Teaching Hebrew in North American Jewish Day Schools:
A Critical Analysis of Current Approaches and Curricula

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Table of Contents

Introduction

We are the People of the Book, but we cannot read the book in its original language. The vast majority of the American Jewish community cannot read a Hebrew text, much less understand its meaning or conduct a conversation.

While some educators might not be alarmed by this, I believe that Hebrew is a cornerstone of our identity. In cultures around the world, language is a key aspect of identity. Without knowing a culture's language, one cannot fully understand that culture or truly feel part of it. Hebrew is no different. Hebrew literacy is an essential part of Jewish literacy. By encouraging Hebrew literacy, therefore, we will strengthen Jewish literacy, and ultimately foster the development of more committed Jews.

The revival of Hebrew as a spoken language over the past 100 years is one of the great contemporary creative achievements of the Jewish people, albeit one in which few American Jews have participated. Yet the need to study Hebrew extends far beyond the link to the modern state of Israel. In fact, relegating Hebrew to that realm may have been, and continue to be, a strategic mistake by limiting the symbolic scope and importance of the language.

Hebrew is the only language that all Jews have in common. Neither Yiddish nor Ladino, nor English for that matter, can make that claim. Of course, the issue of Hebrew language goes far beyond cultural identity. Hebrew is the entry point for a genuine understanding of Jewish tradition. It is the language of our ancestors and the language of our prayers. Competence in Hebrew is fundamental to Jewish life.

Despite the importance of Hebrew, the study of the language is rapidly disappearing in our congregational schools and summer camps. Among the many reasons for this phenomenon is the lack of time available for Hebrew studies. Learning a language is time-consuming and requires discipline and commitment. In modern society, parents, children, and many educators just aren't committed to serious Jewish learning. They

1

prefer a quick fix -- Holocaust studies to foster Jewish identity and a rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew phonetic sounds to get through the bar or bat mitzvah -- over the bookish demands of learning a language. As a result, very little Hebrew is heard in our communities: "ערב שבת" has become "Friday night." The "חזן" has become known as the cantor. Rosh Hashana is New Year's.

One of the leading forces in reversing this trend is the Jewish day school. The Jewish day school, both liberal and Orthodox, is virtually the only institution in contemporary North America that tries to teach Hebrew as a live language. The Hebrew curricula vary among schools, based on their ideological leanings, locations and goals. But bolstered by a strong commitment by educators, parents and students, nearly all day schools aim to enable their students to reach a certain degree of knowledge in Hebrew, both ancient and modern, at various stages of learning.

Bernard Spolsky gives a number of optional rationales for teaching and learning Hebrew in the Diaspora:

1) It is valuable for maintaining Jewish values and heritage.

2) It is needed for religion and religious life.

3) It is a symbol of Jewish ethnic and national identity.

4) It is associated with Zionism and *aliyah*, going to live in Israel.

5) It is useful for visiting Israel.

6) It is required for some useful examinations.

7) Knowing any second language is valuable.

8) You need Hebrew to take part in a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony.

9) You need Hebrew to prepare for a professional career as a rabbi or Jewish teacher.[1]

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[1] Bernard Spolsky. *Conditions for Second Language Learning: Introduction to a General Theory*, (Oxford, U.K., 1989), p.67.

Each of these rationales would influence the way a school chooses to teach Hebrew. For instance, a program that emphasizes Jewish religion and religious life might emphasize reading and comprehension, the skills associated with prayer. A school with a focus on Zionism and Israel might put more weight on communicative goals.

In this paper, I have chosen to study curricula that make the ability to communicate in modern Hebrew a main priority. I made this decision because I believe that communication is the highest level of second-language acquisition. The ability to communicate does not preclude other forms of understanding, such as reading comprehension. If anything, it only enhances them. Through the study of these curricula, I have attempted to do more than gain a better understanding of their effectiveness. I looked for strengths in these approaches that might be incorporated in the next generation of Hebrew instruction. After all, Hebrew instruction must be like Hebrew itself, vibrant, interesting and relevant to modern life.

Teaching Hebrew in North American Jewish Day Schools: General Terminology and the Dilemma Between Second-Language and Foreign-Language Acquisition.

North American Jewish day schools almost universally strive to teach their students to reach a certain level of proficiency in Hebrew, the language of their tradition. But schools, and researchers, are divided over the best way to do this. Even the term "bilingualism," popular among researchers and curricula developers, has taken on different meanings. In their book, "Bilingualism in Education," Cummins and Swain point out that the definitions of bilingualism vary considerably in the academic literature.[2] For instance, Macnamara defined bilingualism in the 1960s as possessing at least one of the language skills -- listening, speaking, reading and writing -- in a second language, even to a minimal degree. At the other end of the spectrum, Oestreicher defined bilingualism as complete mastery of two languages. Other definitions have been based on the age at which the second language is learned, the context in which the two languages have been learned or the domains in which each language is used. There is little consensus, therefore, on the definition of bilingualism, and the term is used to describe a wide variety of phenomena.

Additional confusion occurs around the terms "second language," or L2, and "foreign language." Both terms typically refer to a language that is learned after the mother tongue, or L1. Patricia A. Richard-Amato offers a way to distinguish between the two. "Second language teaching usually refers to a target language that is being taught in the country where it is a dominant language. Foreign language teaching, on the other hand, usually refers to a target language that is being taught in a country where it is not a

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[2] Jim Cummins and Merrill Swain. *Bilingualism in Education: Aspects of Theory, Research and Practice.*(New York, 1986) p. 7.

4

dominant language."[3]

Since Hebrew is not the dominant language in North America, it is treated as a foreign language by Jewish day schools. Students learning a foreign language face several significant obstacles: The environment outside the classroom usually does not provide the opportunity to be immersed in the target language. Since the classroom may provide their only exposure to the language, they are in special need of meaningful interaction.[4]

From a professional point of view, Hebrew instruction in the Diaspora should be seen as foreign-language acquisition. But a group of educators prefer to view it as second-language acquisition. Their argument is mainly ideological: Hebrew cannot be seen as foreign to a Jewish student since it is an inseparable part of his or her heritage and religion. When the Jewish students learn Hebrew, they are being connected to their own culture, rather than being introduced to a new culture. Tova Shimon, the developer of the popular *Tal Am* curriculum, which will be reviewed later, prefers to call it שפת מורשת, or a heritage language.

I tend to see Hebrew learning as lying between second-language and foreign-language acquisition. While I accept the view that Hebrew cannot be seen as foreign to the Jewish student, we cannot escape the reality that it is being taught in an environment where it is not the dominant language. This situation calls for special consideration by the teacher and the curriculum planner.

The last notable distinction to introduce here is the theoretical contrast between "acquisition" and "learning." Acquisition usually refers to L2 proficiency through naturalistic, non-classroom exposure. Learning is the conscious study, usually based in the classroom, of L2. In most cases, Hebrew instruction in the Diaspora is the learning, rather than acquisition, of a second language.

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[3] Patricia A.Richard-Amato. *Making It Happen: Interaction in the Second Language Classroom, from Theory to Practice*. (New York, 1996). p. 4.
[4] ibid, p.4.

Theories of Second-Language Learning: Approaches to Second-Language Teaching

The field of second-language acquisition has seen many philosophies, movements and methodological trends over the past 200 years. The pace of change has only increased over the last 40 years, especially in the era of globalization, with various schools of thought promising a better solution to the ancient problem of linguistic divisions.[5]

A few theories have been established to answer the question of how second languages are most effectively learned. Most of the research in this area was done by second-language acquisition (SLA) theorists. SLA research is a branch of applied linguistics whose main concerns are: to investigate similarities between the L1 and L2 acquisition processes; to explore whether a natural sequence is followed by all L2 learners, regardless of their L1; to determine the effect of the learner's aptitude, motivation, age, personality and cognitive style of their acquisition of L2 grammar; and to determine the role of input, interlanguage and learner processes in SLA.[6]

Research in SLA shows that learners follow a largely similar route in developing L2 competence, especially the sequence in which morphology and syntax are acquired. This phenomenon usually is seen as a result of universal learning strategies common to every learner's innate language faculty. Much of the work in this field has been influenced by Chomsky's notion of a "language organ," or Language Acquisition Device (LAD).[7] Chomsky's theory established the idea that language development is too complicated to be explained on the basis of behaviorism alone. The fact that children master their first language by the age of 5 proves that language acquisition is innate. Children's minds are

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[5] John Klapper. *Foreign Language Learning Through Immersion: Germany's Bilingual-Wing Schools*, (Lewiston, Maine, 1996), p. 15
[6] ibid, p.15.
[7] Richard-Amato, p. 14.

6

not simply *"tabula rasa."* They are born with a highly complex structure that seems to come into operation through an interactional process.[8]

Chomsky claimed that learners only learn in reaction to stimuli from the linguistic environment, that language learning processes cannot be influenced from the outside, and that therefore the natural route of language acquisition cannot be changed by formal instruction. As a result, many SLA theorists believe that the second-language teacher should provide opportunities for authentic communication by creating the conditions of natural language learning in the classroom.[9]

A second thinker who has influenced current SLA theories is Vygotsky. Like Chomsky, Vygotsky didn't focus directly on second-language acquisition. But he did formulate ideas regarding learning and development in children that had significant implications for second-language acquisition. Vygotsky said the individual has two interacting developmental levels. The individual progresses from an "actual developmental level" to a "potential developmental level." Between the two levels is the "zone of proximal development," which he defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance of and in a collaboration with more capable peers."[10]

Vygotsky saw society as a key determinant of development. He therefore placed a great deal of importance on instructional games because, like society, they involve human interaction and are governed by rules. Vygotsky was convinced that learning is a dynamic social process. Through dialogue, he said, the teacher can focus on a student's emerging skills and abilities.

In the field of SLA, Krashen followed Vygotsky with his formulation of the *i*+1

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[8] Richard-Amato, p. 15.
[9] Klapper, p. 15.
[10] Richard-Amato, p.39.

7

concept. Like the zone of proximal development, it refers to the distance between actual

language development (represented by i), and potential language development,

(represented by $i+1$).[11] In Krashen's theory, the crucial factor is "meaningful input." In

order to obtain successful acquisition of the target language, we should introduce

materials, known as target-language inputs, that are relevant to the learner's interests.

These materials should be novel and contain linguistic structures that are a little beyond

the students' current level of competence ($i+1$). The key element is that **meaning** is more

important than **form**. Input does not necessarily have to follow a specific order. Instead, it

should be comprehensible and relevant to learners. New forms can be understood and

acquired through context, background knowledge and nonverbal clues.[12]

One of Krashen's achievements is the development of the "Monitor Model." This

model predicts that when rules are formally taught and learned, they merely serve to

monitor the acquired L2 system and block the students' fluency. The monitor can be

effective in situations when a learner focuses on form and has sufficient time to apply it,

such as when the learner takes a grammar test, writes papers or prepares for a speech.[13] In

the flow of normal discourse, however, it is less useful because the speaker does not have

the opportunity to monitor the output to any great extent unless he or she is a "super

monitor user." This term refers to one who can adapt to apply rules and communicate

simultaneously.[14]

Despite his reservations about formal foreign-language instruction, Krashen

believes it can be appropriate in some instances. He mentions beginners who are not yet

able to understand L2 input outside the classroom, or learners who lack any source of

comprehensible input, such as an opportunity to mix daily with native speakers of L2. In
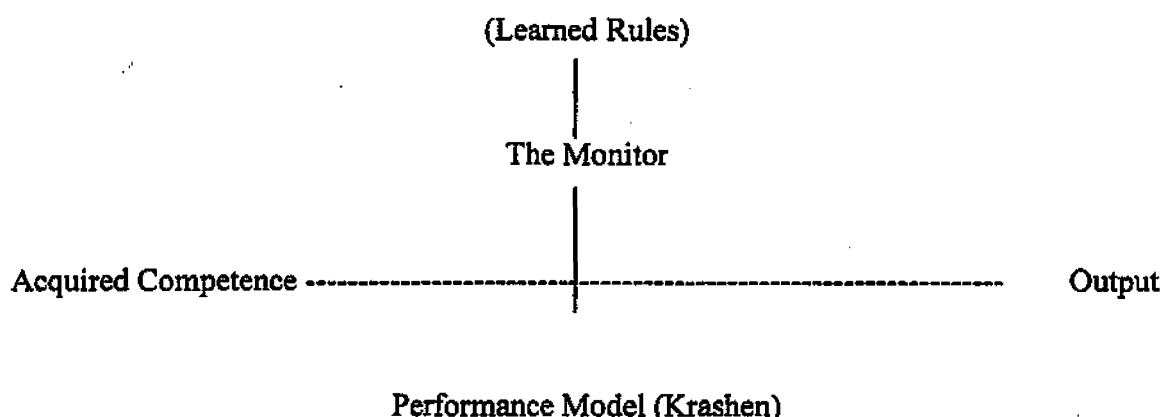
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[11] Richard-Amato, p.42.
[12] Klapper, p.16.
[13] Richard-Amato, p.31.
[14] ibid, p.31.

these cases, acquisition needs to be promoted by providing large amounts of comprehensible input.[15]

(Learned Rules)

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The Monitor

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Acquired Competence ---------------------------------|-- Output

Performance Model (Krashen)

Krashen's views have attracted a great deal of criticism in recent years, especially his minimizing the effectiveness of formal teaching of the linguistic structures. Some researchers even suggested that formal instruction might help increase the rate of second-language acquisition.[16]

In 1991, Ellis introduced the "Variability Model" as an alternative to Krashen's "Monitor Model."[17] Mindful that many individuals manage to acquire L2 through traditional grammar teaching, Ellis put a greater emphasis on the role of learning. Unlike Krashen's theory, which assumes that the learner has a homogeneous rule system upon which all communication depends, Ellis's model takes learners' inconsistent style of speech as its starting point. Speakers adapt their speech to different social contexts, and depending on the social context, place varying degrees of attention to their speech. They range from the "vernacular," everyday speech that requires minimum monitoring of language, to careful, where speech is well thought out and deliberate.The learner's L2

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[15] Klapper, p.16.
[16] ibid, p. 17.
[17] ibid, p.17.

9

competence should be seen as a continuum, characterized by degrees of automatic and nonautomatic language, and analyzed and unanalyzed knowledge.[18]

Analyzed rules involve formal instruction of grammar, while unanalyzed rules involve the acquisition of grammar skills through everyday use of the language. According to Ellis, L2 performance varies depending on whether the learner uses unanalyzed L2 rules in unplanned discourse or analyzed rules in planned discourse. Ellis also distinguishes between non-systematic variability, which is connected to unpredictable factors such as the learner's emotional state, and variability resulting from the learner's knowledge of proper use of the language. Ellis claims that the latter is central to communicative competence.[19] The "Variability Model" views performance in terms of communicative, not linguistic, competence. In other words, it emphasizes the ability to communicate an idea over strictly following grammar rules. Variations in a speaker's styles, depending on the social context, should be considered an integral part of competence.[20]

Ellis's model promotes both accuracy and fluency, emphasizing the joint role of formal and informal teaching approaches. Formal teaching can help to develop a learner's careful style by providing automatic and analyzed knowledge through carefully planned activities and discourse in the classroom. SLA also can acquire a more casual style when learners have opportunities to engage in unplanned and unanalyzed communicative interaction, both inside the classroom (for those in a foreign-language learning setting) and outside the classroom (for those in L2 learning settings).

As learners acquire a larger range of contextual forms, from formal to informal styles and from simple to more complex contexts, interlanguage variability steadily

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[18] E. Bialystok. On the Relationship Between Knowing and Using Forms. *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 3, 1982. pp.181-206.
[19] Rod Ellis. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* (Oxford, U.K., 1985), p. 77.
[20] Klapper, p.18.

10

decreases.[21] The theories presented here have influenced a wide variety of approaches to SLA. In the next section, I will examine these approaches in depth.

Approaches to Second-Language Acquisition

Bilingual education is not a recent phenomenon. It likely has existed since the very beginnings of formal education. Extensive contact between different language communities in the ancient world created the necessity for bilingual schools. For example, tablets engraved with bilingual texts have been found in modern Syria. They apparently were used to teach children to read and write in Sumerian and Eblaite. Use of a non-home language as the sole or major medium of educational instruction was common in the times of the Greek and Roman empires. Imperial Greece did not require the use of Greek in schools. Nonetheless, it was widespread and desired in the colonies, where it was viewed as a necessary skill for those holding important administrative and political positions. Among the Roman elite, instruction in Greek was seen as more than a matter of practicality. It was viewed as the cornerstone of the Roman child's education. Latin was used as the dominant school language throughout the widespread Roman Empire as a way of promoting unity among diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. Latin continued to be the dominant language of education in much of Western Europe until a few hundred years ago. With the rise of nationalism around the 16th century, Latin was slowly replaced by local national languages, such as English in England and French in France.

In the United States, bilingual education dates back to the mid-19th-century establishment of German-English parochial schools by German communities in Ohio and Missouri. These were followed by Spanish schools in California, New Mexico and

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[21] ibid, pp.18-19.

11

Florida, and Norwegian schools in the Dakotas toward the end of the 19th century. In the early 20th century, Italian, French, Spanish and German schooling took place in San Francisco. Most of these schools were established by newly arrived immigrant groups, who felt the need to preserve their heritage, languages and cultures.[22]

Grammar has been the traditional focus of second- and foreign-language teaching for generations. It is not surprising, then, that many teachers still believe that grammar should play a central role in modern language instruction. Many language teachers continue to stress formal grammar instruction. They also may have the student concentrate on one aspect of the grammar system at a time, such as teaching present tense before past, first-person singular before third-person singular and so forth.[23] Some of the common grammar-based approaches that I will review are Grammar Translation, Audiolingualism, Cognitive Code and the Direct Method.

<u>Grammar Translation</u>

The Grammar-Translation approach, often known as the "Prussian Method," aims to enable students to read and write in the target language by teaching them rules and applications. This approach was the most popular method of foreign-language teaching in Europe and America from about the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. Versions of it still exist around the world.

In a typical Grammar-Translation lesson, directions and explanations were always given in the first language. Each lesson began with a reading, which was translated into the first language and then followed by an exercise demonstrating the grammar rule illustrated in the reading. Other unrelated sentences were often added to these exercises to

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[22] Fred Genesee, *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education,* (Clevedon, England, 1998), pp.1-2.
[23] Richard-Amato, p.10.

12

demonstrate how the rule worked. New vocabulary was presented in a list along with definitions in the native language. These new words were often included in the reading, which more often than not, was syntactically and semantically far above the students' level of proficiency. Reading topics might include a trip to the library, shopping expeditions or a train trip. Lessons were grammatically sequenced, and students were expected to produce errorless translations from the very first lesson. Little attempt was made to communicate orally in the target language.[24]

The Grammar-Translation method teaches how a language is built, rather than actual comprehension or usage. Students tend to acquire knowledge of the language, but not the ability to communicate directly. The language-teaching classroom is similar to other classrooms, with the lessons revolving around the teacher's instructions. The Grammar-Translation style is appropriate for an environment with a traditional view of the classroom and of the teacher's role. Although this style strives to build relationships between the vocabulary in the text, it has no consistent way of doing so. It also pays little attention to components of language beyond grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.[25]

Audiolingualism

Audiolingualism became the dominant method for teaching language in the 1950s and 1960s. Developed by a number of linguists, notably Fries, the method originated in the U.S. Army during World War II and was designed to achieve oral fluency in a L2 in nine months. The technique began with linguists drawing up descriptions of the patterns of the L2 after closely studying native speakers of the language. Next, applied linguists outlined contrasting descriptions of the learners' L1 and the target language. These served

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[24] Richard-Amato, p.10
[25] Vivian Cook. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching,* (London, 1996), pp. 177-178.

13

as a basis for selecting and grading the patterns that were to be taught. The applied linguists then prepared teaching materials to practice the patterns. While the Grammar-Translation method, which the audiolingual method replaced, had emphasized intellectual and literary study, the new approach rested on techniques of mimicry and memorization (mim-mem) designed to develop oral-communication skills. Since Audiolingualism adheres to the theory that language is acquired by forming habits and associating responses with stimuli, it is often seen as being based on Skinner's behaviorist psychology.[26]

In Audiolingualism, structures of the target language were carefully ordered and dialogues were repeated in an attempt to develop correct speaking habits. Sentences in the substitution, mim-mem and other drills were often related only syntactically. ("I play ball. You play ball. He plays ball.") They usually had nothing to do with anything happening in the classroom. Rules were presented but often not formally explained, and activities such as "minimal pairs" (i.e. seat-sit, yellow-Jell-O), were commonly used in an effort to overcome the negative interference of L1 sounds. In most applications, there was very little use of creative language, and a great deal of attention was paid to correct pronunciation. Practice sessions often took place in language laboratories.[27]

Ellis notes that the Audiolingual approach makes several assumptions about L2 learning.[28]

1. Learning a foreign language involves the same skills as other types of learning and can be explained by the same laws and principles. All other assumptions accept this premise.

2. All learning is the result of experience and is evident in changes in behavior.

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[26] Rod Ellis. *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Learning in the Classroom,* (Cambridge, Mass. 1990), p.20.
[27] Richard-Amato, p.11.
[28] Ellis, *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Learning in the Classroom,* p. 21.

14

All behaviorist theories were based on observable behavior. Learning, therefore, consisted of changes in behavior that were brought about through experience. It followed that learning could be affected by manipulating the environment. The Audiolingual techniques attempt to alter the environment for the language learner. One of the results of treating learning as behavior was that "meaning" was excluded from consideration. This was considered particularly important in the early stages of learning.

3. Learning a foreign language is different from learning the first language. Comparisons between L1 and foreign-language learning were made with two purposes in mind. The first was to emphasize the relative ease of L1 learning and to make a case for commencing foreign-language instruction as early as possible in order to tap the natural language-learning capacity of a young child. The second purpose was to dispute the view that the classroom should try to imitate "real life." L1 learning takes place successfully in real life, but foreign-language learning requires the establishment of "optimal conditions" for learning.

4. Foreign-language learning is a mechanical process of habit formation. In order to ensure effective learning, each step in the learning process must lie within the capabilities of the learner. In L2 teaching, this was reflected by designing drills that exposed learners to minimal differences between patterns. In particular, it developed exercises aimed at leading the learner toward a goal in an optimal fashion.

5. Language learning proceeds by means of analogy rather than analysis. The Grammar-Translation method emphasized the value of deductive learning through formal explanations of L2 rules. In contrast, the Audiolingual approach emphasizes inductive learning through pattern-practice. This contrast is often referred to as analysis vs. analogy.

Analogy is the central process in forming habits. The learner needs to identify the underlying structure of a pattern by perceiving its similarities and differences with other patterns. Also, the learner was expected to produce a pattern in similar but not identical situations. The use of vocabulary, substitution and cue drills was intended to foster both

15

discrimination and generalization.

6. Errors are the results of L1 interference and are to be avoided or corrected if they occur: The goal of language teaching was to develop the foreign language as a coordinate system, independent of the learner's L1, rather than a compound system, in which the mother tongue accompanied and dominated attempted behavior in L2. To achieve the coordinate system, it was necessary to prevent learners from speaking their L1 in class -- although they might occasionally hear it. Furthermore, the central goal of avoiding errors in Audiolingualism necessitated massive pattern-practice by means of mechanical drills, which had a low probability of error and could thus ensure use of the L2.

Despite all the preventive measures, some errors were bound to occur, and they had to be dealt with. Students weren't allowed to discover and correct their own mistakes. The recommended method was immediate correction by the teacher followed by further opportunity to produce the correct response. This approach was compatible with the central element in behaviorism, namely that correct responses received positive reinforcement and negative responses received negative reinforcement[29]

Textbooks in the Audiolingual style mostly see structures, phonemes (sounds) and vocabulary items as the sum total of language. Although based on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the style pays surprisingly little attention to the distinctive features of each skill. More crucially, its view of language use now seems naive. The communication situation is far more complex than the style implies. If communications is the goal of language teaching, its content needs to be based on an analysis of communications itself, which is not adequately covered by the Audiolingual approach's focus on structures and vocabulary.[30]

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[29] Ellis, *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Learning in the Classroom*, pp.21-25.
[30] Cook, p. 183.

16

The Cognitive Code Method

One of the contributing factors to the rejection of Audiolingualism was the emergence of new theories that directly addressed how language is learned. The impetus for the L1 acquisition research that took place in the 1960s and early 1970s came from Chomskyan linguistics, which provided a radically different view of language from the conventional wisdom of the time. Rather than emphasizing the differences between languages, Chomsky emphasized the idea of "universal grammar," the common abstract infrastructure that all languages share. He also differentiated between competence and performance. Competence (i.e. language) was equated with explicit knowledge of grammatical rules, while performance (i.e. speech) was equated with practicing their use. Learning proceeds from competence to performance. The learner's first task was to lay the foundations of linguistic knowledge. Only when this has been achieved can the learner "perform."

Chomsky has consistently said it is impossible for a child to arrive at the rules of the target-language grammar solely on the words spoken around him. Everyday conversations wouldn't include enough data for a child to fully understand the "hidden" linguistic rules of the L1. Thus, the child's task, according to Chomsky, was to devise an appropriate grammar given imperfect primary linguistic data. This was possible only if the child was credited with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) consisting of innate knowledge of grammatical principles.

Cognitive Code-Learning theory saw conscious grammatical knowledge as essential to the learning process. This assumption derived in part from the distinction between competence and performance. In this respect, this method differed most sharply from Audiolingualism, which paid little attention to grammatical knowledge. Presentation of grammatical rules should precede the opportunity to practice. Whereas Audiolingual learning theory emphasized inductive learning, the Cognitive Code Learning theory

17

promoted deductive learning, at least as a basis for practice. [31] Subskills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, such as sound discrimination and pronunciation of specific elements, needed to be mastered before the student could participate in real communication activities.

Generally speaking, it was felt that phonemes needed to be learned before words, words before sentences and phrases, simple sentences before complicated ones and so on.[32] The linguists who supported this approach were careful to emphasize that they were not advocating a return to the Grammar Translation method. They argued that learners needed to understand what they were learning and that they ought to be allowed to use their cognitive skills to help comprehend grammatical structure. Lessons were usually highly structured through a deductive process, and the "rule of the day" was practice. While creative language was used only at advanced levels, students were expected to produce correct sentences from the beginning.[33]

The other major difference from Audiolingualism was the recognition that language learners needed opportunities to use the language innovatively and creatively. One of the main objections to the Audiolingual theory was that its emphasis on memorizing a fixed set of patterns failed to account for innovation and stimuli in language use.

The Cognitive Code Learning theory was problematic in a number of respects. Its advocates were too ready to extend terms like "competence" and "performance" beyond the theoretical boundaries in which they were formulated. Equating an understanding of grammatical rules with competence and speaking with performance was a distortion of Chomsky's position, Ellis claimed. Another problem concerned the sequencing and grading of linguistic terms. In Audiolingualism, there were clear criteria, such as level of

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[31] Ellis, *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Learning in the Classroom*, p.38.
[32] Richard-Amato, p.12.
[33] ibid, p.12.

difficulty, for determining the order of presentation. Cognitive Code Learning theory continued to view L2 learning as an incremental process, but offered no rationale for deciding in which order items should be dealt with.[34]

The Direct Method

The Direct Method derived from an earlier version called the "natural method" and was developed by the mid-19th century. This method makes an extra effort to "immerse" the students in the target language. Its advocates believe that students learn to understand a language by listening to it in large quantities. They learn to speak by speaking, especially if the speech is associated simultaneously with an appropriate action.

The Direct Method, which is still practiced in "Berlitz" schools, sees second-language acquisition as essentially similar to the way children learn their native language: through direct association of words and phrases with objects and actions. It does this while avoiding the use of the native language as an intervening variable.[35]

The direct method has a few characteristics:

1) Language learning should start with the "here-and-now," utilizing classroom objects and simple actions. Eventually, when students have learned enough language, they move on to common situations and settings.

2) Use of translation is strictly forbidden in the classroom. Therefore, lessons are often developed around specially constructed pictures depicting life in the country where the target language is spoken. These pictures help the teacher to avoid using translation. Definitions of new vocabulary are explained in the target language, or by miming the action or manipulating the objects to get the meaning across.

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[34] Ellis, *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Learning in the Classroom,* pp. 39-40.
[35] Alice Hadley Omaggio, *Teaching Language in Context,* (Boston, 2001), p. 41.

19

3) Students should hear complete and meaningful sentences in simple discourse. This interaction often takes place in the form of questions and answers.

4) From the beginning, an emphasis is placed on correct pronunciation. Transliteration is often used to achieve this goal.

5) Students are encouraged to form their own generalizations about grammar through inductive methods. Grammar rules are not explicitly taught. Rather, they are meant to be learned through practice. When grammar is explicitly taught, it is taught in the target language.

6) Students are expected to comprehend the vocabulary in written texts based on the context of the reading, without the use of dictionaries or translations.

Critics of the Direct Method question the expectation that the students will express themselves freely in the target language from the beginning. These critics say the technique can lead to inaccurate fluency, when L1 structures are used with L2 vocabulary. Another point of concern is that students often don't grasp the whole meaning of an input due to the lack of translation and the sometimes inadequate attempts to explain it in the target language. These drawbacks have led some Direct-Method classes to incorporate short translation exercises and to occasionally use native-language equivalents to clarify new vocabulary or concepts.[36]

The Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach emphasizes communicative competence in the target language. While acknowledging the importance of structures and vocabulary, adherents of this approach believe focusing only on these areas is inadequate. Students

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[36] Hadley Omaggio, pp.58-60.

20

may know the rules of language usage, but they will be unable to use it.[37] In addition to form and meanings, Communications Competence promotes knowledge of the functions that language is used for. For example, the learner must also consider the social situation to convey his intended meaning appropriately.

Culture is the everyday lifestyle of native speakers of the language. The Communicative Approach pays greater attention to cultural aspects that enhance communication, such as the use of nonverbal behavior, than other approaches. The most obvious characteristic of the Communicative Approach is that all actions in the classroom have a communicative intent. Activities, such as games, role playing and problem-solving tasks, are introduced to enhance communications. Activities that are truly communicative have three features: information gap, choice and feedback.[38]

An information gap exists when one person in an exchange knows something that the other person doesn't. For instance, "If we both know that it is Tuesday and you ask, 'What day is today?' and I answer, 'Tuesday,' the exchange cannot be considered communicative."[39]

In free communication, the speaker also has a choice of what to say and how to say it. If the exercise allows for only one correct answer, the speaker has no choice and the exchange is therefore not communicative.

Finally, authentic communication is purposeful. Speakers can evaluate whether they have achieved their purpose based on the feedback they get. Forming questions as an exercise cannot be seen as a communicative activity if the speaker does not receive a response from the listener.

In their book "Languages and Children, Making the Match," Curtain and Pesola

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[37] Adina Ofek. Class Handout for "Teaching Hebrew in the Diaspora: Theory, Methods and Practice," Jewish Theological Seminary, Spring 2000.
[38] ibid
[39] ibid

21

refer to communication as the motivator for all language use. "Communication results from the need to bridge an information gap or opinion gap."[40]

Another important component of the Communicative Approach is the use of authentic materials. Language is always presented in the way it is used by native speakers. This enables the students to develop their own strategies for understanding the language in the form that it is actually spoken.

Activities in the Communicative-Approach classroom are often carried out by students in small groups. This helps maximize the time allocated for each student to create meaningful communication with his or her peers.[41]

The Communicative Approach emphasizes language functions over forms, and a variety of forms are introduced for each function. For instance, in learning to make requests, the students will learn both "Would you ..." and "Could you ..."? More complex forms are gradually introduced as proficiency improves.

The approach advocates work on all four communicative skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking, from the beginning. While other approaches focus on speaking and listening, the Communicative Approach acknowledges that reading and writing are also ways to negotiate meaning. While the feedback in these skill areas usually is not immediate, meaning is still negotiated between the reader and writer.[42]

Students are viewed as communicators trying to make themselves understood, even with their incomplete knowledge of the target language. The teacher is seen as the facilitator of such learning. The classroom is student-centered, but the teacher plays many roles. The teacher is a manager of classroom activities, responsible for establishing

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[40] Helena Curtain and Carol Ann B.Pesola. *Languages and Children, Making the Match; foreign Language Instruction for an Early Start Grades K-8*, (White Plains, New York, 1994) p. 83.
[41] Adina Ofek handout.
[42] ibid

22

situations that can promote communication. During the activities, the teacher acts as an adviser, answering questions and monitoring performance. Students interact a great deal, working in pairs, trios, small groups or as a whole group. Since the teacher's role isn't dominant, the students are seen as more responsible for their own learning processes.[43]

The target language is used all the time in the Communicative-Approach environment, even in everyday classroom management. Errors of form are tolerated and are viewed as a natural part of the development process. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators.[44]

Motivation is a key component in the Communicative Approach. Adherents of this method claim that students are more motivated to study a foreign language when they feel that they are learning something useful. In addition, the students get an opportunity to express their own ideas and opinions in the target language on a regular basis. Helping students to integrate who they are with the target language will give them a greater sense of security with it.[45]

Evaluation can be done informally and formally. As an adviser, the teacher can informally evaluate his or her students' performance. The teacher can also choose to turn to more formal written evaluations. The evaluations, however, should not measure students only on their accuracy, but also on their fluency. The student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator, and therefore, accuracy as well as fluency need to be taken into consideration.[46]

One of the greatest contributions of the Communicative Approach was that it asked teachers to look closely at communication. It reminded linguists that language is first of all a tool for communicating and negotiating meaning between humans before it is

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[43] ibid
[44] ibid
[45] ibid
[46] ibid

23

a linguistic structure of grammatical rules and vocabulary.

Summary

Approaches to second-language teaching and learning have varied over the years. The shift has mostly moved in one direction, from grammatical to communicative approaches. Second-language acquisition is very complex, and every learner takes a different route to get to the goal of fluency. Still, research has shown that people who struggle with a new language often go through some common processes. Understanding these common threads helps us, as teachers and researchers, to develop the means to make a language and a culture more accessible to foreign-language students.

Hakol Chadash is a curriculum that was developed in 1990 in Israel and published by "מטייח- המרכז לטכנולוגיה חנוכית" at Tel Aviv University.

This curriculum contains a series of books intended for second-grade to fifth-grade students who are new immigrants in Israel. In their introduction, the authors state that their goal is to enable young immigrants to learn basic communication in Hebrew so that they will be prepared to enter Israeli schools and society in general. In order to gain these basic communication skills, the immigrant child needs first to gain control in listening and speaking skills. But in order to be fully integrated, the students must also acquire reading and writing skills. The authors believe that their program is uniquely designed to equip the learner with all four skills at the same time. [47]

1. Exterior

Hakol Chadash books have illustrations that are partially colored, and they use large, clear Hebrew fonts, which makes Hebrew reading easier and more attractive. The books are full of illustrations, such as comic strips, as well as graphics and directions to instruct the student (who doesn't know how to read yet) what he or she needs to do. An arrow sign, for example, indicates a reading activity. A magnifying glass signals a visual exercise, in which the student is asked to identify a certain word among others. The layout is clear, but the pages are usually too busy. A page often contains three to five activities, which may be overwhelming for a young student. The curriculum does not provide any auxiliary teacher aids or materials, such as posters or flash cards, beyond specific instructions on how to use the material.

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[47] *Hakol Chadash*, First Book, p. III

2. Table of Contents and Introduction

Each book of *Hakol Chadash* has several units. Each unit is based on a list of vocabulary words. Almost all of the units follow a similar structure, and some contain review exercises. The program developers appear to have made a special effort to create an environment that reflects the reality and culture of the lives of new immigrant kids in Israel today. The curriculum centers around three characters who appear in every unit: Ram, Nira and Robo. Ram and Nira are children who go to school. The students get to know these characters, as well as their families and friends. They learn that Ram and Nira are neighbors who live in an apartment building on Tzabar Street in Jerusalem. Ram and Nira's grandparents live in Ashdod. Nira has an uncle Sammy who lives in Ramat Gan, and Ram has a younger sister, Liat, who attends kindergarten. Robo is a computer robot who lives with Ram and is the kids' friend. He asks questions and makes silly mistakes that provide some comic relief. His character is meant to make students feel secure enough to ask questions and to make mistakes themselves. When I taught *Hakol Chadash*, the kids loved Robo and laughed at his antics.

Every unit begins with an instruction page for the teacher, which introduces the new contents as well as suggestions for learning activities and practice. Each page also contains detailed instructions for the teacher, which appear in a separate bar at the bottom of the page.

Instructions for the students appear only in the advanced books. As noted earlier, the first book uses graphic symbols to instruct the student. Units one through eight use the print font of the Hebrew *aleph-bet*. In these units, the students are rarely asked to write. Instead, most of the written activities concentrate on drawing lines or circling the correct answer. The script letters are introduced at the end of unit eight, and are taught gradually in units nine through 13. The book usually uses full spelling (כתיב מלא), and the voweling (ניקוד) is functional. *Dageshim* appear only if they change the way a word is pronounced.

26

In their introduction, the authors state several guiding principles:

(1) Listening and speaking skills should be taught before reading and writing. This ensures that when students begin to read, they will have a sufficient vocabulary for the reading to be significant.

(2) Emphasizing the communicative aspect of the language. Even in the first stages of the program, the Hebrew conversations are written as much as possible in "natural," or authentic, language.

(3) Meticulous grading of the linguistic elements, and keeping with the principle of teaching only one element of the language at a time.

(4) Recognizing diversity among the students, which is demonstrated by the varied activities geared toward learners with different abilities and different needs. Reading, for instance, is taught through the "whole language" approach, but the reading exercises also use the analytical and synthetic approaches. There is an emphasis on motivating students. Since successfully accomplishing a task helps encourage effective learning, many exercises are relatively simple and have little chance for error. Other fun activities, such as luck and competitive games, have been added to help practice linguistic skills.

The introduction reveals how carefully planned and theory-based the program is. Still, the curriculum sometimes falls short of its goals. While the authors state at the outset that listening and speaking will be a priority, the first unit also introduces reading. Similarly, the authors state their intention to utilize different approaches to reading in order to accommodate varied learning styles. In practice, the curriculum emphasizes the "whole language" approach to reading. The phonetic approaches are used much less frequently, appearing only as one exercise in each unit. The authors do a better job at keeping their promise of making gradual progress in the linguistic content. Each unit introduces a new concept while building on the material that has already been acquired, following Vygosky's zone of proximal development or Krashen's $i+1$ idea.

27

The curriculum lacks any Jewish content. Jewish values, history and holidays are not even mentioned. However, the characters clearly live in a typical Israeli setting. Teaching Jewish content wasn't one of the goals of the developers. Their ultimate concern was teaching Hebrew to young immigrants to help ease their absorption.

3. Samples of Readings and Exercises

Hakol Chadash uses an eclectic approach that incorporates elements from several theories of second-language acquisition. The focus on listening and speaking skills over reading and writing seems to be influenced by audiolingualism. Audiolingualism also is presented in the repeated dialogues in Hebrew at the beginning of every unit. The gradual progress from simple concepts to more complicated ones appears to be borrowed from the cognitive-code approach. However, the most influential theory seems to be that of the whole-language approach, which is not a second-language approach *per se*, but a reading method. It views language acquisition holistically rather than a mastery of isolated parts such as vocabulary, grammar or spelling.

First- and second-language acquisition is seen as a process that evolves gradually, fueled by the intent to communicate, the desire to convey meaning and to understand. Proponents of the whole-language approach advocate using natural language in the classroom, and providing natural reasons to write, such as writing a letter or making a list. The *Hakol Chadash* curriculum follows these approaches because it teaches all four skills of second-language acquisition simultaneously. It uses authentic, uncontrolled language taken from the world of a young new immigrant. The students are encouraged to participate in different activities geared toward speech enhancement.

I have chosen three units of *Hakol Chadash* to demonstrate the curriculum's approach:

Unit One introduces the three main characters in the program, Ram, Nira and

28

Robo. At the beginning of the unit, the teacher is given the vocabulary: לא, את, אתה, אני and שלום. The program also provides the teacher with a few students that can be built with the students: ...אני רם/נירה/רובו ...אתח רם?... אני לא נירה...שלום רובו

The teacher begins the lesson by introducing a set of pictures without text that appear in the book. He points to each picture and introduces the characters' names. For example, a picture of Ram and Nira shaking hands is used to teach "שלום." The children then repeat what the teacher says. Between the pictures, the teacher also presents a few exercises, such as a role-playing game in which the students introduce themselves to one another:

- אני נירה.

- אני רם.

- שלום רם.

- שלום נירה.

In another exercise, the teacher asks students: "את נירה?" or "אתה רם?" They are supposed to respond: "אני _____ לא."

In the following pages, the curriculum concentrates mainly on reading. First, the students are taught to recognize the written words "רם,נירה,רובו and שלום." The words are initially presented as a whole, but then are broken into syllables. In the next stage, the words, "אני" "את" "אתה" and "לא" are introduced as part of short sentences such as " אני רובו" or "אתה רם".

The unit is full of activities meant to help the students to memorize the words. For example, they need to connect two identical words in different columns, or link a word or sentence with the corresponding picture. The unit ends with a short comic strip, a word search and a "T-shirt activity" in which the students can express themselves on a picture of a blank T-shirt in the book. As an extension of the unit, the authors suggest that the teacher help the children form letters with their bodies and spell the words they have

learned, a "live" statue.

Unit 5, in the middle of the book, introduces new vocabulary words: כסא, שולחן,
ילקוט, ספר, תודה and כאן. The sentences that are modeled in this unit are: זה ספר של רם.
איפה הילקוט? הילקוט על השולחן.   זה ספר. The teacher is instructed to point to pictures of a
table, chair, backpack and book and say the Hebrew words while the class repeats after
her. Then, the teacher points out these objects in the classroom. The students then give
their names, before the class plays a game in which a student points to an object and the
children say its name or vice versa.

In the next activity, the teacher introduces pictures. He points to a picture of a
book and says, "זה ספר". Then, the teacher points to a picture of a book with the name
Ram printed on it and says, "זה הספר של רם.". Then, the teacher moves to other objects in
the class. (זה ילקוט. זה הילקוט של...). The teachers are advised that some languages, such
as Russian, don't have הא הידיעה. But they are instructed not to explain what it is at this
stage and to continue using it in natural sentences.

The following concept is "על". The teacher asks questions such as "איפה הילקוט?",
and the students are supposed to try to answer "הילקוט על השולחן/כסא". The teacher also
introduces וו החיבור without explaining it just by using it in a sentence and then helping
the children practice it. The approach here is clearly inductive instead of deductive.
Grammar rules are not explained, but rather introduced in natural sentences so that the
students can understand their meaning by themselves. After conversational introduction
of the words "תודה" and "כאן", we start with the reading. As in Unit One, the student is
expected to read the new words as a whole. Only later does it break down the word into
phonetics. At the bottom of the page, the teacher can find detailed instructions for the
exercises as well as ideas for other games and activities, such as card games and memory
games.

The books' exercises go beyond decoding and actually measure the students' reading-comprehension level. The children are asked to differentiate between "על" and "...ב", for example, or to circle the sentence that describes the picture next to it. The children read a comic strip and enact a phone conversation. The unit ends with the list of new words as well as a T-shirt activity.

Toward the end of the book, Unit 11 presents feminine and masculine verb forms. The new vocabulary is ילדים, ילדות, פתק, משחק, כדורגל, סרט, כותב and כותבת, כותבים and נוסעות and נוסעים, and קוראות and קוראים, כותבות.

As in the previous units, the lesson starts with the introduction of the new words along with pictures. The teacher is instructed to use pantomime to help the children understand some words. Script Hebrew writing is introduced in Unit 8 and is practiced in the following units. Unit 11 also has a script-writing exercise.

The written words, ילדים, ילדות, פתק, משחק, כדורגל and סרט are introduced attached to pictures. The words כותב, קורא, נוסע, עם, כל, טוב and עכשיו are introduced as part of a sentence and sometimes with a picture too. The subsequent exercises emphasize the difference between male and female verb forms. The students are asked to fill in the correct form in a chart or as part of a sentence. Since one of the new words is פתק, there is a note in the book from Tammi to Nira. The teacher is instructed to read the note with the class and then ask questions such as "מי כתב את הפתק? לאן תמי הולכת?". In the next section, the students are asked to read sentences and attach them to the right picture or to put scrambled sentences into order. The unit ends, like all previous units, with a comic strip that contains the characters, the list of new words and another T-shirt activity.

In summary, the authors follow their guidelines carefully. Every unit starts with a conversational section that strengthens the student's ability to comprehend spoken Hebrew and to use it. After the words have been acquired, the teacher moves to reading. The fact that all of the units follow the same structure can be seen as an advantage because it avoids the need to spend too much time teaching instructions in the target

31

language. But it also runs the risk of boring the children by doing the same exercises over and over again. The language in this unit, as in the curriculum in general, is authentic. It is not modified to serve educational purposes. The dialogues flow and sound natural. Linguistic concepts are introduced not through explanations, but by using them in an authentic context, allowing the learner to figure out by himself how to use them.

4) The Learner

As noted earlier, the curriculum was written for elementary school students who are new *olim*. The assumption is that these kids face tremendous difficulties following their *aliyah*. In school, they must struggle with a new language on top of their regular academic requirements. In their introduction, the authors state specifically that many exercises have been written to allow for a little error in order to strengthen the students' sense of success and motivation. The program, therefore, puts an emphasis on improving children's confidence and self esteem.

5) The Teacher

The curriculum does not state any assumptions about the teachers. The program was written for Israeli public schools, and the authors may have assumed that all Israeli teachers meet certain basic requirements. My conclusions about their assumptions, therefore, are based on my understanding of the text.

Hakol Chadash lays out very detailed instructions for the teacher. It also offers extra activities for each unit. The detailed instructions indicate that the curriculum assumes that teachers may not be experienced in the techniques and theories of second-language acquisition. Since these instructions are in high-level Hebrew, the curriculum also assumes that the teachers are native Hebrew speakers. For instance, when I used the

32

curriculum, my American colleagues needed help understanding the directions, despite their relatively strong knowledge of Hebrew. Thus, we can assume that the program was not written for use overseas. The additional activities indicates that the developers understand the need to give teachers flexibility to design their own lessons and to facilitate their own classroom, even in a program as detailed as this one.

Conclusion and Personal Comments:

Even though *Hakol Chadash* was written in Israel for local use, I used it to teach Hebrew to first graders in the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan. The program was partially successful. It provided a springboard to many activities in conversational Hebrew and gave me some direction on how to proceed in teaching reading skills. The students were enthusiastic. They liked the comic strips and the familiarity with Ram, Nira and Robo. However, in the middle of the school year, I found out that my students knew how to read and comprehend all the words that we had studied, but couldn't read new words. Decoding unfamiliar Hebrew text is essential since we also teach Torah and Mishnah. I started to supplement our *Hakol Chadash* sessions with materials borrowed from other, more phonetic-based curricula. My conclusion is that using whole language-based curriculum outside of Israel and for L2 instruction can be problematic because the students rarely encounter Hebrew, spoken or written, outside their classroom. This makes it harder for them to memorize the words that they have learned to read. Using the whole-language method in the Diaspora will require phonetic supplements. This point should be considered by teachers who think about using *Hakol Chadash* in their classrooms.

Nitzanim

Nitzanim was developed in the late 1990s by the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and produced by the Centre for Educational Technology in Tel Aviv. CET used to be known by the Hebrew acronym מט"ח. The program was written specifically for Hebrew instruction in the Diaspora and is aimed at students at Jewish day schools -- kindergarten through second grade. The curriculum is constructed in three levels: Each level includes seven booklets, each containing one short story, a teacher's guide and an audio cassette. In addition, a student activity book, a large booklet of illustrations--along with dialogues and texts in basic Hebrew--are still in development. The booklet is called "תמונות מדברות."

1. Exterior

Nitzanim's booklets are bright and colorful. Each contains a different kind of illustration, varying from clay puppets to photos and drawings, which make each story unique. The teacher's guide is easy to follow. The layout is clear, and the format is user-friendly. The curriculum doesn't provide external teacher's aids, such as cards or games, although the program calls for many activities that require them. However, the teacher's guide offers instruction on how to create these aids in class. Unfortunately, most of these suggestions are expensive or time-consuming.

2. Table of Contents and Introduction

In their introduction to the teacher's guide, the developers state that the curriculum was written with three aspects of current Hebrew instruction in mind:

1) Modern approaches to second-language acquisition, especially the communicative approach.

34

2) Theories that emphasize the centrality of the child's world in education.

3) Emphasis is put on the sociocultural background of the Jewish child.

The focus is on stories as a means for Hebrew acquisition, since children are most familiar with this genre and prefer it over other techniques. Furthermore, the narrative is a form of expression that comes naturally for young children, and the content comes from their immediate environment. The stories of *Nitzanim* reflect the children's daily lives and Jewish holidays.

The stories in the first level are intended for children who don't know how to read Hebrew and those who are beginning to read. The vocabulary is basic (90-100 words), and there are a limited number of basic sentences. The first appendix in the teacher's guide provides the teacher with a list of words that are introduced in level one. The developers note, however, that in a few instances they use words that are not on the list. They do this in order to tell the stories in natural fluent language and to avoid creating artificial sentences that can be used only in the classroom.

The curriculum emphasizes all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The stories are therefore read to the students, or they can listen to the stories on the audio cassettes that accompany the program. After the students have listened to the story, they are asked to talk about it. The developers encourage the teachers to expose the text to the children, even those who do not yet know how to read. They argue that early exposure to the text will help them recognize different patterns in written Hebrew.

The teacher's guide offers three steps for teaching each story. The first is "**prereading.**" This stage is important because it helps the learners acquire all of the linguistic elements that are needed to understand the text. This process prepares the children to develop a general understanding of the story without disrupting the reading for translation or explanations in their native language. The activities in this stage are geared toward vocabulary acquisition. They consist of games with objects or cards, modeling by the teacher and physical activities.

35

The second step is the "**reading**" stage. At this stage, the story is read while the students participate in the parts that are repetitive. They can either repeat what the teacher has said or read aloud. In the subsequent activity, the teacher asks the students to find certain sentences in the story, which they try to locate using the text or picture in each page.

The third step is called "**postreading**." At this stage, the story is used as a basis for conversing and thinking in Hebrew. In addition, the story comprehension is manifested through a variety of activities, such as role playing, art or creation of a new text that is built on the model of the old one.

There is an abundant number of activities in the teacher's guide. They are varied and reflect different levels of difficulty, which enables a variety of learners to benefit. In addition, some of the stories, such as גן חיות של פורים, and לילה טוב אריאל are offered in two different versions in ascending difficulty. The teacher is instructed to choose the version that best suits the class. The curriculum suggests that the teacher create a visual environment in the classroom that reflects what they have studied. For instance, the teacher might display illustrations or characters from the book, sentences or words from the text, or an exhibit of children's works based on the story.

The adjacent "תמונות מדברות" booklet is to be published in a wide format and is full of illustrations and texts in basic Hebrew. The illustrations describe situations from daily life in the classroom, at home and outdoors, as well as scenes that reflect the Jewish holidays. Between stories, the authors suggest that the teacher present one of the illustrations in class in order to stimulate a conversation in Hebrew. The booklet is meant to reinforce vocabulary that does not appear in the stories, but is still needed in the first stages of second-language acquisition.

3. Samples of Reading and Exercises

      The developers of *Nitzanim* state in the introduction that they have relied heavily on the communicative approach to second-language acquisition. This approach emphasizes the function of language as a means to achieve communications between people. Moreover, the way we communicate varies from one social context to another. Since communication is a process, it is not enough for students to master the target language's forms, meanings and functions. They also "must be able to apply this knowledge in negotiating meaning."[48]

      In order to provide a deeper analysis of the *Nitzanim* curriculum, I will present three units from the program. One is meant for the beginning of the year. The next is for the middle, and the last is designed for the end.

      The unit "גם אני" includes a story about a girl named Tamar who wakes up in the morning, does her usual morning activities and is ready to go to school. Her younger brother tries to imitate her, but he is not always successful. The teacher's guide provides the teacher with a list of eight verbs: לובש/לובשת;רוחץ/ רוחצת; אומר/אומרת; קם/קמה; בוכה/בוכה; הולך/הולכת; לוקח/לוקחת; אוכל/אוכלת.

      However, only some of the words are actively taught in the following activities. The guide also lists nine nouns: גן and תיק, ארוחת בוקר, בגדים, ידים, ילדים, מיטה, בוקר, אני. There is one adjective, קטן/קטנה, the word גם, and the linguistic structures "אני קמה בבוקר. גם אני..."

      In the first stage of the unit, the guide instructs the teacher to use the verbs in different tenses, but not at the same time, unless the kids are already familiar with some of them. the introductory games offered here include "לקום", "לשבת" and "הולכים", "לא הולכים" -- activities that are similar to "Simon Says."

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[48] Adina Ofek handout.

The teacher is then instructed to put objects that are connected to washing, clothes and foods around the classroom. When the teacher asks, "מי רוחץ ידים?" the children pretend to wash their hands. "מי אוכל?" The kids need to get a food item and pretend to eat. At a more advanced stage, the teacher can use only the masculine or feminine form of the verb and have only the boys or only the girls react.

The next activity is a movement song that follows the tune of "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush." Each verse includes a morning activity that is sung and followed with movement exercises. The guide offers numerous games that are intended to evaluate the children's comprehension of the verses that appear in the song. The next activity is aimed at teaching the phrase, "גם אני." The teacher asks a student to perform an activity, such as "לכתוב" or "לאכול." The teacher then imitates the student and says, " גם אני."

The guide says not to spend too much time teaching the nouns because these words will be understood through the illustrations. In the final activity before moving into the story, the children look at the book's cover and based on its name and the illustration, try to predict what the story is about. The guide encourages the teacher to emphasize the story name, and permits the discussion to be in the children's native tongue. The rest of the lesson, however, is meant to take place in Hebrew.

In the second stage, the teacher begins by reading the story to the children. Then, the children join the teacher in repeating the words "גם אני." This activity repeats itself every day for a few days until the children can tell the story almost completely. The teacher will then ask the class to find certain sentences in the book. Children can also assume the teacher's role and ask the rest of the class to find the right page. According to the guide, this is not a reading exercise, but rather a listening exercise that asks the children to understand a Hebrew sentence and connect it to the right picture.

In the postreading stage, creative activities are offered to enhance the students' understanding of the story and provide ample opportunities to interact in Hebrew. The

activities include acting out the story, drawing a scene from it, creating a model of Tamar's home, a memory game and creating an alternative story in which Tamar imitates her brother getting ready to go to bed in the evening.

The second unit, "איזה נר מתאים?", is a Chanukah story about Bobo, a boy who has received a menorah as a present and searches for a candle that fits it. Bobo examines a variety of candles before finding the proper one. The teacher's guide offers eight prereading activities, but tells the teacher teacher to choose only the activities that are appropriate for the class level.

The first activity instructs the teacher to present the combinations "נר אדום" or "נר של יום הולדת" and "נר של שבת" as well as names of colors such as "נר לבן" a few weeks in advance. The second activity involves having the children classifying the candles according to different criteria that they have chosen.

In the third activity, the students are asked to classify the candles according to color. The teacher is asked to put four circles on the floor: red, white, yellow and blue. The children will have to pick up candles from a sealed box and place each candle in the correct circle, according to their colors. While doing so, the child is to explain what he or she is doing in Hebrew, saying, for example, "אני שם את הנר האדום פה".

The fourth activity is a game that is intended to teach the words "גדול" and "קטן". The teacher will point to two objects, one big and one small, and the children will describe them by saying, for instance, "שולחן גדול" or "כדור קטן". In this exercise, a child can take the teacher's role and point to objects.

In the fifth activity, the children pass two balls, one big and one small, to one another. Each time a child catches a ball, he or she says, "יש לי כדור קטן/גדול". The rest of the class will respond by saying the child's name. "יש ל_____ כדור קטן/גדול".

The sixth activity presents the expressions, "גדול מדי", "קטן מדי" and "יש לד/לך". The teacher is instructed to bring boxes and jars to the class with covers that fit or don't fit. When putting a large cover on a small box, the teacher says,

"אני שמה מכסה על הקופסא. המכסה גדול מדי. המכסה לא מתאים." She can also use the word "זה" in place of the word "מכסה." Similarly, she can put a small cover over the box. After the demonstration, the children play with the boxes, the jars and the covers while repeating the sentences that have been introduced by the teacher.

The seventh activity teaches use of the adjective "גבוה" and the combination "הכי גבוה". The teacher can bring tall objects to class, such as block towers or ladders. She can also take them outside and ask them, "איפה העץ הגבוה?" or "איפה הבית הגבוה?". The children respond by saying, "זה העץ הכי גבוה" or "זה הבית הכי גבוה". The teacher can follow this activity with a worksheet in which the children must find the tallest of four trees pictured on the page.

The final activity in this section is a dialogue in which the teacher describes a situation such as "יש יום הולדת. מה צריך לשים על השולחן?". The children respond with answers such as "צריך לשים נרות/עוגה/פרחים".

In the reading stage, the children are exposed to the text. The guide suggests that the teacher create a "big book" by photocopying it in an enlarged format and putting the photos on construction paper. At first, the teacher does not give the children their own book. Instead, she will read the story to them from the large-format book while showing them the pictures and following the text with her finger. Then, the teacher will read the story, with the children joining her in repetitive parts. The teacher is instructed to read the story several times until the class knows it almost by heart. Children can participate by reading the different characters' parts. In the last activity of this stage, the teacher asks the children to find certain sentences in the text.

The third and final stage of the lesson follows the story. Here, the teacher can choose between acting out the story, creating a puppet theater, an art project or even a new story based on the text. The children can also bring different menorahs to class and compare them using the vocabulary that was introduced in the story.

The last unit to be described is "למה עיינת מחכה לשבת?". It is the last unit in the

curriculum's guide. The story tells us about Einat, a girl who goes to school every day during the week but always looks forward to Shabbat, which is a special day for her. This unit follows the same format of the previous lessons. It starts with a list of verbs, nouns, adjectives and linguistic structures that will appear in the story. The preparation stage includes activities such as a mime game that introduces the verb "משחק/משחקת עם". The children are divided into pairs. Each pair will demonstrate in mime a certain kind of game. The rest of the class must guess what game it is in Hebrew. For example, "אתה משחק עם _____ במחבואים". In another activity that illustrates the verb "שר/שרה", the teacher asks a volunteer to leave the classroom. Then another student starts to sing. When the volunteer returns to the class, he or she must guess who sang: " _____ שר," or "שרה _____".

An interesting activity is used to demonstrate the words, "כל יום". The teacher prepares pictures of scenes taken from the students' lives. Some scenes describe daily activities, such as a boy brushing his teeth. Others describe activities that aren't as frequent, such as a girl swimming in a pool. The teacher will put the pictures on the floor with a sign that says "כל יום". The children are asked to take pictures that describe their daily activities on the sign and explain their choice in Hebrew. For instance, "אני מצחצחת שיניים כל יום".

The story stage follows the same routine of the previous lessons. The teacher first reads the story, then reads it together with the children, and at the end, the students need to find specific sentences in the book. The third, postreading stage offers more creative activities, such as preparing a personal book with each child titled "למה _____ מחכה/מחכה לשבת?". Another activity asks the children to draw additional pages for the story, which describes what Einat and her family do on Shabbat. The story concentrates on Einat's activities during the week but interestingly gives few details of what she and her family do on Shabbat. This seems to be a shortcoming since it would be an easy and useful way to make the connection between Hebrew and Judaism.

A handout given to me by Adina Ofek describes several principles of the communicative approach. This section will examine to what extent these principles are manifested in this unit of *Nitzanim*.[49]

1. "Authentic language," language as it is used in a real context, should be introduced "whenever possible." The language in this unit, as well as in the rest of the program, is authentic. Except for repetitions, it does not appear to have been modified for second-language learners.[50]

2. "The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just an object of study." It is interesting to note that the guide never instructs the teachers to speak only in Hebrew or even give directions in Hebrew. It is possible that the developers thought this was clearly understood and didn't have to be mentioned. Furthermore, all of the communication between the teacher and the class that is demonstrated in the guide is in Hebrew.

3. "One function may have many different linguistic forms. Since the focus of the course is on real language use, a variety of linguistic forms are presented together." This principle appears to be only partially employed in *Nitzanim*. While the unit does not provide the learner with different ways of saying "הנר לא מתאים", it still introduces many words, sentences and figures of speech instead of concentrating on one linguistic element at at time, the way more traditional approaches do.

4. "Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events -- there is a purpose to the exchange. Also the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not she has successfully communicated. Having students work in small groups maximizes the amount of communicative practice they receive." *Nitzanim* offers an abundance of games that are

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[49] ibid
[50] ibid

42

aimed at fostering interaction among the children, and between the children and the teacher.

5. "Students should be given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions." Most of the activities for the final stage of each unit, which follows the story, are aimed at helping the students express themselves in Hebrew through various art activities that were introduced earlier by the teacher.

6. "Errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students' success is determined as much by fluency as it is by their accuracy." The *Nitzanim* guide provides no guidance on how to deal with students' errors. However, it still states that success and pleasure in accomplishing educational tasks help to achieve effective learning.[51] This statement can be understood as supporting the communicative approach's claim that success in second-language acquisition can be measured only by the grammatical skills of the student.

7. "One of the teacher's major responsibilities is to establish situations likely to promote communication." *Nitzanim*'s activities, such as role playing, puppet shows or class discussion in Hebrew, encourage communication in the target language.

8. "The teacher acts as an advisor during communicative activities." Although the guide doesn't discuss the authors' view of the teacher, the curriculum seems to see the instructor in a more active role than that of an advisor. The teacher reads to the children and communicates with them more than they communicate with each other. This most likely is because of the young age of the target population. Students from kindergarten to second grade usually experience more difficulty working independently than students in higher grades.

9. "In communicating, a speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it." *Nitzanim* offers activities that do not restrict the learners to one kind of

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[51] *Nitzanim* Guidebook, p.7

response. Instead, they allow the students to express themselves in a variety of ways. Some activities, such as role playing or class discussions, give the children many ways to express themselves. Others, such as the game with a large and small ball, are meant to elicit a very specific answer.

10. "The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context and the roles of the interlocutors." The teacher is never expected to explain a grammar rule to the students. Instead, the students learn the rules deductively.

Overall, it appears that the authors have tried to follow the basic principles of the communicative approach. However, it seems that the young age of the learners has forced the developers to make some adjustments. For instance, the teacher plays a more active role than typically offered in the classical communicative approach.

As noted earlier, the language is always authentic, and the skills that are emphasized are mostly speaking, listening and reading, although it does not teach how to read Hebrew phonetically. There are few writing activities. The authors never say why they have done this, so their reasons are unclear. Finally, grammar, while playing an important role, is introduced deductively, allowing the learners to reach the conclusions about the structure of the Hebrew language by themselves.

The Learner

Nitzanim was written for students in kindergarten through second grade in liberal Jewish day schools. (The boys in the the pictures don't wear kippot.) It takes into account the different levels of Hebrew in each class, as well as the multiple intelligences that the learners possess. Therefore, some stories have more than one version, and the preparatory and follow-up activities engage the students in a different task each time.

The developers of *Nitzanim* state that they want the children to enjoy themselves because they believe that when the students are having fun, their learning is more

44

effective. Therefore, games and fun assignments are an integral part of the program.

The Teacher

The teacher's guide offers no direct insight into the authors' view of the teacher. It does not specify the expectations for the teacher's training and experience. However, since the guide is written only in Hebrew, it seems that the authors expect the teacher to be, at the minimum, a fluent Hebrew speaker. The material does not require the teacher to have experience in any prior pedagogic methods or linguistic knowledge. It appears to view the teacher as an independent improviser, rather than an executor of a detailed plan. The teacher's guide seems to be seen as a suggestion on how to teach the material. Often, the authors call on the teacher to decide whether a certain activity or linguistic element is appropriate for their class. While the teacher is not expected to carefully control the class, he or she still plays an active role within it.

Assessment:

The program doesn't have any kind of assessment.

Conclusion and Personal Comments

I have used the *Nitzanim* curriculum with first and second graders and found the program to have tremendous appeal to the students. They loved the booklets with the colorful illustrations and the accompanying activities. The broad appeal of the curriculum, and its consideration of multiple intelligences, allowed me to teach it to the whole class while still enabling children of different skill levels to improve their Hebrew. Another advantage is the program's ability to present Jewish subjects in a way that is attractive to the young learners and connected to their world. Not all of the units deal with

45

Jewish subjects, which sends the message that Hebrew is very much connected to Judaism but also is a modern live language that can be used in nonreligious contexts.

Still, there are disadvantages. One of the most pressing is that the curriculum does not seem to follow a straight line of progression. Each unit presents a new set of vocabulary that usually is not connected to the vocabulary from prior lessons. There is no repetition or review built into the program to help the children memorize the words. This element is crucial since children have very limited exposure to Hebrew outside the classroom. It also has been difficult to teach without supplemental material from other Hebrew-acquisition curricula. In a Jewish day school such as the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan, where Hebrew is taught daily, there simply is not enough material to cover a whole school year of learning. Furthermore, the program does not teach Hebrew reading as a skill. The developers acknowledge this. "The program is not intended to teach reading by a systematic, graded method," they write. "Its uniqueness lies in its ability to support the acquiring of reading in addition to other methods that are taught in the schools."[52] The guide offers the teacher a short appendix with suggestions on how to promote reading through *Nitzanim*, which all include word and sound recognition. This appendix is presented separately from the rest of the units.

Another disadvantage of the curriculum is the lack of any assessment. The program does not offer built-in tools for the teacher to assess each child's individual program or the progress of the class as a whole. Despite its disadvantages, *Nitzanim* is an appealing and effective program that promotes verbal communication and comprehension of Hebrew among young learners.

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[52] *Nitzanim* Teacher's Guide, p.10

46

Saf Madregot

Saf Madregot was developed between 1983-1986 by the Department of Education of the World Zionist Organization. Dr. Asher Rivlin led the project, and it was tested by 94 teachers in 32 schools worldwide. In their introduction, the developers state that their intention is to teach Hebrew as a live language. They note that *Madregot* is not intended to replace other Jewish-studies programs, but to strengthen and broaden them. The authors aimed to create a Hebrew curriculum to be taught only in Hebrew (*Ivrit B'Ivrit*) with "interesting and not too difficult texts, a variety of questions, linguistic exercises in varied difficulty levels and easy to follow educational methods."[53] All of the above, they claim, will enhance the students' motivation, enjoyment and success.[54]

Exterior

Madregot books are clear and bright. The pages are not too busy, the print is large, and the illustrations are partially colored. The curriculum offers only audio tapes as a teacher's aid. The tapes contain a recorded version of the stories in the book.

Table of Contents and Introduction

Madregot is ambitious and wide-ranging. It is intended to be taught for seven years, beginning in elementary school. It includes five books that contain 17 major sections, which are called "gates," with a total of 120 units of study. The curriculum also offers a dictionary that contains 1,250 basic words commonly used in Hebrew. Each book

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[53] *Madregot* Teacher's Guide, p.3.
[54] ibid. p. 3.

can be used in two grades. For instance, there is a book designed for second and third grade, followed by a book for third and fourth grade. Each book was published in two versions. One is for countries in the Northern Hemisphere, which start the school year in September, and another version for Southern Hemisphere countries, which start the school year in February or March.

Structure

Each book contains four sections. Three of them follow the order of the Jewish holidays and the seasons. The fourth can can be broken into units that can be taught throughout the year as complementary material. Each section contains six to eight units of varied lengths. It opens with a "gate page" that includes an illustration hinting at its content. Every unit contains a literary text, such as a story, poem or fable, a collection of questions intended for reading comprehension and creative thinking, and a combination of grammar exercises -- functional grammar, linguistic structures, common phrases and so forth. At the end of each unit, there is a list of all the new words, along with the words that were taught in previous chapters. In addition, each book concludes with a list of all the new words that appeared in it and the vocabulary that was taught in previous books.

The *Madregot* authors state that they followed several methodological principles as they developed the curriculum.

a) Each book should be taught in one year. The developers even calculated that a short unit should be taught in three or four lessons, a medium-size unit in five or six lessons, and a long unit should be taught in seven or eight lessons.

b) Texts were selected based on their literary, linguistic, Jewish, psychological and educational value.

c) The topics are meant to reflect the children's daily lives in school, at home, among friends and with pets, as well as hobbies and deeds of loving kindness. Every book

48

also contains Jewish topics of the past and present, Shabbat, holidays, the state of Israel and universal fictional stories.

d) All the stories have been rewritten for educational purposes.

e) All the texts are presented in a sequential order according to their linguistic complexity.

f) Many texts were written as a dialogue to enable acting out of the text.

g) The layout for each text was chosen in a way to ease the reading process: Each line contains one sentence, the page is divided into small paragraphs that are given a subtitle or number. The location of each illustration was selected carefully, and there is an abundant use of punctuation marks.

h) The number of new words and phrases in each unit is limited and coordinated with the level of the class.

i) The reading-comprehension questions are aimed at learners with varying levels of writing skills and linguistic knowledge. Many units offer the students the opportunity to write their own questions.

j) Formal grammar is never taught, but functional grammar is studied gradually throughout the program. Every book presents different grammatical aspects along with exercises to practice them. For instance, there is a gradual transition from present tense to the past tense and then to the future. Linguistic structures are also presented gradually, from short simple sentences to more complicated ones, such as compound words (סמיכות) and prepositions (מילות יחס).

k. Vowels, or ניקוד, appear in all the books. But their use is reduced as the program progresses.

l. The program uses כתיב מלא, even in words that are not usually written that way, such as "איפוה" instead of "איפה" and "מישפט" instead of "משפט". Asher Rivlin, the program developer, calls this "didactic vocalization" and says it is intended to make reading easier.

Unit Structure

Each unit begins with a prereading activity, such as a class conversation, that connects the new material to the previous unit. This conversation provides the students with the content and linguistic background needed to understand the new unit. The preparation discussion typically contains games and audio or visual aids, such as pictures, card, posters, music, short movies or even a trip. During this conversation, the new words are introduced and written on the board with their definition in the native language. The authors suggest practicing the new words in different contexts and urge the teachers not to proceed to the new text without teaching the new words first.

After the prereading conversation, the class can move to the reading stage. The teacher reads the text, then the class listens to a recorded version of it. Afterward, the children read it on their own. The reading part is followed by another oral exercise aimed at improving the students' ability to express themselves in Hebrew. This conversation concentrates on the main ideas in the text. The discussion is stopped from time to time, and the teacher gives the students short writing assignments. The authors put an emphasis on developing Hebrew writing skills and offer a variety of strategies to provide the students with more opportunities to express themselves in writing.

Samples of Readings and Exercises

Throughout the curriculum, the *Madregot* developers never refer to any particular second-language acquisition theory as the sole influence on their work Instead, *Madregot* seems to utilize an eclectic approach, using elements from various approaches, including the Direct Method.

Following is a description of three units from the curriculum's third-grade book.

The first, "ילדים בונים סוכה", appears in the first section. The text, based on a story by A. Ben-Shazar, is divided into four paragraphs. It tells the story of Noah and Sima, an elderly couple who live in a small house. Every year before Sukkot, Noah builds a sukkah next to his house and invites the children to come and visit. When the children come, they say the ברכות, and are given candy and cake. One year, one of the children tells his friends that his father, a doctor, told him that Noah is sick and cannot build a sukkah. The children then surprise the couple by building the sukkah for them.

In the prereading stage, the teacher is encouraged to visit the school's sukkah with the class and to talk in Hebrew about Sukkot and its customs. After teaching the new words, חולה,רופא, זקן, זקנה and עצוב, the teacher can ask the children what their fathers do, how adults can help other people, and how a child can help an older person. The class then proceeds to reading the text, one paragraph at a time. After each paragraph, the class pauses and discusses its content: How do we know that Noah and Sima love children? How do the children know that Noah is sick? What do we need for a sukkah? After reading the last paragraph, the class can discuss the story as a whole.

In the next exercise, the children take turns reading the story. This is followed by 13 questions and exercises that require writing. The students need to provide full answers to a question, such as "מה יש בסוכה של הילדים?" or "מי רופא?". In others, they need to complete a sentence (סימה חיא אשח טובה כי...). Then, on the blackboard, the teacher writes names of the characters in the story, and the students fill in what each of them said. The authors recommend ending the chapter with a role play of the story.

The second unit to be presented is the unit for *Yom Haatzmaut*. The unit presents a poem called "ברכה לישראל" by R. Shilav. The poem describes how Jews all over the world celebrate Israeli independence day by raising the blue and white flag, sending Israel blessings and prayers for peace, and singing Hatikva and *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*. The program's guide encourages the teachers to decorate their schools and classrooms for *Yom Haatzmaut* and to open the unit with Independence Day songs that the children are

51

familiar with.

The new words introduced in this unit are אייר ,מדינת ישראל, עצמאות, עולם ,עם ,אל, לנגן and שמח. The guide, however, doesn't offer any creative ways to help the children memorize the words. The teacher is instructed to write at the center of the blackboard the Hebrew date and then "שנים __ בת היא ישראל מדינת .ישראל למדינת העצמאות חג ". Since the main theme of the poem is that Jews all over the world are celebrating Israeli Independence Day together, the teacher raises the question:

"מה אנחנו עושים ביום הזה?".

After discussing the question with the students, the teacher slowly reads the poem twice and writes the children's answers to the question on the blackboard. Then, the class looks at the main illustration to the poem. It shows a map of the world with Israel in the middle. From all over the world, there are arrows pointing to Israel. After the illustration is explained, the children are asked to pick up phrases and words from the poem that fit the illustration.

In the next activity, the children write greeting cards to the State of Israel in Hebrew and share them with the rest of the class. The last activity is another list of reading-comprehension questions and a small letter-search game that creates the words "מגן דוד". As a conclusion, the authors suggest that the teacher lead a discussion that compares the costumes of the local independence day with those of *Yom Haatzmaut*.

The third unit to be described is the last unit in the book. The unit, called "יום של קיץ," starts with a discussion in which the children review each season and its distinctive characteristics. (The seasons were already taught in previous units.) The teacher presents summer pictures as well as objects that are associated with summer, such as sea shells, sand or a beach ball.

The prereading conversation introduces the unit's new words: ארמון ,חול ,בגד ים, קופץ ,חוזר, דלי, כף ,הביתה ,בחוץ and להתרחץ. The discussion should include questions such as: How do we know when it is summer? What do we do in the summer? Why is it good

to go to the beach? What are children doing on the beach? Children should be encouraged to share their own experiences.

In the next stage, the poem is read by the teacher, and then by the students. The guide suggests that each time a few children read parts of the poem in a certain order. Afterward, the children need to answer the questions at the end of the unit. As in the previous units, some of these questions ask for information that is found in the poem. Others require a closer look at the text, such as "Find words that appear four times in the poem." The unit concludes with another reading of the poem and an exercise in which the children are asked to draw a picture that is related to the beach during the summer.

Through these units, we can see how *Madregot* is influenced by the Direct Method approach. They all follow the same format, beginning with a preparatory discussion, introduction of text and subsequent questions and exercises.

Although the authors made an effort to introduce the students to famous Hebrew and Jewish stories and poems, the language of these texts is not authentic. In some cases, they altered the language for educational purposes. In many cases, the language seems artificial, even forced, such as the story for Yom Kippur when a child tells his mother: "אז אני אוכל עוגה ושותה חלב."[55] Most native speakers would say the sentence in future tense: "אני אוכל עוגה ואשתה חלב." Another example is the sentence, "כולם נותנים תודה לאל"[56] in the *Yom Haatzmaut* poem. Native Hebrew speakers would say "כולם מודים לאל." This reflects the curriculum's graded approach, reinforcing what has already been taught and not adding concepts that have not been introduced yet.

While grammar rules are not formally taught, each unit has a strong grammatical component. In many units, students are expected to work on a grammar exercise after they finish studying the text. In addition, the book contains "yellow pages" between the

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[55] *Madregot*, Second and Third Grade Book, p. 25
[56] ibid, p. 153

units. These pages contain a list of words that illustrate a specific grammar rule, such as a list of present-tense verbs in feminine and masculine forms, or singular and plural forms.[57] Since the children learn the grammar rules inductively, and a strong emphasis is put on oral discussion, the unit appears to be influenced by the Direct-Method approach. I observed "*Madregot*" being taught in two classes in a Modern Orthodox day school in New Jersey. In one class, the children were focused on answering the questions in the book. In the other, teacher tried to engage them in a review discussion of a unit that they had just completed. The students were not very cooperative, and not everyone was involved in the conversation.

In my experience, long exchanges in Hebrew often involve only a few students because they require a long attention span and a high level of concentration and knowledge. Unfortunately, *Madregot* does not offer any alternative. The program might be more effective if the conversational sessions were shorter and supplemented with more games and visual arts. Games in small groups also increase the students' opportunities to converse in Hebrew.

The developers' decision to provide definitions of new words in the students' native language runs contrary to their aspiration to create a classroom in which only Hebrew is spoken. A better solution would be to convey the meaning of new words through illustrations, mime or role play, and resort to the native tongue only if all other methods have failed or if the students have reached a mistaken understanding of the word.

4. The Learner

As noted earlier, *Madregot* has a wide scope and is intended for use in all grades in elementary Jewish day schools. While a big portion of the program is devoted to

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[57] *Madregot* Teacher's Guide, p. 23

Jewish subjects, the authors state that the curriculum is not intended for teaching only in Orthodox schools. Attention is given to the students' developmental stage. As the books progress, the texts and the illustrations mature as well.

Since all units follow the same format, it seems that not enough attention was given to multiple intelligences and the various types of learners. The program does not offer enough physical, musical and dramatic activities to address the learning skills of students with kinesthetic or musical intelligences.

5. The Teacher

The developers note that their suggestions for teaching materials should be seen only as guidance tips, and encourage the teacher to use his or her imagination and creativity. At the beginning of the guide, they offer a few general strategies for the teacher, such as "מדרש תמונה" -- developing a conversation around the illustrations in the unit. They recommend questions such as: "What is everyone in the picture doing? A second technique is "מדרש כותרת" -- asking the students to guess what the text is about based on its title; or asking students to tell in their own language the story that they have just listened to or read.[58]

The teaching strategies in the guide are explained briefly, without detailed guidance on how to execute the activity. The *Madregot* guide appears to make a few assumptions about the teacher, although they are not stated directly. First, it appears to assume that the teacher has some experience teaching Hebrew or other subjects, but is a novice about second-language acquisition theories in general. Since the authors never refer to research or theoretical background in the field of second-language acquisition, we also can assume that it is not necessary for the Hebrew teacher to become familiar with

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[58] *Madregot* Teacher's Guide, p.17

the subject. While the guide encourages the teachers to be creative in their teaching, it also conveys the sense that all the units should be taught by following the format of preparation discussion, reading the texts and a concluding conversation. This reflects the carefully graded nature of the program. The teacher also is seen more as carefully controlling the classroom than as a facilitator. Most of the activities that are suggested place the teacher in the center. The students work individually in their books or participate in class discussion. The curriculum offers few activities that involve work in small groups, which put the students at center stage.

Assessment:

Madregot offers a short test at the end of every section. This test seems to be intended to help the children memorize the vocabulary. It contains a list of all the new words that were studied in a certain section, and the students are expected to write the definition of each word in the native language. The curriculum also developed a model for a full-length exam, which is designed for reading comprehension. The exam contains four sections. Three are in the form of a closed test, with a list of words at the end to answer the questions. The fourth contains two to four open questions. The developers even offer guidance on how the teacher should grade the exam. The program even has its own exam handbook, which the teacher can use as a reference.

Appeal of Text

Madregot is a school-wide curriculum that attempts to cover all bases: different age groups and secular as well as religious students. Their activities are varied enough that all subskills of second-language acquisition -- writing, speaking and listening -- are practiced. However, the activities tend to focus on traditional methods that don't take into

account the variety of learners and multiple intelligences. The fact that the guide instructs the teacher on several occasions to teach a certain unit in two or three sessions[59] is a strong indication that the developers did not consider that each individual and each class might learn at a different pace.

The guide states that the curriculum's goal is to motivate the learners to use Hebrew. In reality, many of the activities are not inspiring and lack any element of "fun." I commend the authors' decision to use a variety of texts that include classic Hebrew stories and poems. This gives students a glimpse into the rich world of the Israeli and Hebrew culture. It is disappointing, however, that the texts are not presented in the original form, but instead were altered for educational purposes. The language of these texts often is not authentic and lacks the natural flow of native Hebrew.

In conclusion, while this ambitious project was much needed during the 1980s, when Hebrew curricula were almost nonexistent, it now seems out of touch with modern methodologies and research in second-language acquisition.

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[59] ibid, p. 22

Tal Am

Tal Am (תכנית למודים עברית ומורשת) was developed by the Jewish Education Council of Montreal in the mid-1990s. Unlike other Hebrew-learning curricula, this program cannot be purchased in bookstores. A school that wishes to use the curriculum needs to send its teachers to a five-day seminar. These seminars are conducted throughout North America by the program's head designer, Tova Shimon, and its coordinator, Drorit Farkash. In addition, the school has to buy the curriculum's materials directly from them. *Tal Am* and its sister curriculum for higher grades, *Tal Sela*, are very popular and widely used in North American Jewish day schools.

Exterior:

All of *Tal Am*'s materials for the student are bright and colorful. The print in the curriculum's booklets is clear, and the layout is not too busy. The teacher's guide also is easy to follow. The program offers an abundance of teacher's aids: students' booklets, big format books that include songs and stories, audio tapes with songs and teacher's guides designed specifically for each unit. The program also includes picture cards for demonstrating vocabulary, games for different skill levels, dolls, big colorful boards for display in the classroom and a series of small reading books in Hebrew.

Table of Contents and Introduction

Tal Am was written specifically for first-grade students in Jewish day schools. Its content can be divided into three subsections that should be taught simultaneously. The main part of the curriculum contains nine units, each with its own books and other teacher's aids. Each unit is centered around one theme, general or Jewish, and a few

linguistic structures. For instance, the first unit, "שלום כתה א," is built around four

linguistic structures: "מי בכתה?" "מי לא בכתה?" "מה יש בכתה?" and "מה עושים בכתה?".

The teacher's guides offer very detailed lesson plans for each stage, as well as an introduction to the unit as a whole. The curriculum does not offer a general master teacher's guide for the entire program or any written materials explaining its theoretical and empirical background.

Another part of the program is the Ariot (אריאות) books, a set of stories about a friendly lion. It contains four units (Ariot 1-4), and a book called "אריאות כותב". This part of the curriculum was designed to teach reading and writing skills. The lion, Ariot, tells the children stories as he introduces new letters and vowels. These stories are essential to the program because they bring in an element of fun. Indeed, the first unit's guide encourages the teacher to have a member of the school's staff to dress up like Ariot -- there are even instructions on how to build the costume -- and to come to class to introduce himself. (The name Ariot can cause some confusion because it is a combination of the words אריה and אות. Because of its ending, the name sounds feminine, while Ariot is a male.)

As noted earlier, the Ariot books are taught in conjunction with the other *Tal Am* units. The last section of *Tal Am* is designed to teach *parashat hashavua* in Hebrew. This section contains three books: *Breshit*, *Shmot* and a joint book for *vayikra* and *bamidbar*. Every week, a specific unit introducing a *parasha* is taught along with the previously mentioned sections of *Tal Am*.

Tal Am's developers haven't left any place uncovered. The lesson plans in the teacher's guide give a step-by-step description on how the lesson should look. The guide describes activities and directs the teacher how to organize the room in preparation for the lesson. Each lesson plan also displays a "window," or a sidebar, that provides the following facts to the teacher: **time** (how long the lesson should take); **participants** (class, group or individual); **activity goals** (acquisition, learning, internalization,

creativity or memorization) ; and **communication channels** (listening, speaking, singing, writing or reading); **body and language** (ways to physically demonstrate new vocabulary and concepts), and **connections** (other curriculum books that can be taught in connection with this unit).

The body of each lesson plan is divided into the following stages:

1) **Preparation:** Introductory activities that include opening questions, usage of the boards, opening music.

2) **Demonstration:** Activities that introduce the new vocabulary and linguistic structures in class.

3) **Comprehension evaluation:** Activities that are intended to measure how much the class has understood the demonstration.

4) **Internalization activities:** A series of activities to help the student internalize, memorize and master the material in the lesson.

5) **Summary:** Suggestions on how to wrap up the lesson and make the connection to the new material.

6) **Homework:** Some sessions include optional homework. The suggested assignments are always very light, such as singing a song or reciting a certain blessing at home.

While general content is introduced, *Tal Am* puts a stronger emphasis on Jewish content. Of the nine main units of the program, only two have general appeal. It appears that the developers wanted to create a program that will introduce Judaica through the study of Hebrew. *Tal Am* seems to concentrate on teaching vocabulary and linguistic structures, while grammar plays a smaller role. Grammar is always taught inductively, often conveyed through Jewish themes. For instance, the Chanukah book teaches numbers using the menorah, and verbal and nonverbal sentences (משפטים פועליים ושמניים) using the holiday story: אנחנו מכבים (nonverbal) and אנחנו שומרים שבת (verbal).

<u>Samples of Reading and Exercises</u>

The three units from the *Tal Am* book to be presented include "שלום," the unit for the beginning of the school year, the Chanukah book and the Ariot book for reading acquisition. The program advises the teacher to complete the "שלום" unit as the High Holidays approach and to start teaching the next unit, titled "שנה טובה." But if Rosh Hashana comes during the first week of the school year, the authors recommend to start teaching the "שלום" unit after the High Holidays. The "שלום" unit introduces the children to "*hamorah* Shira" and her class. The authors state that in creating Shira's classroom, they have tried to reflect the environment found in most North American day schools. The students also are introduced to Shachar and Sharona, children in Shira's class.

Shachar is presented in the lesson called "אני שחר". According to the teacher's guide, this lesson has two main goals: 1) acquisition of the question structure, "בכתה_____?" (שחר בכתה?); and 2) Introduction of the nonverbal sentence, " אני _____" (אני בכתה).

The next section in the lesson plan provides the teacher with a list of materials that need to be prepared before teaching begins. The list includes three sentences written on the board: 1) שלום כתה א 2) אני שחר 3) אני בכתה. In addition, there is a Shachar doll and a card with his picture; Shachar's "lollipop," a round picture of him glued to a stick. (Each child receives a lollipop with his or her own picture on it); an audio tape with the songs "שלום" and "שלום שחר"; students' booklets and the large format book.

At the beginning of the session, the teacher greets every student with "שלום _____." After listening to the song, " שלום כתה א" everybody sits in front of the board, with the words "מי בכתה?" written on it. The teacher starts by asking: "_____בכתה?" Then she will display this child's lollipop, and ask the student to get up and stand next to him or her.

The teacher then reads from the board:

1) "שלום כתה א"

2) "אני _____"

3) "אני בכתה"

The class then answers "שלום _____". This activity is repeated with the assistance of other students. After each child introduces himself or herself, the class answers "שלום _____"

The guide recommends introducing shy children at the beginning, with the teacher's help, and then to let the more confident ones introduce themselves. After all the students have introduced themselves, the teacher introduces "Shachar" by displaying the Shachar doll and Shachar's lollipop. The class then answers, "שלום שחר". The teacher then uses the large format book and the audio tape to teach the song "שלום שחר." The children can also find the three sentences that are introduced here in their booklets. The instructions in the booklets are very clear and simple. They always come in two to three words, and the first word is always "בבקשה" as in "בבקשה לקרוא" or "בבקשה לצייר".The sidebar attached to this lesson plan indicates that this lesson should take no longer than 10 minutes, and that listening, reading and speaking skills are being taught.

The second lesson to be described here comes from the Chanukah unit. The lesson is called "יהודים או יוונים?". The main idea of the lesson is that the Jews wanted to stay Jews, despite the Greek oppression. The lesson introduces a variety of sentences: nonverbal (אנחנו יהודים); infinitive sentences (אנחנו רוצים להיות יהודים); and verbal sentences (אנחנו שומרים שבת). The new vocabulary words are: מדברים, אוכלים, שומרים, אלוקים, תורה, עברית, כשר, שבת, מתפללים, לומדים. The unit aims to develop reading, listening-comprehension and observation skills.

The guide instructs the teacher to prepare the following -- a "חנוכה שמח" board, cards with all of the new vocabulary words, the song "שמונה ימים בחנוכה, למה?" on audio

tape, the large format book, game cards, and a puppet of Antiocus, the Greek king, made out of construction paper. The body of the lesson starts with preparation activities, such as letting the students browse through the Chanukah story in the big book and playing the Chanukah song on the tape. The teacher reads the story from the big book but does not finish it. The teacher then displays cards with pictures of Jews keeping Shabbat, studying Torah and eating kosher food. She asks the children, "איפה היהודים?," and answers with them: "איפה חיוונים? על ההרים, מחפשים את היחודים"." לא בבית לא בירושלים, במערה, בהר"

The guide then offers a few activities to help the students internalize what they have just learned. The teacher gives the children cards containing the new vocabulary: לומדים תורה, שומרים שבת, יוונים, יהודים and so forth. Before she reads the story, she asks the children to raise their hands if they hear a sentence that matches their card. In the next activity, the children divide the cards into two categories: יוונים and יהודים. The children read the cards before they place them into the right column. The class is then divided into יוונים and יהודים. The teacher then reads sentences from the book, like אסור לשמור שבת or אנחנו שומרים שבת, and the correct group has to raise its cards.

In the next activity, the teacher explains the Greek prohibitions, while the children answer as Jews. For instance:

Teacher: אסור לאכול כשר

Children: אנחנו אוכלים כשר

The guide suggests that the teacher make a doll of a Greek person that will recite all the prohibitions. This is so that the children won't identify with the Greeks.

The last activity is a role play. The class should again be divided the Greeks and the Maccabim. The Greek group will get game cards carrying sentences like: "אסור לשמור שבת" or "אסור לדבר עברית". The "Jewish" group will get cards with sentences such as "אנחנו מדברים עברית" or "אנחנו שומרים שבת". The Greek group then displays the Greek dolls and one sentence at a time. The Jewish group answers with their own sentences.

For instance:

--אסור לדבר עברית.

--אנחנו מדברים עברית.

    The groups change places after a while so that the students will have a chance to participate in both roles. This exchange reflects the ideological tone found throughout the curriculum. In addition to teaching Hebrew, *Tal Am* aims to foster strong Jewish identity and pride by telling stories in stereotypical bold strokes. In this instance, the Greeks are portrayed as thuggish evildoers, and the Jews are innocent and heroic.

    The sidebar attached to this lesson plan indicates that it should take about 20 minutes, and that reading, demonstrating and listening skills are being practiced. It is important to note that a large part of the Chanukah unit is devoted to teaching the children the blessings for lighting the candles. It is clear that *Tal Am* is designed to teach not only language, but religious content as well.

    The last part of *Tal Am* to be presented here is one of the Ariot books. These books are designed to teach reading in connection withthe other units. The children can also write and draw in the books. The first book introduces the letters א, ב, ג, ד, ה and ש and several vowels.The book start by introducing the letter א and the word שלום. The children sing a song that contains the words שלום, אריאות and the consonant א. Then, they are asked to read a line of אs with the vowels קמץ and חטוף פתח and to find the א consonants in a picture. The students fill in the missing א to create words like אבא and אני and אדום , which they must read afterward. In other exercises, they are asked to connect words to the correct picture, to read a short story with Ariot that contains all the new words and to practice writing the letter א.

    The activities that teach the other letters are very similar. The series combines the two main approaches to reading acquisition: phonics and whole language. Each letter is

introduced separately and combined with a vowel. Following the phonics approach, the children are asked to read the letter on its own, and not as part of a word. The curriculum sometimes uses כתיב מלא, even if there are vowels in the text, to clarify pronunciations. For example, the word חנה is spelled הינה. At the same time, they are introduced to each letter as part of a word and need to read these words, which contain other letters and vowels that they are not familiar with. For instance, the consonant ב is taught on its own, then presented as part of the word בלון. Children who are not familiar with the other consonants and vowels need to memorize the entire word, a standard technique in the whole-language approach.

Overall, all of these units demonstrate how tightly structured and detailed the *Tal Am* curriculum is. It has an abundance of teacher's aids, as well as suggestions and ideas on how to run the Hebrew classroom. It was difficult to assess the type of Hebrew used by *Tal Am* because it is full of repetition and never presents more than one or two sentences at a time. In addition, the sentences have very simple structures, which iss understandable in a program designed for first graders. Still, the language in these units seems to be authentic. The sentences do not have artificial structures, and while the program has its own songs that teach phonics, it also incorporates common Hebrew songs. *Tal Am* does not seem to follow any single language-acquisition technique. It incorporates some elements of the Direct Method, such as the centrality of the teacher, formal questions and responses, direct repetitions and the effort to "immerse" the student in Hebrew.

Tal Am emphasizes almost all of the language skills. Nonetheless, reading comprehension and listening comprehension seem to take precedence over speaking and writing. The children are asked to speak only within the structures that the teacher provides. For instance, the teacher says, "בכתח יש...", and the children are expected to complete the sentence with one of the new vocabulary words. There is no real interaction among the students, or between them and the teacher. Similarly, writing in *Tal Am* is

limited to copying the letters' shapes. There is no exercise that requires the students to write their own sentences based on the structures they have learned.

In general, the classroom atmosphere seems to be tightly controlled. There is little room for students to express themselves. It is true that in the first grade, children's ability to write or speak in full sentences in a foreign language is limited. But I believe that students should be encouraged to express themselves and communicate in Hebrew from the beginning. While I did not study the second-grade *Tal Sela* program, a colleague who uses the curriculum in Florida told me that there is a big gap between the first-year and second-year programs. *Tal Sela* introduces vocabulary and structures that aren't presented in *Tal Am*, forcing the teachers to create materials to fill in this gap.

The Learner

In the teacher's guide, the developers do not indicate what assumptions they have made about the learner, except that the curriculum is designed for the first grade. However, it is clear that such a rich and time-consuming program can be taught only in a day school. They have created a classroom in which boys and girls study together, but the boys always cover their heads and the girls and the teacher always wear skirts. These details were probably intended to make the program acceptable in Orthodox schools.

The variety of teacher's aids help to address the diverse needs and skills of learners with multiple intelligences. The program offers many songs, games and colorful visual objects, such as boards and dolls, in addition to the books. This abundance makes it easier for the musical or kinesthetic child to relate to the Hebrew classroom almost as well as the child with linguistic abilities. The program's visual and musical attractiveness also helps motivate young learners.

The Teacher

Tal Am's curriculum does not provide a profile of the target teacher. But its structure conveys a few strong underlying assumptions. The highly detailed nature of the program leaves little room for teacher creativity, indicating that the developers see the teacher as an executor rather than an improviser. The teacher is expected to closely follow the lesson plans, and the success of the program depends on it. Every minute of the lesson is described in the guide, there is little room for free input from the children. This is additional evidence that the program views the teacher as carefully controlling the classroom, rather than a facilitator of activities.

The curriculum does not indicate any requirements for the teacher's prior knowledge or training. However, it seems that even a novice teacher who has no experience teaching a second language can execute *Tal Am* thanks to its level of detail and control. This can explain why *Tal Am* is so popular today among Jewish day schools. Most Hebrew teachers in these schools are Israelis or Americans who learned Hebrew as youths. While most of them possess some training in education, they often lack experience in the field of teaching Hebrew. The high rate of teacher turnover in Jewish schools adds to the problem, creating the constant need to train new teachers. *Tal Am* provides answers to this problem with its intensive seminars for new teachers and through a program that does not require expertise or knowledge of second-language acquisition.

Assessment

Tal Am does not include a large-scale assessment at the end of each book or at the end of the year. However, almost every lesson contains activities that are specifically designed to assess the students' comprehension of the material.

Appeal of the Text

I had a mixed reaction. The text is very carefully thought out, addresses a variety of learners, is gradually structured, colorful and attractive, and offers lots of help to the novice teacher. On the other hand, it blocks teacher and student creativity, and does not offer enough opportunities for real, significant communication in the classroom. I also would have liked to see more general content in the program. While Hebrew is taught as part of *limudei kodesh* in many schools, there is a need to present it as a live modern language in which one can express himself or herself on secular subjects as well.

Conclusion

This survey has examined four major curricula used in Jewish day schools, but it is far from comprehensive. While many North American day schools use these or other commercial programs, others are trying to write their own curricula, tailored specifically to their own needs. None of the programs that exist today seems to address all of the needs and goals of the contemporary day school. Some rely on outdated linguistic theories, while others lack coherence and gradual development. Some rely almost solely on Jewish content; others have none. Some use unauthentic language, and others have no visual appeal.

While we are far from creating a curriculum that will satisfy everybody in our community, we can still try. Efforts to improve our Hebrew curricula will create a change in the way we teach Judaica in general. Revitalization of the field will bring more enthusiasm into the classroom, helping to create a community whose members are literate about the language of their heritage.

The Importance of Authentic Language in the Communicative Classroom

In many Hebrew curricula, we can find texts like the following:

"דן אומר לקובי: האוטו שלך יפה. אולי אתה רוצה להחליף? אני נותן לך את הכדור, ואתה נותן לי את האוטו.[60] וקובי אומר: טוב, אתה נותן לי את הכדור, ואני נותן לך את האוטו."

The language presented here is not authentic. It was constructed especially for its teaching potential. Native speakers of Hebrew would use the future tense instead of the present tense in this exchange. "אני אתן לך את האוטו." In addition, native Hebrew speakers, like native speakers of other languages, do not answer questions so explicitly and speak in full grammatical sentences in real-life conversations. Until recently, teaching provided students with specially adapted language, not only simplified in terms of syntax, vocabulary and structure. The belief was that such nonauthentic language was vital to L2 learning. Language adaptation is necessary to overcome gaps in knowledge in different linguistic forms, such as tenses in this case.

With the advent of methods that simulate typical communicative situations, educators began to realize that students were handicapped by never hearing natural and diverse speech. Thus, there has been a proliferation of materials that turn away from specially constructed classroom language to language that is really used by native speakers. They may include tapes of conversations, advertisements from magazines, train timetables and other sources.

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[60] *Madregot*, Third and Fourth Grade Book, p.102.

69

In the book, "Second Language Learning and Language Teaching," Vivian Cook gives three reasons for the use of authentic language:

1) <u>Motivation and Interest</u>: Students will be better motivated by texts that have served a real communicative purpose.

2) <u>Acquisition-promoting content</u>: Authentic texts provide a rich source of natural language for the learner.

3) <u>Filling up Gaps</u>: Designers of course books and syllabuses may miss some aspects of language used in real-life situations. We must turn to outside sources of language, such as office chatter or newspaper articles, to give students the appropriate real-life language taken from situations appropriate to their needs.[61]

Just because language is authentic does not mean that it is more difficult than specially written language. Difficulty depends partly upon the amount of material that is used. A recording or a text does not have to consist of many words to be authentic. "Exit," "This Door Is Alarmed," and "Ladies" are three authentic signs. A recording of people on the streets of Israel saying "שלום" is authentic. Difficulty also depends upon the task that is used with the material. Beginners can listen to two professors discussing a topic in the target language if all they are asked to do is to identify who is "איש" and who is "אשה," who is "כועס" and who is "רגוע" or who says the word "כן" more often.

While using authentic language in the classroom has many merits, it should not be forgotten that authentic language by definition is not normal classroom language. It is used for purposes quiet different from those of its originally speakers, however well-intentioned the teacher may be.

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[61] Cook, pp. 123-124.

Three Units of Study of Hebrew Curriculum

To conclude this paper, I have developed three units of Hebrew curriculum designed especially for the first grade. The units are based on the principles of the Communicative Approach, putting a strong emphasis on the children's ability to negotiate meaning in Hebrew. In an effort to introduce as much authentic material as possible, I have chosen three popular Hebrew children's songs as the main theme for each unit.

The units assume that the children have some decoding skills. They are built around the following structure, which was common throughout the different Hebrew curricula and which I found to be very effective:

Stage 1: Prereading -- Introduction of the units' new vocabulary and linguistic structures through a variety of activities.

Stage II: Reading -- Introduction of the text with or without the music.

Stage III: Postreading--Internalization of the vocabulary and the linguistic structures through drama and art.

Stage IV: Assessment..

The units have not been divided into lessons and no time boundaries are given because I believe that every teacher and every class moves at their own pace. Giving respect to individual learning styles will enhance the effectiveness of the Hebrew-acquisition process. During Hebrew instruction, only Hebrew should be spoken in the room. The teacher should make an extra effort to explain new words in Hebrew. If there are children who still don't understand a word, as a last resort one of the children who do understand can be permitted to say the definition in English. Art activities, such as making puppets, should be kept short. It has been my experience that during art activities, children tend to converse in their native tongue, distracting from the "Hebrew-only" environment in the classroom.

71

This unit is based on the famous Shabbat song by Ehud Manor, which was written for Yitzhak Damiel's children's musical, שמלת השבת של חנהילה. I have chosen to introduce the chorus of the song alone, without referring to the story of Chanaleh. I have done so because the text of the story contains advanced vocabulary and linguistic structures that will be ineffective for our learners without altering them.

למה לא כל יום שבת?

מי אוהב את השבת?

אמא ואבא.

מי אוהב את השבת?

סבתא וסבא.

מי אוהב את השבת -

אני, אתה ואת.

כל העולם כמעט

אז למה לא כל יום שבת?

Unit Vocabulary:

Nouns:	Verbs:	Question words:
אני	אוהב/ת	מי?
אתה		
את		
משפחה		
כל יום		
שבת		
אמא		
אבא		
סבא		
סבתא		

Things that need to be prepared in advance:

1) Ask the children to bring in pictures of their parents and grandparents.

2) Have your own pictures of parents and grandparents, as well as a picture of yourself.

3) Write on the board "מי במשפחה?" and draw a basic family tree and attach a picture of yourself at the bottom.

4) Cut out pictures of certain kinds of foods, such as chocolate and banana, sports, like baseball and football, and the family members (סבתא, סבא, אבא and אמא).

5) Prepare pictures of daily activities and pictures of Shabbat activities and signs that read, שבת and כל יום.

6) Prepares signs with the words אבא, אמא, סבתא, סבא, אוהב, אוהבת.

7) Get an audio tape or CD with a recording of the song.

Stage I: Prereading Activities

1. סבתא, סבא, אבא, אמא.

Ask "מי במשפחה?" and display the picture of אמא. Show the picture and say "אמא", then attach the picture to the board on the family tree and say, "אמא". Then, display the picture of אבא and say "אבא". Repeat the word "אבא" again as you attach it to the board. Do the same with the pictures of סבא and סבתא. The teacher may decide to present two sets of grandparents.

Give the children their pictures and ask, "מי במשפחה של _____?" Each student should then point to his parents and grandparents in the picture and say " אבא,אמא, סבא and סבתא".

2. אוהבת, אוהב

Spread the pictures that you have prepared on the floor. (Note: Except for the new words about the family members, it is preferable to use cognates, such as banana or baseball. This avoids burdening the children with new vocabulary words that are not necessary for the lesson topic).

Pick up one picture from the floor and say, "אני אוהב/ת _____" Make sure that you demonstrate dramatically the word "אוהב" or "אוהבת". Let the children follow your lead and pick up one picture from the floor, saying, "אני אוהב/ת _____". Make sure they understand the difference between *ohev* and *ohevet*.

Put the pictures back on the floor and say, "אני אוהב/ת ..." then demonstrate what you love in mime. The children should guess what you love. Try to get full sentences from them instead of one-word answers. Let the children follow you. Each one should say, "אני אוהב/ת ..." and then demonstrate what he or she loves in mime. The rest of the class will say, "הוא/היא אוהב/ת _____".

3) ?מי אוהב_____

Spread the cut-out pictures on the floor again. Ask the children, "מי אוהב _____?" and name one of the pictures on the floor. The children that raise their hands should say, "אני אוהב/ת _____" adding the name of the object. Then, let other children ask the question, "מי אוהב_____?" and gather answers from the rest of the class.

4) את, אתה, אני

Continue to play the game of "מי אוהב ___?" But now, after a student says, "אני אוהב/ת _____" the class should answer, "את/ה אוהב/ת_____". Make sure that the child understands the difference between אתה and את.

5) שבת, כל יום

Display the pictures of שבת and כל יום. Pick up one of the daily activities and say, "כל יום אני _____". Then pick up a Shabbat picture and say, "בשבת אני אוהבת ל...". Display the signs of כל יום and שבת. Ask the children, "מה עושים בשבת?" The children will have to divide the pictures between Shabbat and daily activities.

Stage II: Reading

1) Read the song to the children.

2) Give the children the signs with the new vocabulary words. Ask them to raise their sign if they hear the word that is written on it and read the song again.

3) Give the children a paper with the text. If possible, try to decorate the text with Shabbat symbols.

4) Ask the children to take turns and read the song.

5) Ask the children to find the new vocabulary words in the text: "איפה שבת?", "איפה אמא?"

6) Play the song to them and teach them how to sing it.

75

Stage III: Postreading

In this section, each teacher can design his or her own creative activities, as long as Hebrew is the only language spoken in class. The following are my suggestions:

1) Ask their children to create their own family tree and share it in class. Emphasis should be given to the variety of families we see in our contemporary society.

2) A group of children can create a dance to the music.

3) The class can create a different song based on the structure of "למה לא כל יום שבת?"

4) Children can create a short Shabbat play that describes what they do on Shabbat.

5) The song can be incorporated into the Kabbalat Shabbat service in school.

Stage IV: Assessment

Ask children to interview another student and ask in Hebrew for the names of that child's family members.

Unit Two: לדוד משה היתה חוה

This unit is centered around the song, לדוד משה היתה חוה, and uses it as a vehicle to teach the vocabulary of farm animals as well as the verbs "חיה" and "היתה." The song is actually a translation of the English-language children's song, "Old McDonald Had a Farm." But since it was translated long ago and it is now one of the most popular children's songs in Israel, it can be treated as authentic material.

לדוד משה היתה חוה

לדוד משה היתה חוה - איה איה או

ובחוה חיתה פרת - איה איה או

והפרה מו מו, היא כל היום מו מו

לדוד משה היתח חוה - איח איח או

76

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

ובתוח חיתה כבשה - איה איה או

והכבשה מה מה, והפרה מו מו

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

ובחווה היה תרנגול - איה איה או

התרנגול קו קו רי קו, הוא כל היום קו קו רי קו

והכבשה מה מה, והפרה מו מו

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

לדוד משה היתה חוח - איה איח או

ובחווה היתה סוסה - איה איה או

והסוסה אי אי, כל היום אי אי

והתרנגול קו קו רי קו, והכבשה מה מה והפרה מו מו

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

ובחווה חיה שפן - איה איה או

והשפן סח סה, הוא כל היום סה סח

והסוסה אי אי, והתרנגול קו קו רי קו

והכבשה מה מה, והפרה מו מו

לדוד משה היתה חווה - איה איה או

Unit Vocabulary:

Nouns	Verbs
חווה	היה/היתה
פרה	

77

כבשה

תרנגול

סוסה

שפן

Note: The word, שפן, in Hebrew refers to guinea pigs, but most native speakers use the word to refer to rabbits. I have decided to adopt this "mistake" because it is so common.

Things that need to be prepared in advance:

1) Prepare or buy masks made out of cardboard, or any other material, of a cow, sheep, rooster, horse and a rabbit. The total number of masks should correspond to the number of children in the class.

2) Get a toy model of a farm. Make sure that it includes all of the animals mentioned above.

3) Get an audio cassette or a CD with the recording of the song.

4) Prepare an "album" for each student by folding 8-1/2 by 11 paper in half, and writing the word, אלבום, on the cover.

5) Prepare cut-out pictures of each of the farm animals in the song. There should be a set of five pictures of each animal for each student.

6) Get a piece of cloth.

Stage I: Prereading

1. חוה

Display the toy farm model in front of the class and say, "חוה" Write the word חוה on the board, and ask the class to repeat it. Then ask, "מה יש בחוה?" and pick up one of the

animals. Say the animal's name, then write it on the board and ask the class to repeat it.

2) חוה

Mark a big circle in the room with chalk or tape, and tell the children that the circle is the חוה. When you call, "ילדים, ילדים," the children should walk around the circle. But when you say, "חוה, חוה," the children should enter the circle and pretend to be the farm animal of their choice.

3) פרה, סוסה, תרנגול, כבשה, שפן

Each child will get an animal mask and imitate the animals's voice and way of walking. The other children will say what animal it is.

4) פרה, סוסה, תרנגול, שפן, כבשה

Call out the name of an animal, and the children will imitate that animal. For instance, the teacher will say "פרה," and the children should start "chewing grass" and mooing.

5) היה, היתה.

Show the children the toy farm again. Point to each item and say, "יש לי..." adding the names of the animals and objects. "יש לי חוה, יש לי כבשה" and so forth. Then, cover the farm with a piece of cloth, and take away one of the animals. Let the children observe again and say, "חיה/חיתה לי _____" and indicate the name of the missing animal. Repeat the exercise several times using different animals. The teacher can also choose to take away more than one animal at a time. Let the children take away animals too. The rest of the class can say, "חיה לו _____," or "היתה לה _____" after they observe which animal is missing.

Stage II: Reading

1) Read the song to the class.

2) Read the song again, asking the children to make the noises of the animals every time their names are mentioned.

3) Give the children a sheet with the text of the song. Try to have the paper decorated with the animals' pictures.

4) Ask the children to take turns and read the song.

5) Ask the children to find the new vocabulary words in the text.

6) Play the song for them and teach them how to sing it.

Stage III: Postreading

1) Divide the class into pairs that should sit opposite each other. Each child will get an "album" and five randomly chosen cut-out pictures. The goal of the game is to get all five pictures: a cow, sheep, rooster, horse and rabbit. In order to do this, one child should say to his partner, "היה / היתה לי_____" and indicate the animal that he needs. If the partner has the animal, she has to give it away. Then, she can say, "_____ היה / היתה לי" and try to get the animal that she needs in order to create the complete set of five animals.

2) Have a group of children choreograph a dance to the song.

3) The class can create a puppet show of a day on the farm. The puppets can be made out of brown paper bags.

4) The children can create a new song based on "לדוד משה היתה חווה." They can change the name and the place as well as the animals. For instance, it might be, "לדוד יצחק היתה חנות". After they have completed the song, they can sign and role-play it.

Create a worksheet with pictures of each of the animals and some of their names in Hebrew. Ask the students to write the name of the animal next to the picture or draw the animal next to its name.

Unit Three: לאווירון

This unit is based on the song לאווירון by Hinga Smiler. The song will be used to introduce a group of words connected with the sky, as well as verbs in the future tense. This unit is more difficult than the others. It presents more verbs than nouns, and they are all in the future tense.

לאווירון

רד אלינו, אווירון!

קח אותנו למרום!

נתרומם מעל הרים

ונהיה כצפורים.

נעלה לכוכבים,

נרחף בין עננים,

ונבוא להתארח

בביתו של חירח.

לשמיים יד נושיט,

כוכבים משם נוריד,

מבריקים ורועדים,

מתנות לילדים.

Unit Vocabulary:

Nouns	Verbs
אוירון	נעלה
חרים	נרחף
צפורים	נבוא
כוכבים	נושיט
עננים	נוריד
ירח	
שמיים	
מתנות	

Things that need to be prepared in advance:

1) Create a "magic box" -- a box with an opening or sleeve leading inside.

2) Get pictures or little toy figures of an airplane, mountains, birds, starts, clouds, the moon, sky and presents. Put the objects in the "magic box."

3) Get large pictures of all the new vocabulary words and hang them around the classroom.

4) Create airplane wings from Styrofoam

5) Create a big "moon," "clouds" and many stars from cardboard and attach them to the classroom walls with tape. The stars and the clouds should be located in two separate areas.

6) Create a sign that says:

טיול באוירון

1. נעלה לשמיים

2. נרחף בין עננים

82

3. נבוא לירח

4. נשיט יד לשמיים

5. נוריד כוכבים

The verbs should be written in a different color than the rest of the text.

<u>Stage I: Prereading</u>

1) New nouns

Hold the magic box in your hands and shake it. Announce to the class:
"יש לי קופסת קסם". Let each student pull one item out of the box. Pronounce the name of the item. Write it on the board, and ask the class to repeat it.

2) New nouns

Ask each student to look at the item that he or she picked and come up with a movement that describes it. For instance, the movement for כוכבים can be the opening and closing of the hands. The class then imitates the movement while repeating the word. After each word is associated with a movement, the teacher should be able to give a word and have the class repeat the word and perform the movement. Children may replace the teacher as the announcer. The teacher can also announce three or four words in a row. The class should then follow with the movements without getting confused.

3) New nouns

Show that pictures that have been hung around the room to the children. Ask them to walk to the picture that describes the word that you have chosen. For instance, if the teacher says "אוירון" the children should go to the picture of the airplane.

83

4) New verbs

Display the sign that says "טיול באוירון" to the class, and say:

"אנחנו יוצאים לטיול באוירון." Then, read each of the sentences and demonstrate them in mime. Read the sign again, and ask the children to repeat after you. Leave the sign hanging on the board, so that children can see it.

5. New verbs and nouns

Ask the children to stand in line. This line is the airplane. Two children in the middle of the line can hold the wings. The teacher is the pilot. Take the children for a trip in the classroom, visiting the moon, clouds and stars, while following the instructions on the sign and asking the children to repeat the sentences. When the plane gets to the stars, let the children take them off the wall. Let other children be the pilot.

6. New verbs

Divide the class into groups. Each group gets a verb. When the teacher says a verb, for instance, "אנחנו נשיט יד", the group should perform the correct movement.

Stage II: Reading

1) Read the text to the children.

2) Give the children the pictures and toys used in the magic box activity. Read the song again to them, and ask them to raise their picture or toy every time they hear its name.

3) Give the text of the song to the children. Read it again, and ask them to follow with their fingers.

4) Ask them to take turns and read the songs.

5) Ask them to find words from the new vocabulary in the text.

6) Play the song for them and teach them the song.

84

<u>Stage III: Postreading</u>

1) A group of two children can create a dance to the song.

2) Freeze Frame: Divide the children into groups. Give each group a sentence from the song, and ask them to create the scene described in the sentence and to pose for the camera. Take pictures of these scenes, and put them together with the sentence into a "story in pictures." Display in class.

3) Ask the children to create an alternative song or story that will describe a future plan, such as "טיול בחלל."

4) Ask the children to draw a picture based on a sentence in the song. Each child will share his or her drawing, and the class will need to find out what sentence it was.

5) Children can dress up as one of the things described in the song, such as a star or a cloud, and stand in front of the class and describe themselves. For example, "אני גדול/קטן, אני לבן/כחול" and so forth.

<u>Stage IV: Assessment</u>

Ask the students to create a picture of the sky. They can use various art methods, such as drawing, painting or creating a collage. Then, ask them to write the name of each item in their picture.

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