/Decoding*. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language: Working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79* (pp. 128-138). Hutchinson.

Halliday, M. A. (1984). *Language as code and language as behavior: a systemic-functional interpretation of the nature and ontogenesis of dialogue*. *The semiotics of culture and language*, 1, 3-35.

Harris, R. (1988). *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein, How to play games with words*. London: Routledge, p. ix.

Herr, K., & Anderson, G. (2005). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Heyd, M. (1993). "Reuven Rubin in Palestine." In the Rubin Museum. *Catalog of the Permanent Collection* (pp. 102-98). Tel Aviv: Rubin Museum.

Hitlin, S. (2003). *Values as the Core of Personal Identity: Drawing Links between Two Theories of Self*. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 66(2), 118-137.

Holliday, A. (2010). *Intercultural Communication & Ideology*. London: Sage.

Hymes, D. (1972). *On Communicative Competence*. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.

Kasper, G. (1997). Socialization in Second Language Acquisition. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203849927>.

Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kress, G. (1997). *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy*. London: Routledge.

Krueger, D., & Donham, J. (1993). Use of pragmatic markers in a corpus of business English textbooks. In L. Bouton & Y. Kachru (Eds.), *Pragmatics and language learning* (pp. 217-235). University of Illinois.

Lantolf, J. P., & Pavlenko, A. (1995). Sociocultural theory and second language acquisition. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 108–124.

Lee, Y.-S. (2010). *Exploring the Use of Computerized Dynamic Assessment in EFL Learning*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick). Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/18249036/Exploring\\_the\\_Use\\_of\\_Computerized\\_Dynamic\\_Assessment\\_in\\_EFL\\_Learning](https://www.academia.edu/18249036/Exploring_the_Use_of_Computerized_Dynamic_Assessment_in_EFL_Learning).

Legenhausen, L. (1994). The notion of culture in linguistics. *The semiotics of culture and language*, 11-41.

Li, D. C. S., & Kaye, D. L. (2009). The Impact of Culture on Second Language Learning: A Neglected Issue in Second Language Acquisition Research. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 13(2), 1–22.

MacWhinney, B. (2000). *The CHILDES Project: Tools for Analyzing Talk* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Maynard, S. K. (2006). *Interaction and second language development: A Vygotskian perspective*. A&C Black.

MANOR, D. (2005). Orientalism and Jewish National Art: The Case of Bezalel. In I. D. Kalmar & D. J. Penslar (Eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews* (pp. 142–161). Brandeis University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1d1qmmz.13>

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.

Mor, S. (2013). The Role of Visual Thinking Strategies in Developing L2 Reading Comprehension. In E. G. Jay and M. J. Young (Eds.), *Applied Linguistics in the Middle East and North Africa: Current Practices and Future Directions* (pp. 195-204). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203456878>.
- Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second-language learning conditions, processes, and outcomes? *Language Learning*, 44(3), 493-527.
- Pica, T., Young, R., & Doughty, C. (1987). The impact of interaction on comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(4), 737-758.
- Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams, and imitation in childhood*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- RAZ-KRAKOTZKIN, A. (2005). The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective. In I. D. Kalmar & D. J. Penslar (Eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews* (pp. 162–181). Brandeis University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1d1qmmz.14>
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ruan, J. (2016). Theoretical and pedagogical aspects of development of intercultural competence in EFL context. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 169-188.
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & McDaniel, E. R. (2007). *Intercultural communication: A reader*. Cengage Learning.
- Savignon, S. J. (1972). *Communicative Competence: An Experiment in Foreign-Language Teaching*. Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development.
- Savignon, S. J. (1983). *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley.
- Schmidt, R. (1983). Interaction, acculturation, and the acquisition of communicative competence: A case study of an adult. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition* (pp. 137-174). Newbury House.
- Schutz, A. (1973). Structure, Meaning, and Linguistic Experience. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 70(22), 770–782. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2024783>.
- Sharwood Smith, M. (1981). Consciousness-raising and the second language learner. *Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 159–168. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/2.2.159>.
- Steyn, J., & van Niekerk, T. (2002). Introduction: Language, identity, and the politics of becoming. In J. Steyn & T. van Niekerk (Eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (pp. 3-24). London: Routledge.



- Sturm, B. W. (1994). Communicative competence and communication strategies in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 67-86.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. *Input in Second Language Acquisition*, 235-256.
- Swain, M. (2000). The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue. *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*, 97-114.
- Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1995). Problems in output and the cognitive processes they generate: A step towards second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 16(3), 371-391.
- Tarone, E., & Yule, G. (1989). *Focus on the Language Learner: Styles, Strategies, and Motivation*. Oxford University Press.
- Thorne, S. L., & Black, R. W. (2007). Language and literacy development in computer-mediated contexts and communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 27, 1-29.
- Tobin, G., & Begley, C. (2004). Methodological rigor of a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48(4), 388-396.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and Language*. MIT press.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2002). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Towards a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. Cambridge University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1998). Context, community, and authentic language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), 705-716.
- Williams, J. (1983). The place of negotiation in the language learner's interaction repertoire. *Language Learning*, 33(2), 155-171.
- Williams, J. (2005). Strategic use of L1 in the language classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(3), 325-346.
- Wong-Fillmore, L. (1976). Second language learning in children: A proposed model. In R. C. Gingsras (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 115-133). Center for Applied Linguistics.

Yorio, C. A. (1976). Toward a description of the ESL learner. In R. C. Gingras (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 176-204). Center for Applied Linguistics.

Young, R. (1990). Second language acquisition and language use in interaction: A case study of a classroom discussion. In R. Scarcella, E. Andersen, & S. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 41-55). Newbury House.

## Appendix A: permission

---

*University of Strasbourg*  
*Faculty of Languages*  
4 Rue Blaise Pascal,  
67081 Strasbourg, France

2/1/2023

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As part of my work with the University of Strasbourg, I am conducting action research by studying the development of student's linguistic competency through visual art and how culture is acquired. The degree of texts with historical and cultural aspects affects a learner discourse (oral and written) performance and the impact on the identity after acquiring the language.

I would be grateful if you would give your permission to collect data about you.

My data collection methods will include audio and video recording, recording of your assignments, written assignments, notes, questionnaire, interviews.

I guarantee that I will observe good ethical conduct throughout. I guarantee confidentiality of information and promise that no names will be made public without your permission.

I would be grateful if you can sign and return it at your earliest convenience, please retain one copy for your record,

Best,

*Hagit Arieli Chai*

Participant Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A1: Consent Form

---

### Informed Consent Form for Case Study Participation

**Title of the Study:** The Relationship of Language Acquisition and Visual Art Amplifies Communicative Competence (linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic) and Reconstructs the Learner's Identity

**Principal Researcher:** Hagit Arieli Chai

**Introduction:** You are being invited to participate in a case study conducted by Hagit Arieli Chai at the University of Southern California and Hebrew Union College. This study aims to critically explore the impact of art (Israeli/Jewish paintings) as a text that on degree of development of communicative competences in second language acquisition. And how the learner renegotiates his or her identity as part the language acquisition process.

**Your Participation:** Your participation in this study involves [describe what participation entails, such as interviews, surveys, observations, recording, etc.]. The estimated time commitment for participation is approximately over 12 months.

**Confidentiality:** Any information obtained during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will be anonymized, and any identifying information will be removed from the final report. Only the research team will have access to the data collected, and it will be securely stored.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits. Your decision will not affect any services or treatments you may be receiving.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. However, you may benefit from the opportunity to contribute to research and share your experiences, which could potentially benefit educators, policy makers and linguists in similar situations.

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact Hagit Arieli Chai at [arielich@usc.edu] If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [IRB Contact Information (800) 447-2112].

Your information collected for this study will NOT be used or shared for future research studies, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name, place of birth.

You can choose to leave the study at any time. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to leave the study early, data collected until that point will remain in the study database and may not be removed.

**Consent:** I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A2: University of Southern California Information Sheet

---

My name is Hagit Arieli Chai, and I am a faculty member at the University of Southern California as a Hebrew Language Coordinator for the Hebrew language program at USC (administered by the LA campus of HUC-JIR). I also hold a role as Hebrew Coordinator at Hebrew Union College.

I am conducting a research study Language Acquisition; the development of communicative competences of L2 through art (paintings).

The name of this research study is: The Relationship of Language Acquisition and Visual Art Amplifies Communicative Competence (linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic) and Reconstructs the Learner's Identity

I am seeking your participation in this study.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and I will address your questions or concerns at any point before or during the study.

You may be eligible to participate in this study if you meet the following criteria:

1. You are over 18 years old.
2. You studied or study at USC.
3. You are not participating in another research in the same field (second language acquisition)

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following activities:

1. Participate in an interview over Zoom for 30-40 minutes.
2. Complete survey and questionnaire online for 20-30 minutes
3. Send sample of writing material and oral recording via email

I will publish the results in my thesis and publication. Participants will not be identified in the results. I will take reasonable measures to protect the security of all your personal information. All data will be de-identified prior to any publication or presentations. I may share your data, de-identified with other researchers in the future.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me: [arielich@usc.edu](mailto:arielich@usc.edu) or (3100 309-1414). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Southern California Institutional Review Board at (323) 442-0114 or email [hrpp@usc.edu](mailto:hrpp@usc.edu).

## Appendix B : Lagunage and Identity Questionnaire

---

Dear Participants,

As part of my research, I would like to explore the relationship between studying Hebrew and identity.

I am interested in understanding how studying the Hebrew language relates to personal identity and cultural connections. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.

### Section 1: Demographics

1.1. Age: [ ] years

1.2. Gender: [ ] Male [ ] Female [ ] Non-binary [ ] Prefer not to say

1.3. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

1.4. Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

1.5. Current Place of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2: Language Learning

2.1. Are you currently studying Hebrew? [ ] Yes [ ] No

2.2. If you are studying Hebrew, what motivated you to start learning the language? (Select all that apply) - [ ] Personal interest - [ ] Family heritage - [ ] Religious reasons - [ ] Career opportunities - [ ] Travel - [ ] Academic requirement - [ ] Other (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.3. How long have you been studying Hebrew? - [ ] Less than 6 months - [ ] 6 months to 1 year - [ ] 1-2 years - [ ] 2-5 years - [ ] More than 5 years

### Section 3: Cultural Identity

3.1. Do you have any familial or cultural ties to the Hebrew-speaking world (e.g., Israel or Jewish heritage)?  Yes  No

3.2. If yes, please describe how your cultural background or heritage relates to the Hebrew language.

---

---

---

3.3. How has studying Hebrew impacted your sense of cultural identity, if at all? Please explain.

---

---

---

### Section 4: Language and Identity

4.1. Do you believe that the language(s) you speak are connected to your personal identity?  Yes  No

4.2. How has learning Hebrew influenced your sense of self or identity? \_\_\_\_\_

---

4.3 Do you feel a stronger connection to Jewish culture and heritage as a result of studying Hebrew? (Please explain)

---

---

---

4.4 Has learning Hebrew language played a role in your religious or spiritual identity? (If applicable)

---

---

---



## Section 5: Motivations and Experiences

5.1. What do you find most rewarding about studying the Hebrew language?

---

---

5.2. Have you faced any challenges or obstacles while learning Hebrew? If yes, please describe.

---

---

5.3. How do you envision using your knowledge of Hebrew in the future? (e.g., professionally, culturally, socially)

---

5.4. Have you participated in any cultural or community activities related to Hebrew language and culture? If yes, please describe your experiences.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5.5 What motivated you to study Hebrew? (Select all that apply)

- Personal interest in the language
- Cultural or religious reasons
- Academic or career requirements
- Family heritage
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5.6 How would you rate your proficiency in Hebrew?

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Native speaker

## Section 6: Community and Hebrew Language:

6.1 Have you joined any Hebrew language or Jewish cultural organizations or communities as part of your language study? (Please specify)

---

---

---

6.2 How has interacting with other learners or speakers of Hebrew impacted your sense of identity or belonging?

---

---

---

### **Section 7 Future Outlook:**

7.1 What are your future goals or plans related to Hebrew language learning and its connection to your identity?

---

---

---

7.2 Do you believe that Hebrew language and identity are interconnected for you personally? (Please explain)

---

---

---

### **Section 8: Additional Comments**

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences with studying Hebrew and its connection to your identity or culture?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses are valuable for my research.**

## Appendix C: Questionnaire ‘The attachment to Hebrew’

---

Please respond to the following statement by yes and no and provide explanation if needed.

### 1. What is your attachment to Hebrew Language?

1 I wish I had more courses in Hebrew during my early year in school.

2 I like to attend Hebrew classes more than any other language.

3 I love Hebrew, and I don't want any other foreign language to take its place.

### 2. How do you feel about your pronunciation

1 I think speaking Hebrew with an English accent is bad.

2 I feel proud speaking Hebrew with an accent.

3 I like English pronunciation more than Hebrew.

### 3. Language and social status

1 I believe a person who speaks Hebrew very well has a better social status and respect in the Israel society.

2 I believe knowing Hebrew showing being respectful to the Jewish / Israeli culture.

3 When I speak Hebrew, I Feel that I am \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Use/exposure in the society.

1 I speak Hebrew during \_\_\_\_\_

2 I use Hebrew words a lot when I \_\_\_\_\_

3 I like to speak Hebrew with \_\_\_\_\_

4 I like to speak Hebrew rather than English when

---

5 I read Hebrew text from \_\_\_\_\_

### **5. Language and knowledge**

1 I would like to know more about the history of the Hebrew language.

2 I read poetry and stories in Hebrew.

3 I send text messages and email in Hebrew.

4 I like or don't like the Hebrew Aleph bet because.

## Appendix D : Identity Questionnaire

---

### IDENTITY זהות

Latin root of the word 'identity' (identitas), which means 'same.'

1. Email \* \_\_\_\_\_

Identity



2. Your name. (it will not be mentioned in the research)

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male
- Female
- Bi gender
- A-gender
- Rather not say.
- All gender
- Non-binary
- Other:

4. The year you were born.

---

5. How many years or semesters you learned Hebrew? please specify.

---

6. What is your ethnicity? (e.g. American, African, Middle eastern) write as many terms as needed.

---

7. What is your ethnicity? (e.g., American, African, Middle eastern) write as many terms as needed.

---

Identity is closely associated with ...

Define identity in your own words?



---

---

Is it important for a person to have a specific identity (i.e., to be Iranian, American, English, African, etc.)? why or why not? Please explain.

---

What composes identity?

What is the significance of having an identity?

---

---

What viewpoint did you hold toward your identity before you started to learn Hebrew?

---

Has your identity changed since you started learning Hebrew?  
If so, then in what way has your identity changed?

---



---

How do you feel now that Hebrew has or has not impacted on your identity?

Do you feel positive or negative? Please explain.

---

---

What causes the Hebrew language to impact a learner's identity? Please elaborate.

---

What was your motivation to learn Hebrew?

עברית

---

Did learning Hebrew affected your identity perception?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Other:

---

How learning Hebrew impacted your life?



---

Describe the feelings about your Hebrew learning experience?

---

What would your parents or peer view about identity reconstruction due to learning Hebrew?

---

What was the most influential factor that helped you obtain communication skills in Hebrew?



*Mark only one oval.*

- Media and press movies
- and TV communication
- with native articles and
- textbook

Describe the most influential factor on your Hebrew learning experience. How was it influential?

## Appendix E: Images and Symbols

---

The following questions were presented to the participants:

- 1 What do I see in the image?
- 2 What comes to my mind when I see this photo or symbol?
- 3 I associate this with \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 How is this related to my life? if at all?









## Appendix F : Participants' Reflection on Art

---

### Sin – Sample 1

רות צרפתי, היא אומן ישראלי.

היא מברשת ופסל.

היא נולדה בישראל, בעיר פתח טיקבה. שם, היא למדה על אומנות כפי שסגנון מודרני.

אחרי-כך, היא למדה עם אחרון אבני במוסד אבני. זה היה בית ספר מפורסם בא ומנות.

פה, היא פגשה עם מושה שתרנסהוס, בעל שלה.  
היה להם הילד הראשון. המשפה עלים לתל-אביב. 1958 ב  
במשך החיי שלה, היא עשתה הרבה ציורים ופסלים.  
הסגנון שלה זה מודרני מופשט.  
היא הקימה את התנועה אופקים החדשים.  
היא אמרתה איזון בין ציורים ופסלים שלה. היא עשתה שניהם.  
ילדים תינוקות היו במרכז הפסלים שלה.  
אחרי שהיא נסיעתה ליוון, היא ציירתה נופים של ביתיים לבנים.



בציור הזה, יש הרבה ילדים בצבעים שונים.  
הציור מספר את השימה הילדות.  
יש גן ירוק ויפה ברקע עם הרבה עצים שונים.

כשאת רואה את התמונה הזאת, את יכולת א לזכור איך היה להיות כמו ילדי ם

1922 יהודי וישוע -

. איך רובין בחר את הדמויות האלה, זה מעניין. 1922 השם של הציור הזה, הוא "ישוע ויהודי". רובין צייר את זה ב קודם כל, היהודי בציור, הוא יכול להיות סמל ליהודים בתפוצות. כי הוא יהודי מסורתי. אפשר להבין את זה מבגדים שלו. הוא שונה מהיהודי המודרני שהתחיל עם ציונות. בגלל שהוא סמל ליהודים בתפוצות, הוא נראה עצוב וישן. כי אנשים יהודים היו בתפוצות במשך זמן ארוך. הזמן הזה גם היה קשה בשבילם. היהודי יושב ביחד עם ישוע בספסל. ישוע בהיסריה, באמת, הוא גם יהודי אחד. אבל הוא סמל להתחלה החדשה לחלוצים ציונים. לפי סיפורים דתיים, ישוע נולד עום פעם אחרי שהוא נפטר. זה דומה לתפיסת של התנועה הציונית על ארץ ישראל. הזמן ליהודים בתפוצות עבר וצריך לסיים אחרי הציונות. פרחים, הם נראים אביב. שה גם סמל להתחלה חדשה. עוד סמל, זה אץ ברקע. הם אצים צעירים שדומים ל חלוצים והחיים היהודים בפלסטינה.



### 1922 מדונה של חסרי הבית -

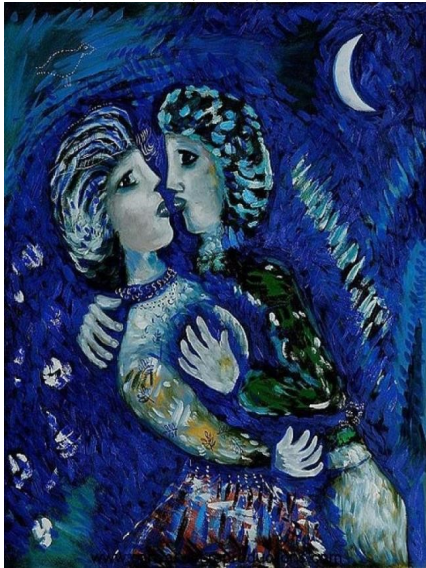
זה ציור שמתאר חקלאים בשדה בזמן שהם נחים. הציור מראה דוגמא מוקדם של סגנון הארץ-ישראלי. יש סירות ברקע שמספר אותנו שחקלאים בציור הם חלוצים. עוד פעם, הציור על אידיאלים ציונים כמו ללמוד ביחד בארץ עם חברים. צבעים בציור הם חמים ותוססים. הם עוזרים להרגיש את חום השמש. למראת שנושא הציור על חלוצים, יש גם משמעות דתי לדמויות. תינוק עם אמא, זה ג'נר באומן נוצרי. בגלל זה, אמא ותינוק יכולים להיות סמלים לישוע ומרי. עוד פעם, רובין משתמש את שילוב מוטיבים נצורים לתאר את האידיאלים ציונים.

Lee Sample #1



כשאני ישן, אני חוזר אליך. כשאני ער, אני מתגעגע אליך. אני גר בחלומות שלי כי אתה שם איתי. אני לא יודע למה אני צריך לחיות את החיים האלה בלעדייך, אבל אם אני לא יכול להרגיש את הגוף שלך פעם נוספת, או השפתיים שלך על שלי, אני לא רוצה לחיות עוד יום אחד. אני זוכר שפגשתי אותך. ירד שלג והיה קר לי, אז נכנסתי לבית קפה שעבדת בו. לא ידעתי שעבדת שם והקור היה חזק באצבעותיי, אז אני לא שמת לב אליך. אבל אחרי דקה, ראיתי אותך מאחורי הדלפק. אהבתי אותך מיד והתחתנו תוך שנה.

כשמתת, גם אני. היום רק בחלומות אני יכול לראות אותך. החלומות שלי הפכו לחלומות שלנו כי אני אוהב לחשוב שאתה באמת שם איתי. אתמול בלילה שכבנו מתחת לעץ תאנה. אור הריח רקד על פניך בזמן שהבטתי בעיניך החומות. "אני אוהב אותך", אמרתי, "אני מתגעגע אליך ואני חושב שאתה משמעות החיים." אתמול בלילה הרגשתי את הנשיקה שלך. למה אתה לא יותר פה, אהבה שלי? אחבק אותך שוב בקרוב...



Lee Sample #2

15, פברואר, 2023

### פרחים סגולים על הרי-ירושלים

יש דרך אחד מירושלים שעלה למלה על הרי ירושלים. בקיץ, השמש חזקה וכל האדמה על ההרים חמה ואין פרחים. כל העצים צריכים מים והאנשים שגרים על ההרים שורים במעין תחת עץ זית אחד. בסתיו, יש ימים שעדיין חמים, אבל בבוקר קר קצת, ויונים עוזבות בתייהם בעצים לשיר להזריחה. חורף על ההרי ירושלים קר מאוד, והשניים יורדים שלג על האדמה שעכשיו קרה. אביב בא כשהיונים חוזרות מתל-אביב להרים. העצים שותים את השלג שעכשיו מים ופרחים סגולים צומחים מהאדמה.



יש שם עיר קטן שיש בית ספר קטן עם שתי כיתות וחמישים בתים, אבל רק חצי יש אנשים בפנים במרכז העיר יש גן יפה עם הרבה עצי פרי שהאנשים אוכלים מהם. רק האנשים שגרים בעיר הזה יודעים על העיר, כי הם לא רוצים אוד אנשים עוברים שם. למה כדאי לגור שם? כי שם כולם עוזרים אחד לשני. גם, האוויר נוח וההרים יפים ומגנים האנשים ממלחמה ושנאה.

אם אני אגור בעיר הזה ואדע איך ללכת שם, אני אקנה בית קטן עם אהבה שלי ונטייל על ההרים כל יום לראות את הפרחים סגולים. כל לילה אנחנו נאכל גבינה ונשתה יין אדום תחת הכוכבים. יום אחד אני אצמא גן אדן, אני פשוט לא מוכן עדדין.



#### Sample of participant reflection on the painting

##### **מהם הצבעים בתמונה**

השמיים, אלה בצהוב. זה מספר לי שזהיום שמשי. צבעים בתמונה, הם צבעי הקיץ והם צבעים חמים ההורים ברקע, הם גם נראה לי חום. אולי זה בגלל שהעצים שם לא עוד ירוק. יש לבגדים כהולים שיכולים להיות סמלים לעבודה. יש לאנשים אותם בגדים באותם צבעים. זה גם נראה לי שהם ממעמד הפועלים.

##### **איזו שנה או תקופה הציור מתאר**

לדעתי, הציור מתאר כמה זמן אחרי הקמה של מדינת ישראל. יש משפחות גדולות שגרות בקיבוץ אחד בתמונה. זה נראה לי שהם לא חלוצים צעירים או מהגרים בהתחלת המדינה. כיאנשים ב תמונה נראים לי 1950 שמה ו, אין להם זמן קשה כמו חלוצים או מהגרים הקומים בשנותה-

### **מה היחסים בין האנשים? מה הקשר ביניהם**

נראים אנשים הם אולי יכולים להיות חברים בקיבוץ שעובדים ביחד וגרים באותו מקום. כל האנשים דומה לאחרים אולי זה בגלל שצייר רוצה להראות שהם כמו אחים ואחות.

### **מה עושה האישה/הנשים**

בילדים. זה הן נחות ביום חמים אחד תחת העצים ומדברות עם אנשים ממשפחות אחרות. נשים מטפלות מעניין שרק ילדות הן בידיים של אמא שלהן.

### **מה עושים הגברים**

גברים גם ניחם וכמה גברים משחקים עם ילדים.

לכל אנשים יש אותה הבעה בפנים שלהם. זה נראה לי הבעה של אנשים **מהן ההבעות ביצירה** צוחק או מדבר הרבה. שנחים. הם לא

### **מה לדעתך משמעות ההבעות**

בשביל אולי זה נותן לצופה רגש נחמד ושלווה. זה נותן לי הרושם שיש שקט ורגש השלום בשדה ההורים.

**הם היו על מה האנשים מדברים? אילו הציור היה משקף את התקופה העכשווית על אילו נושאים מדברים?**

בקיבוץ, על בתקופה הזאת הם יכולים לדבר על ילדים שלהם, על עבודה בשדה, על חקלאות, על יחסים משפחה שלהם לחוץ מקיבוץ, על דברים יומיומים, על לוח זמנים שלהם בקיבוץ. אם הציור היה משקף את הזמן עכשוי, הם היו מדברים יותר על פוליטיקה, יותר על עתיד, יותר על דת, יותר על לנסוע יותר על אוכלים עולמים, על הדשות הם היו מדברים למדינות אחרות, יותר על בתי ספר של ילדים. עולמות.

הציור הזה מראה (גוטליב)

תמונת חג בבית כנסת. אני מזהה את הציור הזה, אז אני יודע שזה מראה אחד ימי הנור אים. יש הרבה יהודים בבית כנסת, עם הרבה גילים, גברים ונשים. אני יודע שהם אשכנזי ם בגלל איך הגברים לובשים את הטליתות שלהם.

יש אור שמש מהחלונות, אבל לא הרבה, ובית הכנסת חשוך וגדוש. יש לכל האנשים פני מות עייפים. אולי הם צמאים כי הצומוהיו שם זמן ארוך. הרב מחזיק את התורה, אבל הוא לא מלמד, וגבר יושב בבימה קורא בלי האנשים האחרים שומעים. ישגבר אחד שלובש צבעות, אז אולי הוא כוהן. הוא מסתכל בקהל, רואה שלא הרבה קורה עכשיו. יש ילד אח ד לפני הבימה שלובש שמלה זהובה. הוא עם הגברים, אבל הוא לא לובש שחור כי הוא ע דיין לא חלק לחוכמה של הגברים.

יש גם הרבה נשים מעל הגברים בסעיף שלהן. הן מדברות ביחד, עם הדעות וההרגשות שלהן. אף על פי הן מופרדות, הן חשבות לתמונה. אחת מהנשים גם רואה לקהל, כי היא

רואה בהיר למרות הפרוד והרעש, מסמל שהיא גם חשוב לדת. הגברים מדברים על התורה, אבל האישה הזאת יודעת יותר בלי הרעש שלהם.

Codes:

- 5 Identify and describing information – there are many Jews in the synagogue from all ages, there is sun light seen through the window, but not a lot, the synagogue is dark and full.
- 6 Expressing Knowledge – I know they are Ashkenazi because of the way they wear their prayer shawls.
- 7 Expressing thought – there are many women above the men...I know they important even though they are separated.
- 8 Expressing emotion – the people seem tired.
- 9 Constructing Discourse – express opinion about the situation of women and men role in the painting.

Case # 2 Jas

Painting by Reuven Ruben 1.1 the Artist Family

זו משפחה של צייר: הוא עם אמו, אחיו ואחותו. הצייר יושב משמאל, הרחק ממשפחתו. הצייר רואה את עצמו כשונה משאר בני משפחתו. למרות שחלק מתווי הפנים שלהם נראים דומים, עורו ושיערו כהים יותר משלושת בני משפחתו האחרים. הוא גם לובש סגנון לבוש אחר. בעוד שבני משפחתו לבושים מאוד רשמי ודתי, הוא לבוש בבגדי פשתן נינוחים יותר, חילוניים, המתאימים יותר לצייר. מה שמפגיש את המשפחה הזו היא אמו של הצייר, שיושבת במרכז התמונה. היא נראית כמו מאטריארך רב עוצמה, והשמלה השחורה שלה עשויה לסמל רוח של מוות. נראה שנוכחותה מביאה פחד לבני המשפחה האחרים, לא אהבה.

הדבר החשוב ביותר שמיחד את הצייר ממשפחתו הוא העובדה שעז אפורה בוהה בו בריכוז ולא בבני משפחתו האחרים. בתנ"ך, השעיר מסמלת את חיית הקורבן הנושאת את חטא העם הישראלי פעם בשנה ונשארת למות במדבר. העז בתמונה מסמל את ההרגשה של הצייר. כמנוחה של משפחתו, הצייר מרגיש נטוש. עם זאת, הוא מתנחם בידיעה שהוא נבחר על ידי אלוהים לתפקיד ייחודי זה.

רקע התמונה הוא מטע זיתים בישראל. אולי הסצנה הזו מזכירה לצייר היכן גדל עם משפחתו. עצים הם גם סמל למשפחות, ועצי הזית הרבים מייצגים את הדורות הרבים שהגיעו לפני חייו של הצייר ב"עץ המשפחה" שלו.

Codes:

Identify and describing information- The artist's family: him with his mother his brother and his sister.

Expressing Knowledge – the family members are dressed officially and religiously, the artist is dressed in linen clothes, more comfortable and secular, better fit for an artist.

Expressing Opinion/ thought – the black dress might symbolize the spirit of death.

## Yohanan Simon Painting

הצבעים הבולטים ביותר בציור זה הם כחול וזהב, סמלים לישראל. זהו עידן החלוצי זמן קצר לאחר עצמאותה של ישראל ב-1948, והוא נראה כמו קיבוץ יהודי באזור הגליל, שבו החלו להקים משפחות רבות. יש הרבה צעירים וצעירות עם ילדים קטנים, וכולם נראים מאושרים מאוד כשהם משחקים וקרובים זה לזה. בתמונה יש יותר נשים מגברים, אבל כולם עושים את אותן הפעילויות. כמה גברים ונשים נחים. גברים ונשים אחרים מחזיקים ידיים זה עם זה ועם ילדיהם. אף אחד לא עובד. כולם רגועים. ביטוייהם מראים שהחלוצים שלווים. הם לא חוששים מכל סכנה או אי ודאות בעתיד. הם מתמקדים בהנאה מהרגע עם משפחותיהם.

אני חושב שהזוגות הצעירים מדברים ביניהם על הילדים שלהם ואיך להקים משפחה בישראל. עבור רבים מהם, זו הפעם הראשונה שלהם. ייתכן שהם חולקים טיפים להורות, דברים שלמדו מהוריהם שלהם כשגדלו. אם הם לא מדברים על הילדים שלהם, הם מדברים על איך הקיבוץ שלהם עשוי להתרחב בעתיד. אני חושב שהם גם מספרים לילדיהם סיפורים מהתנ"ך כדי שילדיהם יגדלו ויעריכו את הארץ המובטחת החדשה הזו.

אם אלה היו הורים מודרניים, אני חושב שהפנים שלהם היו נראים הרבה פחות אופטימיים. ייתכן שהם מתלוננים על מזג האוויר, על יוקר המחיה או על הממשלה! ובמקום לדבר או לשחק, חלקם עשויים להיות בטלפונים שלהם ולכתוב הודעות טקסט לילדים שלהם במקום זאת!

### Codes:

Transmitting information – children, modern parents, young people with small children, the colors in the painting

Expressing knowledge, memory, faith – it's a pioneering era, shortly after the establishment of Israeli in 1948.

Expressing will, expressing hope – I think the couples are talking about raising families in Israel.

Expressing emotion - Relaxed, Optimistic

Constructing discourse – the narration of the story indicate ability to construct discourse.

## Appendix G: Certificate of Training by Citi Program



Completion Date 30-May-2024  
Expiration Date 30-May-2027  
Record ID 63026124

This is to certify that:

**Hagit Arieli-Chai**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

**Human Research**  
(Curriculum Group)  
**Social-Behavioral Human Subjects**  
(Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic**  
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**University of Southern California**

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.



Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative  
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US  
[www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org)

Generated on 30-May-2024. Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w91de5d39-0e49-4fe1-93c4-7f6d76c5b473-63026124](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w91de5d39-0e49-4fe1-93c4-7f6d76c5b473-63026124)

## Appendix H: Request to Access Students Data

---

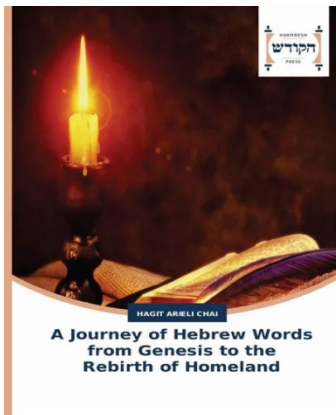
Dear Mr. Chang,

As part of a research that I am conducting I would like to request a permission to access to students' data. the data I am seeking is students' assignments and all material pertaining to their performance in the courses. I would like to have a permission to access Hebrew courses from 2018-2023.

Thank you,

*Hagit Arieli-Chai*

*Hebrew Language Coordinator and Lecturer  
Louchheim School for Judaic Studies at USC, HUC - JIR  
<https://dornsife.usc.edu/jewishstudies>*



University of Southern California Institutional Review Board  
3720 S. Flower Street, Suite 325  
Los Angeles, CA 90089  
Telephone: (323) 442-0114  
Fax: (323) 224-8389  
Email: irb@usc.edu

Date: Jun 11, 2024, 03:57pm

Action Taken: **Approve**

Principal [Hagit Arieli-Chai](#)

Investigator: Los Angeles County Medical Center

Faculty Advisor:

Co-Investigator(s):

Project Title: [Language Acquisition; communicative competences and visual art](#)

Study ID: **UP-24-00502**

Funding:

Your submission was reviewed and determined to be exempt §46.104(d)(1) on 06/11/2024 by the University of Southern California Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Any Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others, Deviations from the approved submission, or complaints, must be reported to the IRB in accordance with University of Southern California Human Research Protection Program policies and procedures.

If there are significant changes that increase the risk to subjects, revisions to study materials/documents, or if the funding has changed, you must submit an amendment to the IRB for review. For other revisions to the application, use the "Send Message to IRB" link.

iStar Application and contents dated 06/03/2024 were reviewed.

Attachments

:

Social-behavioral health-related interventions or health-outcome studies must register with **clinicaltrials.gov** or other International Community of Medical Journal Editors ([ICMJE](#)) approved registries in order to be published in an ICMJE journal. The ICMJE will not accept studies for publication unless the studies are registered prior to enrollment, despite the fact that these studies are not applicable "clinical trials" as defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). For support with registration, go to [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) or contact Jean Chan ([jeanbcha@usc.edu](mailto:jeanbcha@usc.edu), 323-442-2825).

Approved Documents: [view](#)

### **Important**

The principal investigator for this study is responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals before commencing research. Please be sure that you have satisfied applicable requirements, for example conflicts of interest, bio safety, radiation safety, biorepositories, credentialing, data security, sponsor approval, [clinicaltrials.gov](http://clinicaltrials.gov) or school approval. IRB approval does not convey approval to commence research in the event that other requirements have not been satisfied.

This is an auto-generated email. Please do not respond directly to this message using the "reply" address. A response sent in this manner cannot be answered. If you have further questions, please contact iStar Support at (323) 276-2238 or [istar@usc.edu](mailto:istar@usc.edu).

The contents of this email are confidential and intended for the specified recipients only. If you have received this email in error, please notify [istar@usc.edu](mailto:istar@usc.edu) and delete this message.



## The Impact of Visual Art on my Research (a personal note)

---

As I reflect on my research journey, I find that visual art has influenced and enriched my understanding of my research. Art has a unique ability to convey complex ideas and emotions in a way that transcends conventional text-based analysis. Through engaging with various artworks, colleagues, artists and art historians, I've gained new perspectives that have significantly shaped my research.

Visual art often captures the nuances of cultural and historical contexts that are difficult to articulate through words alone. For instance, exploring the rich symbolism in nineteenth-century Orientalist paintings has not only broadened my appreciation for the aesthetics of the period but has also deepened my insight into the socio-political dynamics at play. These artworks offer a window into the perspectives and emotions of the time, which has been invaluable for contextualizing my research within a broader historical framework.

I would like to share interviews with two colleagues and friends who are experts in the field of art and also have experience in acquiring a second language.

### *Professor Selma Holo*

Selma was born in Chicago to a large family of five children and two parents. Selma focused on art history and museum studies, and she has become increasingly interested in museology - the study of museums themselves and their influences on the shaping of our culture. Selma Holo has published and lectured extensively in Spain and Latin America about the future of museums in those regions.

“When I was a little girl, I had a family that was kind of Classic, we didn’t belong to any country club or to any institution except one, and that is my father had a life membership to the art institute of Chicago. And we spent all our weekend at the art institute, and he would say I will meet you outside the lions which were guarding the art institute and of course he was late. There was one painting that I always wanted to see, and it was Song of lark, and it was by and artist Jules Breton, and it had the image of the girl with a kerchief on her head looking often to the distance where there was a little spot which was the lark apparently singing. She was captivated by it. And What it said to me was you can be whatever you want to be. I was from a little town outside Chicago and the idea that wherever a song that I might hear it might be something I can follow came from it.

When I got to art history I had a professor, Leo Steinberg inspired me and was a kind of a mentor. Later, when I started working everyone told me that I can reach higher. Norton Simon was one of them. I was flattered when he called me at six o'clock in the morning so we can be on a call with Europe. I felt that he believed in me when he sent me to Paris or London to try to find out the true value of the painting that we are collecting.

Professor Ruth Weisberg (based upon an interview March 9th, 2023)

“I am particularly nourished by the history of art, the history of the Jewish people, and by the unwritten history of women. I make art out of all aspects of my identity, finding in the process that art integrates my experiences, beliefs, and heritage. I am particularly nourished by the history of art, the history of the Jewish people, and by the unwritten history of women. I believe that art creates meaning and can be transformative for both the artist and their audience. I seek to create realms of the imagination in which the viewer can also project their struggles, stories, and

desires”. Ruth was born in Chicago, to a Jewish family, the father Abraham Wisemen was an architect, and the mother was a homemaker. She has a younger sister Naomi. Ruth’s parents chose the names Ruth and Naomi based on the biblical story of Ruth. From a young age Ruth told her parents that she would like to be an artist. She was visiting the Chicago art institute on a regular basis. She was exposed to fine art from age four, Ruth was drawing images that showed her exquisite talent.

“I find drawing to be the underpinning of everything I do. As a medium, I have treated drawing as both an intimate and monumental form. Since 1974, I have created installations that invite the viewer to enter an architecturally defined space. My interest in the spatial organization of narrative with its potential for interactivity culminated in the large-scale works, “The Scroll” (1987-88), “Sisters and Brothers” (1994), and “Canto V: A Whirlwind of Lovers” (1999). For me, as an artist, the great Italian, Spanish, and Flemish masters are a constant inspiration. Women artists are regrettably far rarer, but I have also sought out the work of Sofonisba Anguissola, Mary Cassatt, and Kathe Kollwitz. I feel wed to the past as both an artist and a Jew. Art at its core is an affirmation of the very best of our collective past and our humanity. I find the interweaving of the past and present to be endlessly thought provoking and a real source of inspiration. I feel truly blessed to be an artist.

