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Not Only in Hebrew: The Multilingual Mosaic of the Israeli Printing Press

*The article is dedicated to the memory
of Professor Joshua Aaron Fishman (1926–2015),
the founding father of the sociology of Jewish languages*

The sociology of language and the sociology of communication are well-established fields in Israeli social sciences. A number of meaningful books have been published on the history of the Israeli press,¹ though no comprehensive research has focused on the language-choice dimension of the development of Israeli media. Though a few studies of the press in foreign and community languages such as Russian,² Arabic,³ German,⁴ Yiddish, and Ladino⁵ have appeared, no systematic comparative research on the non-Hebrew Israeli media has been published so far.

The scholars who dedicate their research to the study of Israeli society usually emphasize the very important role the media plays for the Israeli population. However, they seem to underestimate the importance of the linguistic pluralism of Israeli mass media, paying very little attention to the fact that, because Israel is a nation of immi-

¹ See, among other publications: Dan Caspi, *Media Decentralization: The Case of Israel's Local Newspapers* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1986); Dan Caspi and Yehiel Limor, *The In/Outsiders: Mass Media in Israel* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999).

² See: Avraham Ben-Yaakov, "The Russian-Language Press in Israel," *Kesher* 24 (1998): 2–15 [in Hebrew]; Dan Caspi and Nelli Elias, "Being Here but Feeling There: The Russian Mass Media in Israel," *Israeli Sociology: A Journal for the Study of Israeli Society* 2, no. 2 (2000): 1–42 [in Hebrew]; Dan Caspi et al., "The Red, the White and the Blue. The Russian Media in Israel," *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 64, no. 6 (2002): 537–556; Nelli Elias, "The Roles of Mass Media in the Period of Crisis: The Case of the Immigrants from the CIS in Israel," *Israeli Sociology: A Journal for the Study of Israeli Society* 6, no. 2 (2005): 295–312 [in Hebrew].

³ See Atallah Mansour, "The Arab Press in Israel," *Kesher* 7 (1990): 71–77 [in Hebrew]; Salem Jubran, "The Arabic Press in Israel," *Kesher* 25 (1999): 83–87 [in Hebrew].

⁴ See Yoav Gelber, "The Campaign against the German Language Newspapers in Palestine," *Kesher* 4 (1988): 101–105 [in Hebrew].

⁵ See Berta Ares, "The Ladino Press in the Early Years of the State of Israel," *Kesher* 24 (1998): 28–33 [in Hebrew].

grants, and because its Arab citizens constitute about 20% of the population, the country's newspapers and magazines see the light of the day not only in Hebrew, but also in Arabic, English, Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, French, German, Amharic, and other languages. Those scholars who analyzed Israeli language policy and practice⁶ did not even include in their studies a single chapter dealing with an analysis of the press appearing in various languages. A relatively high number of publications about the Israeli mass-media in Russian, published during recent years,⁷ adds to the mosaic, but cannot fill the gap, which is too wide: periodicals in other languages should be taken into account as well. The goal of the current paper is thus to create a "bridge" between the sociology of language and the sociology of communication through the study of the development of the printing press in various languages in Israel.

For decades, Israeli education policy followed a "melting-pot" approach. The goal was for all citizens to become "Israelis" as soon as possible, at the expense of their home culture and language. This policy was in keeping with the general policy of the "ingathering of the exiles" and the consolidation of the Jewish people, aimed at the eradication of the negative connotations of the Jewish Diaspora, which culminated in the Holocaust. The dominant culture in Israel emphasized the imperative of building an integrated and culturally-homogeneous nation; *Hebrew*, the revived national language, was to be the matrix for the new setting. Among veteran European groups, this linguistic transformation was pursued by the persistent attrition of the languages of origin, a process that began even before Hebrew was fully mastered. While it is debatable whether the melting-pot approach responded to Jewish needs (particularly because questions arise about how to maintain Jewish cultural traditions within Israel as the country matures), it is undoubtedly not applicable to the needs of Israeli Arabs.

The first Hebrew newspapers in Palestine/Eretz-Israel commenced publication in the latter half of the 19th century, during the Ottoman era. Over the years, there were several Hebrew dailies that have not survived to the present; among these the most prominent were *Davar* (*The Word*) later – *Davar Rishon* (*The First Word*), closed in 1996, which was established in 1925 by the Trade Unions and edited (until his death in 1944) by famous Zionist leader and publicist Berl Katzenelson; *Mishmar* (*The Guard*),

⁶ The most important books on the subject are: Bernard Spolsky and Robert Cooper, *The Languages of Jerusalem* (Oxford: Clarendon / Oxford University Press, 1991); Eliezer Ben-Rafael, *Language, Identity, and Social Division: The Case of Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon / Oxford University Press, 1994); Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Elite Olshtain, eds., *Language and Society*, special issue of *Israel Social Science Research*, 9, no. 1–2 (1994); Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel. Policy, Ideology and Practice* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999); Ron Kuzar, *Hebrew and Zionism. A Discourse Analytic Cultural Study* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001).

⁷ See Nelly Elias and Dan Caspi, "From *Pravda* to *Vesty*: The Russian Media Renaissance in Israel," in *Every Seventh Israeli: Patterns of Social and Cultural Integration of the Russian-Speaking Immigrants*, ed. Alek D. Epstein and Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2007), 175–198; Nelly Elias, "Russian-speaking Immigrants and their Media: Still Together?" *Israel Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2011): 73–89; Nelly Elias, "Between Russianness, Jewishness and Israeliness: Identity patterns and media uses of the FSU immigrants in Israel," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 4, no. 1 (2011): 93–102.

later *Al Ha'Mishmar (On Guard)* – the official organ of the socialist MAPAM party, established in 1943 and closed in 1995; *Hadashot (News)* – a popular tabloid, established in 1984 and closed in 1993; and *Ha'Zofe (The Observer)*, issued by the religious Zionist movement from 1938 till 2007.

Among the nine Israeli dailies which appear in Hebrew today, four were founded before 1950: *Ha'Aretz (The Country)* – the country's first and most prestigious newspaper, established in 1918 as *Hadashot Me-ha'Aretz Ha'Kdasha (News of the Holy Land)*; *Yedioth Aharonot (The Latest News)* – for years, the most popular Hebrew daily, established in 1939; *Maariv (Evening)* – the second most popular Hebrew daily of general interest, established in 1948; and *Ha'Modia (The Announcer)* – the official organ of the Ultra-Orthodox *Agudat Israel* movement, established in 1949. Two additional dailies appeared in the mid-1980s: *Globes (The Globe)* – the Israeli analogue of the *Financial Times* (established in 1983) and *Yated Neeman (Loyal Stake)* – the official organ of the Ultra-Orthodox *Degel Ha'Tora* movement, established in 1985. At the end of the 20th century the total weekday circulation of Hebrew dailies exceeded 520,000 copies.⁸ In the time of the Internet, the decline of printed media is a global phenomenon, so trends occurring in Israel are quite similar to those in other highly developed countries. However, three additional daily newspapers in Hebrew have been established in Israel during the last decade: *Israel Hayom (Israel Today)* and *Israel Post* in 2007 (both are distributed free of charge) and the Ultra-Orthodox newspaper *Ha'Mevasser* – in 2009. Most of these newspapers have their own Web-sites, though in some cases they are quite similar to the printed editions, whereas in other ones operate as almost separate quasi independent media. In addition, there are dozens of weeklies, monthlies and other less frequently published Hebrew periodicals.

In Israel, there are two main newspapers that dominate the market: *Israel Hayom*, in terms of circulation, and *Yedioth Aharonot*, in terms of revenues and circulation. There are few other major newspapers but they are much smaller. Despite being one of the youngest periodicals, *Israel Hayom* is Israel's most widespread newspaper since 2010. According to the survey published by the TGI market research company at the end of July 2014, *Israel Hayom* has a 39.89 exposure rate, maintaining its position as the most read daily newspaper in Israel for the fourth year in a row. *Israel Hayom's* owner Sheldon Adelson clearly stands behind Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while *Yedioth Aharonot's* owner Arnon Mozes explicitly supports his political rivals.

Immediately after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Arabic was recognized as the second official language. Several sub-groups of the Arab minority, Moslems, Christians and Druze, live in Israel as its citizens. Most of them reside in villages and towns that are populated by Arabs only; even in mixed cities (such as Jerusalem, Nazareth, Jaffa, etc.), Jews and Arabs inhabit separate neighborhoods. With very few exceptions, Arab and Jewish schools de facto exist apart, partly because of residential separation and partly because of cultural differences.

⁸ See Caspi and Limor, *In/Outsiders*, 65.

As stated by Eliezer Ben-Rafael, “The Arabs themselves attach great importance to their allegiance to their language, and determinedly reject the majority’s tendency to underrate its importance.”⁹ Since the Arabic language is considered by many educated Arabs in Israel and abroad as the main bond of the Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism (as the Arabs are otherwise divided by boundaries, different religions, conflicting ideologies, and varying economic status), language has been increasingly listed among their demands for equality in the State of Israel.

The Arab press in Israel “combines the features of a community press and a local press.”¹⁰ The Arab press serves an ethnic community that maintains its distinct identity. To some extent, the Arab press also nurtures the Palestinian national identity, which many Arab residents seek to preserve. The basic issues that the Arab minority faces in the State of Israel – Palestinian identity, the struggle for equal rights, and receptivity to social change in a traditional society – have all left their mark on the development of the Arab press.¹¹

Between 1948 and 1968, only one Arabic daily, *Al’Yom*, established by the Labor Party and the Trade Unions, was published in Israel. It was replaced by a new daily, *Al’Anba*, which closed down in 1985. Since the 1990s the only Arab daily newspaper in Israel has been *Al’Ittihad (Unity)*, the organ of the Communist Party, originally established as a weekly in 1944 and based in Haifa. The paper was established in 1944 by Emile Habibi, Emile Toma and Fu’ad Nassar. Emile Habibi (1922–1996), who served in the Israeli parliament between 1951 and 1959, and again from 1961 until 1972, edited the newspaper until 1989. The list of the Arabic dailies also includes newspapers published in East Jerusalem and intended mainly for the Palestinian population of the West Bank, such as *Al’Kuds* (pro-Palestinian), *Al’Fajr*, *Al’Shaab* and *Al’Nahar*. A few Arabic weeklies and monthlies appear as well. The former include *Al’Sennara*, with the largest readership, *Al’Talia* (an Arab-oriented communist weekly), *Saut Al’Haj* (an Islamic fundamentalist weekly, published in East Jerusalem), *Kul Al’Arab*, and *Al’Bayadir Assiyasi*; among the latter are *Al’Usbu* and *Fosta* – East Jerusalem monthly magazines¹². As mentioned by Lehman-Wilzig and Schejter, “The Israeli-Arab press in general is highly unstable, given severe economic problems and stricter press censorship than that found among the Israeli-Jewish publications.”¹³

It is clearly impossible to account for Israeli multilingualism without focusing on the special role of the English language in the country. English is one of the four compulsory subjects for all forms of the high-school matriculation exams in Israel;

⁹ Eliezer Ben-Rafael, “A Sociological Paradigm of Bilingualism: English, French, Yiddish and Arabic in Israel,” *Israel Social Science Research* 9, no. 1–2 (1994): 193.

¹⁰ See Caspi and Limor, *In/Outsiders*, 103.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See Mustafa Kabha and Dan Caspi, *The Palestinian Arab In/Outsiders: Media and Conflict in Israel* (Middlesex: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011).

¹³ Sam Lehman-Wilzig and Amit Schejter, “Israel,” in *Mass Media in the Middle East*, ed. Yahya R. Kamalipour and Hamid Mowlana (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994), 112.

university students must satisfy an English-proficiency requirement in order to obtain their first degree; it is a requirement for a substantial proportion of jobs, this tendency increasing over time; it is a vehicle for international pop culture; and it is the language most likely to be used between an Israeli and someone from abroad, whether the foreigner is a supplier, a customer, a tourist, or a relative.

In a study of language attitudes among Jewish Israeli high-school students, Cooper and Seckbach, as well as Ben-Rafael, have found that socioeconomic status is a good predictor of the respondents' English proficiency.¹⁴ Students who are good in English are also good in other subjects; these achievements correlating with the social status of the family. Likewise, Ben-Rafael has found that in all ethnic groups of the Israeli society, the higher the SES is, the greater the probability of knowing English is. In the upper middle class, no language is really popular apart from English. In the words of Ben-Rafael, "English holds the top of the language status hierarchy."¹⁵ While it is the best-known language within each and every class, the mastery of English is clearly concentrated in higher classes. Knowledge of English is, in fact, the linguistic variable that best differentiates between social strata.

By the early 1970s, the effects of the English-based globalization process became obvious to the Israeli public, as well as the status attributed to this language and to competence in its use was growing. The teaching of English has moved from an earlier (pre-1960) focus on literature and culture to a stress on English as an international language of communication. Besides giving access to business, science, education, and travel, English is the language of some major Jewish diasporas (such as the one in the United States). The strengthening of the role of English in Israeli society has been sped up due to the fact that a large number of English-speaking immigrants arrived in Israel after 1968. As well as being the first immigrant groups whose language could compete with Hebrew in standing, they provided a stock of native speakers of the language, many of whom became English teachers.¹⁶ The high status of English, leading to an infusion of English words into the Hebrew language, is a result of and contributed to the Americanization of the Israeli society, a process that brought to Israel "the virtues of pragmatism, tolerance, and individualism,"¹⁷ but is often seen as a threat to the unique identity of Israel.¹⁸

¹⁴ See Robert Cooper and Fern Seckbach, "Economic Incentives for the Learning of a Language of Wider Communication," in *The Spread of English*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman, Robert L. Cooper, and Andrew W. Conrad (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1977), 212–219, as well as Ben-Rafael, *Language, Identity, and Social Division*, 124.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶ See Bernard Spolsky, "The Role of English as a Language of Maximum Access in Israeli Language Practices and Policies," *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 33 (1998): 377–398.

¹⁷ See Tom Segev, *Elvis in Jerusalem: Post-Zionism and the Americanization of Israel* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

¹⁸ See Uzi Rebhun and Chaim Waxman, "The 'Americanization' of Israel: A Demographic, Cultural and Political Evaluation," *Israel Studies* 5, no. 1 (2000): 65–91.

For several decades the *Jerusalem Post*, founded in 1932 as the *Palestine Post*, was the only daily English-language newspaper. Its first editor was Gershon Agron, who also served a term as Mayor of Jerusalem.¹⁹ “During the pre-state period, the newspaper was perceived as the organ of the Jewish community, but was also welcome on the desks of British Mandatory officials.”²⁰ After the establishment of the independent State of Israel, the *Jerusalem Post* assumed a dual mission, serving as a newspaper for new immigrants from the Anglophone countries and as a quasi-official publicity tool for the government. Besides serving the English-speaking residents of Israel, the *Jerusalem Post* continues to provide information on Israeli events to the diplomatic community in Israel and abroad, as well as to research institutes and to Jewish communities worldwide.

A 1988 attempt to establish a second English-language daily, *Nation*, was unsuccessful: the newspaper closed within a few months, suffered major financial losses. A second attempt to found another English-language daily newspaper proved much more successful: *Ha’Aretz*, an independent daily newspaper with a broadly liberal outlook on both domestic issues and international affairs, with a journalistic staff of some 330 reporters, writers and editors (among them some of Israel’s leading commentators and analysts), decided to publish an English version (together with the *International Herald Tribune*) in addition to the Hebrew one. It is worth mentioning that the Hebrew edition’s editor-in-chief from 2004 till 2008, David Landau (1947–2015), previously managed the English edition of the newspaper.

Until the early 1990s, the *Jerusalem Post* had a moderate leftist slant, but later, under new ownership, it took a hawkish stance in the area of national security, peace and the future of the territories in the West Bank and Gaza. As mentioned by Caspi and Limor, in the past “in its editorials and opinion pieces, the *Jerusalem Post* frequently expressed dovish views regarding the conflict with Arab countries, according it a certain popularity in the Palestinian community and arousing considerable criticism among readership sectors with a religious/nationalistic outlook.”²¹ After the transformation of *The Jerusalem Post* into a newspaper with an overtly right-wing orientation, the leftist niche was vacant, and later occupied by the English edition of *Ha’Aretz*. On June 9, 2011, the English Edition of *Israel Hayom* was launched as an online newsletter, published six days a week.

In addition to the daily newspapers, there exists a wide range of English journals in Israel. Apart from the *Jerusalem Report*, a bi-weekly news and analysis magazine, which commenced in 1990, most Israeli scientific and semi-scientific journals in the exact and the natural sciences, as well as in humanities, are published in English. The list of Israeli scientific and semi-scientific periodicals in English includes journal titles in almost all fields of knowledge, including Judaism, Jewish and Israeli history,

¹⁹ See Erwin Frenkel, *The Press and Politics in Israel. “The Jerusalem Post” from 1932 to the Present* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994), 1–5.

²⁰ See Caspi and Limor, *In/Outsiders*, 76.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

archeology, and arts.²² This situation is not unique, English has become world science's *lingua franca*.²³ English is the most dominant language in scientific communication and is de facto the official and working language in most international organizations.²⁴ Many authors consider the transformation of English into a new *lingua franca* as a threat to multilingualism and multiculturalism.²⁵

The promotion of Francophonie in Israel represents a rear guard cultural action against the creeping Americanization of Israeli society.²⁶ The Francophones in Israel may be grouped into seven categories. One of the oldest (though probably the smallest) is the indigenous group of Arabs trained in religious schools set up in Palestine by French and other Catholic missionaries mainly in the 19th century. Some of these Francophones live in Jerusalem and Jaffa, but the single largest cluster of Palestinian Francophones is found in Bethlehem in the Palestinian Authority. The second long-standing category includes the descendants of Jewish families who immigrated from East Europe and the Balkans (Romania, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria) before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and who settled in the Tiberias region. The third category encompasses Francophones of North African and Middle Eastern origin (especially Moroccan, but also Algerian, Tunisian, Egyptian, and Syrian). Their massive inflow in the 1950s and the early 1960s came to change the social and political landscape of the nation; Netanya, Ashdod, and Beersheva contain large clusters of these Middle Eastern Francophones. West European (French, Belgian, Swiss) Jews, the fourth category, are located mostly in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. More recently, the post-Cold War wave of immigrants from the former Soviet bloc (including Romania), newly dispersed throughout the country, included a cadre of intellectuals steeped in Francophone tradition (category five). Between 1989 and 2013, an average of 1,943 French immigrants arrived in Israel per year. In 2014 France for the first time since the founding of Israel was the leading source of immigration to the Jewish State, with more than seven thousand immigrants. It was the largest single-year movement of French Jews to Israel since the founding of the state (category six). A seventh category could cover those Israelis who, without any particular ethnic or familial ties to the Francophone world, have chosen to study the French language and thereby add the Francophonie to their personal repertoire of multilingualism.

The fact that the largest group of the Israeli Francophones emanates from an underprivileged socioeconomic class (North African Sephardim) has given rise to a par-

²² See Nina Kheimets and Alek Epstein, "Languages of Higher Education in Contemporary Israel," *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 37, no. 1 (2005): 55–70.

²³ See Ulrich Ammon, ed., *The Dominance of English as a Language of Science* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001).

²⁴ See David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁵ See a discussion and critical analysis of this thesis by Juliane House, "English as a Lingua Franca: A Threat to Multilingualism?" *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, no. 4 (2003): 556–578.

²⁶ See William Miles, "Minoritarian Francophonie – the Case of Israel, with Special Reference to the Palestinian Territories," *International Migration Review* 29, no. 4 (1995): 1023–1040.

adox. On the one hand, by its identification with a low socioeconomic status (SES), within wider Israeli society French carries with it unwelcome associations and connotations. On the other hand, Francophonie has managed to retain its image as a high status and high prestige cultural marker. As summarized by Ben-Rafael, “that the French language has been an identitional attribute of a low-class community has not diminished the prestige of French in privileged milieu and its status there as a desirable object of acquisition.”²⁷

The number of Israeli printed media published in the French language is very small. In November 1990, the *Jerusalem Post* began to issue a special edition in French. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Magnes Press publishes an academic journal in French entitled *Perspectives: Revue de l’Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem*, edited by Fernande Bartfeld, Professor Emeritus of French Language and Literature. In addition, the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA) offers 13 hours of French programs a week. All major French daily and weekly newspapers are available in Israel.²⁸ Besides, a number of Israeli French dailies have been shut down, such as *L’écho d’Israël* (existed between 1948 and 1958), *L’information d’Israël* (1957 to 1973) and *Le Journal d’Israël* (established in 1957, closed in 1985). There is no any daily newspaper in French in contemporary Israel, though due to a large number of immigrants quite a lot of commercial advertisements have been publishing translated into French in either Hebrew or English nationwide and local media.

The Soviet language policy successfully suppressed Yiddish and Hebrew. As a result, the contemporary cultural world of the Russian Jews has been conducted mostly in Russian. Shulamit Kopeliovich, who studies the current sociolinguistic trends among the Russian Jews in Israel, argues that the Post-Soviet immigrant intelligentsia in Israel not only intend to preserve the Russian language, but also desire to retain the cultural and linguistic values associated with it, even when they are expressed in Hebrew or English. Thus, the goal is to resist the process of globalization and distribution of mass culture.²⁹ To live a rich cultural life in the mother tongue does not mean to produce an artificial closed shell around a community in order to preserve everything as it was before the immigration. The vitality of the distinct cultural character lies in putting the authentic cultural values in relation with the new reality, enrichment through the communication with other cultures, and lively struggle for defending original world outlooks. Thus Israeli post-Soviet Jewish immigrants are striving to retain a multilingual identity: while they do appreciate Hebrew and the cultural values it conveys, they share a strong feeling that their own cultural-linguistic identity is of great value to them.³⁰ Be-

²⁷ Ben-Rafael, “Sociological Paradigm of Bilingualism,” 199.

²⁸ See Spolsky and Shohamy, *Languages of Israel*, 193.

²⁹ See Shulamit Kopeliovich, *Reversing Language Shift in the Immigrant Family. A Case Study of a Russian-speaking Community in Israel* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009).

³⁰ See Nina Kheimets and Alek Epstein, “Confronting the Languages of Statehood: Theoretical and Historical Frameworks for the Analysis of Multilingual Identity of the Russian Jewish Intelligentsia in Israel,” *Language Problems and Language Planning* 25, no. 2 (2001): 121–143.

sides, most immigrants are aware of the crucial importance of English in their professional career in the new country.

The Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA) runs a radio service in Russian. This channel, *Radio REKA*, was launched in May 1991 as the Immigrant Absorption Media Network. The original intention was to integrate all immigrant broadcasts in various languages, which had existed for many years, yet in practice most of the broadcasting time – over 12 hours per day – was dedicated to programs in Russian. By 1998 there were 107 different programs on *Radio REKA*. “The main goal of *Radio REKA* was to facilitate the adaptation and assimilation of immigrants in the new society, very much in accordance with the traditional ideal of the melting pot.”³¹ Another radio station – the right-oriented *Arutz Sheva (Channel 7)* – established a separate channel in Russian in 1991, openly attempting to win the Russian immigrants to its political camp. After the shut-down of *Arutz Sheva*, the private *Pervoie Radio (The First Station)* became the second most popular Israeli radio station in Russian. An Israeli TV channel called *Israel Plus*, broadcasting in Russian, has been operating since 2002.

The oldest Israeli newspaper in Russian – *Nasha Strana (Our Country)* – was established in 1968. At the end of the 1990s, the Russian-language print media in Israel included four dailies, nearly 60 weeklies and local papers, 43 monthlies and bi-monthlies, and 10 other periodicals.³² In recent years, three of the four dailies have been shut down (among them *Nasha Strana*), unable to compete with the electronic media (Israeli-Russian TV and radio channels, as well as various Internet sites). These changes converted *Vesti (News)*, established in 1992 by a team of renowned journalists led by former “Prisoner of Zion” Eduard Kuznetsov, to the leading Israeli newspaper in Russian. Alexander Goldstein (1957–2006), one of the brightest Israeli Russian-speaking intellectuals, edited *Vesti*’s weekly supplement. This newspaper is owned by *Yedioth Communications*, the strongest Israeli media corporation. As time passes, its similarity to the popular Hebrew daily *Yedioth Aharonot* increases. Since 2014 Danny Spektor serves as *Vesti*’s editor-in-chief, though his dependence on *Yedioth Aharonot*’s bosses should be taken into account. The second most popular Russian newspaper in Israel – *Novosti Nedeli (Newsweek)* – has been traditionally more oriented towards the Russian past than the Israeli future. Leonid Belotserkovsky has served as *Novosti Nedeli*’s editor-in-chief for more than a decade.

It is worth mentioning that prior to the beginning of the last wave of immigration in 1989, *Nasha Strana*, then published three times a week, was the only Russian newspaper in Israel. In addition, there were two weekly journals: *Krug (Circle)* and *Alef*, as well as a weekly newspaper, *Sputnik*. Almost all the newspapers (both dailies and weeklies) published in Israel in Russian today were established after 1989. Most of them, like *Vremia (Time)* or *Russkii Izrailitianin (Russian Israeli)*, did not succeed to survive until nowadays.

³¹ Caspi et al., “The Red, the White and the Blue,” 541–542.

³² *Ibid.*, 543.

There are other languages that should not be forgotten when analyzing Israeli multilingualism, as follows:

Yiddish and Ladino are the prototypical Jewish heritage languages of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews respectively. They serve vital functions in retaining the strength of Jewish tradition. In state secular and state religious schools, Yiddish has not become an important language, but in the ultra-orthodox schools it is generally used as the language of instruction, serving to maintain the isolated identity of this community. The only Israeli daily in Yiddish was *Letzte Neies*, established in 1949. Since 1994 *Letzte Neies* appears on a weekly basis.

Spanish is important both as the language of a significant number of immigrants and as one of the major languages of international communication. Like English, this language is essential both for the socio-cultural strength of an important group within the population and for the capacity of Israel to maintain connections with some large segments of the Jewish Diaspora. In addition, it helps build trade relations with the corresponding regions of the world.

Amharic is the principal language spoken by Ethiopian immigrants. There were several attempts to establish an Israeli newspaper in Amharic, but these initiatives were only partly successful.

Due to the significant number of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe (most of whom are Holocaust survivors), various newspapers were also established in Romanian (the oldest Israeli newspaper in Romanian is *Viata Noastra*, founded in 1950, another one, *Ultima Ora*, has been published since 1996), Hungarian (the only Israeli daily in Hungarian is *Uj Kelet*, established in 1948), Polish (the only Israeli daily in Polish is *Nowiny Kurier* established in 1958) and Bulgarian (*Far*, established in 1949, which began as a daily, later became a weekly, and closed down in the early 1990s). A list of Israeli dailies in German included *Yedioth Hadashot* (published from 1935 to 1973) and *Yedioth Hayom* (published from 1936 to 1965). *Israel-Nachrichten (Israeli News)*, established in 1937, until its last issue, appeared in the beginning of 2011, was the only newspaper in German published in Israel. Alice Schwarz-Gardos (1915–2007) edited it for more than thirty years, from 1975 until her death.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics' data (see Table 1), though the Hebrew print media market had grown from 267 titles in 1967 to 629 titles in 1997, a slight decrease in the proportion of these periodicals within Israeli print media was evident (from 62.4% in 1967 to 56% in 1997). It should be mentioned that 477 newspapers and periodicals (of 1,121, i.e., 42.6%) in Israel were published in languages other than Hebrew at the end of the 1990s. In 1967, only 80 Israeli newspapers and periodicals were published in languages other than Hebrew.

Not surprisingly, this growth, to a large extent, reflects English-based print media: the number of periodicals published in the English language increasing (from 36 in 1967 to 477 in 1997), and so did their proportion in Israeli print media (from 8% in 1967 to 25.8% in 1997). Thus the English print media market had been developing more rapidly than the Hebrew one: the number of English periodicals multiplied eightfold from 1967

till 1997, whereas the number of those published in Hebrew only doubled in the same period. One should not, however, immediately infer that periodicals published in languages other than English and Hebrew had been dying away. Although periodicals in English constituted more than a quarter of the total Israeli print media, the total number of periodicals published in languages other than Hebrew and English grew from 64 in 1967 to 188 thirty years later.

Table 1. Newspapers and periodicals published in Israel, by language

	Absolute numbers (<i>and Percentages</i>) by years				
	1967	1978	1985	1990	1997
TOTAL	428 (100)	706 (100)	911 (100)	895 (100)	1,121 (100)
Hebrew	267 (62.4)	447 (63.3)	612 (67.2)	483 (54.0)	629 (56.1)
Other languages	80 (18.7)	207 (29.3)	264 (29.0)	382 (42.7)	477 (42.6)
Thereof: English	36 (8.4)	79 (11.2)	130 (14.3)	204 (22.8)	289 (25.8)
Arabic	—	37 (5.2)	62 (6.8)	63 (7.0)	60 (5.4)
Russian	—	12 (1.7)	16 (1.8)	25 (2.8)	37 (3.3)
Yiddish	—	—	13 (1.4)	12 (1.3)	9 (0.8)
French	—	—	10 (1.1)	15 (1.7)	18 (1.6)
Spanish	—	—	9 (1.0)	19 (2.1)	22 (2.0)
Other	44 (10.3)	79 (11.2)	24 (2.6)	44 (4.9)	42 (3.7)
Bilingual	61 (14.3)	52 (7.4)	35 (3.8)	30 (3.3)	15 (1.3)

Calculated on the basis of: “Daily Newspapers and Periodicals Published in Israel, 1995,” *Current Briefings in Statistics* 4 (1998): table B, and *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 51 (2000), table 26.4.

To summarize, the English sector among Israeli newspapers and periodicals has been, undoubtedly, the most rapidly developing one, which explains its growing proportion in the country’s print media. This does not imply, however, that the other languages have not increased. The number of Hebrew titles has grown as well. Furthermore, apart from the Arabic newspapers and periodicals (the number of which has remained stable since 1985) and the Yiddish ones (whose number has been declining since the same year), the numbers of Israeli print media published in languages other than Hebrew and English have been growing, and their proportion in the Israeli print media market has either increased or remained stable. Unfortunately, during the last fifteen years the *Statistical Abstract of Israel* did not include any quantitative data regarding the linguistic diversity of local mass-media, and there is no alternative source of reliable information.

However, there exists detailed updated information about the books and brochures published in Israel in various languages (see Table 2). The dominance of Hebrew editions (6.140 of 7.221, i.e. 859) is self-evident, primarily due to financial and market reasons. One can find a lot of books in various languages, besides Hebrew, in

most Israeli bookshops, but the vast majority of them were published abroad because volumes in English, Russian, French and Arabic are issued worldwide. On the contrary, Israel is practically the only country in the world where hundreds of new books in Hebrew are published every month.

*Table 2. Books and Booklets Published in Israel
by Topic and Language of Publication, 2012*

	Hebrew	Hebrew and English	Hebrew and other languages	English	Russian	Arabic	Other languages and unknown	Total
TOTAL	6,140	212	91	348	159	187	84	7,221
Literature	1,027	10	8	24	78	51	16	1,214
Arts and folklore	115	117	13	10	5	—	6	266
General humanities and social sciences	250	3	2	40	4	14	1	314
Education	213	5	2	25	1	17	1	264
Language	22	4	8	—	—	1	—	35
Natural sciences, medicine and technology	109	—	—	6	1	3	1	120
The State of Israel and the Jewish people	671	16	18	101	21	64	34	925
Religious literature and Jewish thought	1,643	33	18	52	5	1	7	1,759
Leisure guides, cookbooks, travel and health guides	167	1	—	7	—	1	—	176
Biographies, autobiographies, correspondence	192	1	4	14	22	1	2	236
Encyclopedias, lexicons and catalogues	9	1	—	3	—	—	—	13
Miscellaneous	41	3	2	14	4	—	—	64
Unknown	904	15	14	46	14	15	12	1,020

Source: *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 65 (2014): 494.

The Israeli electronic media demonstrate a stronger tendency to linguistic diversity than the print media. TV channels in foreign languages have been accessible in Israel since 1994. Today, satellite and cable television networks include dozens of channels broadcasting in various languages. For example, the basic package offered to all subscribers

of “Hot” (the leading Israeli satellite TV network) includes channels in 12 different languages, among them Arabic, Russian, French, German, Italian, Turkish, Hungarian, Romanian, Spanish and even Hindu. Original films, shows and serials produced by Israeli cable networks are in most cases broadcast with Russian and/or Arabic subtitles.

At present, there are dozens of radio stations that legally operate on Israeli territory which broadcast in Hebrew, English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Russian, and Amharic; almost all these radio stations are also accessible via the Israel Broadcasting Authority’s website (<http://www.iba.org.il>).

Three conclusions seem to be most meaningful in this regard. First, after a century of Hebrew revitalization efforts this language is undoubtedly Israel’s most used and widespread language. Multilingualism within its Jewish population does not threaten the future of Israel as a unified society. Second, it has become a common claim that English is the only language in the world that benefits from globalization. However, analysis of the Israeli case leads to the opposite conclusion: the globalization seems to cause neither the total dominance of English nor the decline of various community languages. Third, despite the dominance of the “melting pot” approach, Israeli society has always been multicultural and multilingual, and during the last decades this fact has been recognized both by the state authorities and civil society institutions, which gave various languages legitimacy to co-exist side by side with Hebrew. This situation is likely to be preserved in future decades.