

# Language Problems & Language Planning

VOLUME 37, NUMBER 1

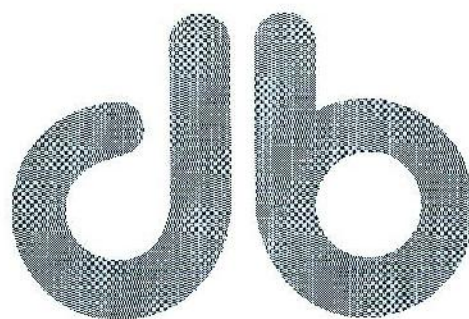
SPRING 2013

ISSN 0272-2690

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# Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew

## Fleeting fashion or persistent phenomenon?

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This article reports on the phenomenon of Arab authors in Israel writing in Hebrew. "Writing in Hebrew" refers to literary works originally written in Hebrew or translated from Arabic to Hebrew. The article examines the status of Arabic for Israeli Arabs, the scale of the phenomenon of writing in Hebrew, the bilingual literary works of Arab authors in Israel, and Israeli society's acceptance of Arab authors writing in Hebrew.

Some ten Arab novelists are currently writing in Hebrew in Israel, an apparently growing trend among Arab authors. The choice of these Arab authors to write in Hebrew is a conscious-aesthetic choice and a reflection of their natural gift for writing and mastery of Hebrew. The ten writers are: Anton Shammas, Naim Araidi, Sayed Kashua, Atallah Mansour, Jurays Tannūs, Muhammad Ghanaïm, Osama Abu-Ghosh, Odeh Basharat, Ayman Siksik, and Salman Natur.

**Keywords:** Hebrew literature, Israeli Arab writers, Hebrew language, cultural assimilation, translation

Minorities living under the rule of a majority are influenced by such external forces as culture, customs, and language. Examples of such influence are found throughout history, for example in Spanish society which came under Muslim Arab rule for centuries. Spanish was strongly influenced by Arabic and hundreds of Arabic words entered Spanish. Similarly, in Arab countries during the Ottoman era, Turkish elements entered the Arabic language (Dana 2000: 13). The same phenomenon is evident today in the Israeli Arab community, a minority community living alongside a Hebrew-speaking Jewish majority. The minority's proximity to the majority has resulted in clear influences in many areas, particularly language (many members of the Arab minority speak fluent Hebrew).

Almost all Israeli Arabs have some Hebrew proficiency, and the language is taught in Arab schools. For Israel's Arab citizens, Hebrew is the key to the dominant Jewish majority and most of its social, financial, and educational resources. It

is therefore essential for smoothing the daily lives of Israeli Arabs (Amara 2002: 86–101). The fact that it is a basic necessity has raised its status in Arab society.

Contact between Hebrew-speaking Arabs and Jews occurs in many different contexts, for example governmental offices, work, and recreational settings, such as restaurants. As a result, Arabic has borrowed many Hebrew words and even entire sentences. Israeli Arabs routinely use words like *beseder* 'okay', *aruts* 'TV channel', *mivtsa* 'sales discount', *kenyon* 'shopping mall', *matsil* 'lifeguard', and many others.<sup>1</sup> Still, not all Israeli Arabs speak Hebrew fluently, and fluency is not evenly distributed, depending rather on such factors as gender, age, locality, and frequency of contact with Jewish Israelis.<sup>2</sup> Arab males speak Hebrew better than Arab females since they are in touch with Jewish society more than Arab females, especially through work and in contact with government bureaucracies, and younger Arabs also speak better Hebrew than their elders (Amara 2002: 87). Young Arabs nowadays are more exposed to Hebrew because they use leisure and entertainment facilities in Jewish cities and read Hebrew publications, especially the press. This contact greatly improves their Hebrew fluency and increases adoption of Hebrew words and phrases in Arabic (Amara 2002: 87). As for locality, the closer an Arab person lives to Jewish centers, the more strongly he or she will be influenced by Hebrew. For example, Arabs living in the Negev and the "Triangle" speak more Hebrew than Galilee Arabs. Also, in mixed cities and neighborhoods Arabs and Jews share the same public services, which leads to routine contact between Arab and Jewish citizens, something which has improved Israeli Arabs' regard for Hebrew and elevated Hebrew's status. Another key factor responsible for the use of Hebrew among Israeli Arabs is that many work for Jewish businesses and most are employed by Hebrew-speaking Jews, encouraging them to study Hebrew. Hebrew is thus a significant factor in their lives, a lack of which makes it extremely difficult for them to achieve anything in Israeli society, and they would be unable to learn many of the things that demand fluent Hebrew. In the workplace, management and staff all speak Hebrew, customers speak Hebrew, tools and equipment have Hebrew names, and instructions for use are all in Hebrew. So, Arab employees have to know Hebrew to integrate at work and succeed (Amara and Kabaha 1996: 60–62; Marai 2002–2003: 133–136; Cohen 1968: 670). Hebrew is also relatively easy for them because Arabic and Hebrew belong to the same linguistic family. Furthermore, the fact that Hebrew and Arabic have many lexical elements in common helps Israeli Arabs to learn Hebrew quickly, sometimes simply from being spoken to (Dana 2000: 165–170).

Although Hebrew is the second most important language for Israeli Arabs, allowing communication with Israeli Jews in all areas of life, and although it acts as an agent of modernization, various sociolinguistic obstacles limit its convergence with Hebrew. Ben Rafael (1994: 176) points out that:

...the dual identity (Palestinian and Israeli) is reflected in the linguistic repertoire of Palestinians in Israel. The tension between the two identities, the Israeli and the Palestinian, has restricted their approach to Hebrew, the language of the dominant Jewish culture. In other words, the Arabs employ a strategy of linguistic integration. On the one hand, they try to connect with the wider social network which is shaped by the majority culture by learning to speak Hebrew well. On the other hand they maintain their identity by retaining their mother tongue.

Snir (1990: 248–253) gives a detailed analysis of efforts by Israel's majority culture to dominate the Israeli Arab minority following the establishment of the State of Israel, which the Palestinians call *Nakba* ('Tragedy') and which was a traumatic event for Israeli Arabs. The Israeli establishment attempted to install a system of re-education and reculturalization aimed at distancing local Arabs from their Palestinian heritage and integrating them into the life of the state<sup>3</sup> because nationalist inclinations within the Israeli Arab community were considered dangerous. Before he left Israel, the poet Mahmoud Darwish asserted that the premise of the Israeli establishment and public was that every Arab was both suspect and guilty.

The strategy of the Israeli establishment for achieving this goal was harsh and produced a strong negative reaction from the Arab community. For example, Michael Assaf, a Jewish Israeli Middle East expert, a key figure in the Arabist arm of the Israeli establishment in the 1950's, and the editor-in-chief of establishment journals such as the weekly *حقيقة الأمر* *Hakikat Alamr*, daily *اليوم* *Alyawm*, and the Arabic journal of the teachers union *صدى التربية* *Tsadai al Tarbiyah*, suggested that more hours of Hebrew study should be added to Arab elementary schools at the expense of Arabic. As a result of Michael Assaf became persona non grata in the Arab community (especially among the communists) and is often described as a disseminator of hatred, incitement, and bias against the Arab minority and as someone with a hostile attitude toward Arabs inside and outside Israel.

In contrast to Snir (1990: 248–253), who maintains that Israel's majority culture failed to dominate the minds of the Arab minority in Israel despite all its best efforts and a strong desire to do so, Amir (1992: 41) believes that the majority culture failed because it didn't try. If it wanted Arabs at all (by force of circumstance, not choice), at most it wished them to provide a picturesque, oriental flavor to the country, to be hardworking, law-abiding subjects, and, where possible, to be passive players in the party political game. And it clearly and openly preferred them to be Arabs "loyal to their nation and tradition, fighting perhaps for their rights" in the enlightened Israeli regime, but not as Israelis with all that this status implied.

The majority culture's efforts to achieve symmetry between the political hegemony and cultural hegemony and to assimilate the minority culture has goaded the minority into an intense national cultural activity that cannot compare to that of any other Palestinian community. This cultural debate is taking place under a

somewhat equivocal reciprocity: the Arab-Palestinian minority was the majority before Israel's establishment and can still maintain that it is the majority if the balance of Middle East power is considered. On the other hand, not only is the current Jewish majority a minority in a region which is entirely Arab, but its collective consciousness remains permeated with the memory of having been a minority during most of its history, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora. No wonder, then, that it continues to fall back on the characteristic patterns of a minority struggling for existence, and uses these patterns to mask its personality.<sup>4</sup>

### The bilingual literary activity of Israeli Arab authors

Many of the most highly regarded authors in the world today write their fiction, prose, or poetry in a language that isn't their mother tongue. For a number of them, the second language has been bound up with personal experiences of exile or colonialism. Some use one language for private or emotional expression and another for public, formal presentation. Others reflect on how the cultural and aesthetic possibilities of a second language offer options they could never have experienced in their first language. Most struggle with maintaining a coherent sense of self. Taken together, these reflections shed new light on the creative process and the complex ways identities are forged in the contemporary, globalized world.

An example of an author writing in a second language is Algerian novelist Asia Djebar, who set out specifically to write in French—the language of the French colonialists in Algeria. Djebar was impelled to write about the brutality of French colonialism and document the uprising of the Algerian people who bravely fought against the French enemy. She explains that when you write in the language of the other you make the other felt; the other becomes felt and seen (Djebar 2003: 19–27.)

Snir (1997: 141–153) provides an in-depth analysis of the question of Israeli Arab authors writing in Hebrew and the underlying reasons. He maintains that this phenomenon is linked to the wider narrative of majority-minority reciprocity and the impact of the balance of political power on the literary sphere. In terms of their background, bilingual Israeli Arab writers are part of the Israeli Arab minority culture that lives in Israel within the Israeli Jewish majority culture. Minority cultures generally adopt an oppositional stance toward the majority culture, and in the case of the Israeli Arabs, this was inflamed by the majority culture's attempt in the 1950's and up to 1965, to gain control of the minority culture. Taha (2006: 1–9) provides a lengthy description of the Israeli majority culture's attempts to dominate the minority culture, noting as follows:

After 1948, the Israeli leadership was faced with an Arab minority that was rooted in its homeland. Some termed this minority an historic danger and did all they could to exile it. Others sought to Hebraize the people and the land and succeeded with regard to the names of regions, springs, rivers, and certain villages and cities. For example "Wadi al-hawarath" became "Emek Hefer", the Aluja River became the "Yarkon", "Aka" became "Akko", Jaffa "Yaffo", Safad "Tzfat", and "Bisan" "Bet Shean". But they were unsuccessful in Hebraizing the Arab land and people. When Israel first assumed control of the Arab minority, it devised a plan to teach only Hebrew in Arab schools as a tool for Hebraization. However, this strategy failed, which led some Zionist intellectuals to look for alternative ways of achieving this goal. On May 25 Mapai loyalist Eliyahu Agassi published an article in the Hebrew newspaper *Davar* which called for Arab authors and poets in Israel to write in Hebrew. His calls were rejected and resented by Israeli Arabs. Later, Agassi revised his initial proposal and called on the Israeli Arabs to write Arabic in Hebrew letters, as Jewish authors and poets did during the Middle Ages — writing Hebrew using Arabic letters — but that proposal was also rejected, and in fact made Israeli Arabs even more determined to protect their language. In fact, all these plans to Hebraize Arabic did was incense the Arab minority, whose devotion to Arabic and determination to read and write it correctly became a national issue. Safeguarding Arabic against Hebraization became a matter of no less national importance than protecting Arab lands. Indeed, preserving the Arab language actually overtook safeguarding Arab land in importance. (Taha 2006: 1) [author's translation]

We can only try to understand the complex mental and cultural state of those lonely authors against the background of the dialectics of this complicated political and cultural debate. Unlike most of the minority community, and certainly the educated among them, these writers were not satisfied with using Hebrew for the purposes of practical communication, but went even further to produce literature in Hebrew. Snir (1992: 6) emphasizes that linguistic literary dualism is common in societies where a minority culture is crystallized alongside a majority culture as a consequence of political power relations. In Israel, however, the high status of Arabic in the cultural and religious tradition of the minority, which is predominantly Muslim, has tended to limit creativity in Hebrew to marginal groups only, in particular the Christians and Druze.<sup>5</sup> Such writing only assumed importance in the Hebrew literary domain in the 1980's with the work of Naim Araidi, a Druze, and Anton Shammas, a Christian.<sup>6</sup>

### **Shammas and Araidi — Authors who represent the Israeli Arab cultural elite**

Anton Shammas was born in 1950 in the village of Fassuta in Galilee. He is still renowned for his translation of Emile Habibi's work from Arabic to Hebrew, for

articles in the Israeli press, and especially for his first novel, *Arabesque* (1986), the most serious work of fiction written by an Israeli Arab. Not only was the original novel not written in Arabic, it was not even translated into Arabic even though its author is one of the foremost translators from Arabic to Hebrew (Margolin 1996: 18). The name *Arabesque* embodies the essence of the book in both content and style. Content-wise, there are shifts in time and place, while the thread of memory forming the book's leitmotif winds through it like a curling, colorful Arabesque pattern. Stylistically, the work is frequently adorned with Arabic influences on the author's Hebrew.

Naim Araidi, a Druze, was born in the Druze village of Marrar, where he still lives with his family. He has a Ph.D. in Hebrew literature and the topic of his dissertation was the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg. Araidi is a leading poet and the recipient of several prizes. Many of his poems, which are partly in Arabic and partly in Hebrew, have been translated into different languages and appear in poetry anthologies throughout Europe. His first novel was *Fatal Immersion* (2005, *Lexicon of Modern Hebrew Literature*, Jerusalem). Snir (1990: 258) cites Hever (1989: 193–196), who maintains that, while most local Arabic literature has remained outside the Hebrew literary canon, the past two decades have witnessed a slow process of penetration into the Hebrew canon, bringing it from the periphery of the minority culture into the majority culture's authoritative mainstream. The most important part of this process is the growing tradition of translation into Hebrew, topped by Arab authors' efforts to write in Hebrew, the majority language.<sup>7</sup> Hever characterizes this development as a dramatic moment in the cultural confrontation between the minority and the majority in which the dialectic of power relations has shifted. In order to realize the option of breaking into the canonic center, the minority has identified weaknesses in the majority culture and strikes at them in an attempt to force the majority's cultural apparatus to lend it legitimacy, gravity, and importance.

Kochavi (1999: 267) notes that Araidi and Shammas, along with such writers as Ghanaim, form the cultural elite of Israeli Arab culture. Shammas, Araidi, and Ghanaim also function *within* Hebrew majority culture, representing an important prestigious cultural stratum whose view is heard and whose members Jewish culture regards as authorities on Arab culture. Kochavi believes that if Shammas and Araidi did not occupy this position in *both* cultures it is doubtful whether any of the Israeli institutions or publishing houses would invite them to edit anthologies (Shammas is editor of *In Two Voices*) or magazines (Ghanaim is the editor of *Meeting* magazine, funded by the large trade union organization Histadrut) or allow them to publish anthologies of their own. Araidi has published his own anthology, *Soldiers of Water* (1988, Kibbutz Meuhad).

Snir (1997: 142–143) stresses that discussion of Arab authors who write in Hebrew does not focus on Araidi and Shammas for lack of other writers to focus on, but because only their work and presence in Hebrew literature has carried any weight since Israel's establishment, while the others, such as Atalla Mansour<sup>8</sup> (*In a New Light*, 1966, Tel Aviv, Karni Publishing), the first novel by an Arab author in Hebrew, have proved a passing phenomenon.

### Other Arab authors to attract media attention

Beside Shammas and Araidi, who have written in Hebrew since 2000 and attracted media attention, several other Arab writers have caught the eye of the Israeli media. One of them is Sayed Kashua<sup>9</sup> who received the Prime Minister's Prize for Hebrew Writers for his two novels *Dancing Arabs*<sup>10</sup> (2004, Ben Shemen, Keter Publishing) and *Let It Be Morning*<sup>11</sup> (2005, Lexicon of Modern Hebrew Literature, Jerusalem). These novels were translated into several languages and garnered considerable praise. The most recent novel written in Hebrew by an Arab author<sup>12</sup> is *In the Shade of the Jujube Tree — Pictures of my Neighborhood*, by Jurays Tannūs,<sup>13</sup> which was self-published in 2007, Nazareth.<sup>14</sup> Another noteworthy Arab writer is Salman Natur,<sup>15</sup> who published *Walking on the Wind — Conversations at Home*, which he wrote in Hebrew in 1992.

Araidi and Shammas' writing reflects the fact that they belong to two alienated cultures: Arab culture, where they were born and took their first steps in literature, and Hebrew culture, where at first they were thrown reluctantly, but which they came to prefer, for identifiable personal, aesthetic reasons. It is no wonder that their main work focuses on the demarcation between Hebrew and Arab literature. Both are acknowledged as remarkable translators. Their natural talents, sensitive intellects, articulateness, mastery of Hebrew, unique linguistic style, and modern techniques allow them to write fluidly in Hebrew, sometimes on a higher level than in their native language, Arabic.<sup>16</sup>

Snir (1997: 142–143) also notes that, whereas in their natural Arab milieu Araidi and Shammas are conspicuous for their conscious aesthetic affinity with Hebrew culture, in Hebrew literary circles they stand out not only as newcomers and foreigners, but chiefly as representatives of a minority with access to the circle of the majority. Almost the only reason they are accepted in Hebrew literary circles is because they fit into the slot which the Israeli cultural system allocates for minorities (as it does also in the political system). They therefore find themselves working inside a culture which, to put it mildly, does not see the minority culture as its top priority. Still, as writers working on the fringes of Palestinian literature, while trying to penetrate the canonic center of the majority culture, they mostly

address Jewish Israeli audiences and deal almost exclusively with the question of cultural identity. In addition, the penetration of such authors into Israeli culture is never planned and invariably involves single individuals with specific cultural preferences; it is only in retrospect that one can see the commonality between them. When we examine how Araidi and Shammass operate within Israeli culture, we see emerging two alternative models of the Palestinian minority representative active in Israeli culture.

### Israeli society's acceptance of Arab authors writing in Hebrew

Amir (1992: 40) disagrees with Snir and others who have reservations about Arabs being accepted as "Hebrew" authors, and see the work of authors like Shammass and Araidi as out of the ordinary and impermanent.<sup>17</sup> Amir dismisses the "alarm" shown by Snir, Oren, and others over Shammass and Araidi's acceptance as bona fide Hebrew writers: Snir's view is that only Jews can write Hebrew literature. Josef Oren<sup>18</sup> argues that Hebrew literature must have a "Jewish national" character; we surmise that this means that the only acceptable vision is a Zionist Jewish vision.<sup>19</sup>

Amir (1992, Tel Aviv:39) quotes Oren to the effect that it is dangerous to allow the identity of Jewish literature, which less than fifty years ago was Jewish Zionist literature, to become indistinct: according to Oren the problem with writers like Shammass and Araidi is that they are part of an "inexorable process" of mutual assimilation between "Jewish writers and writers with other national backgrounds," which, if it persists, will divest Hebrew literature of its Jewish-national character. In support of his doom laden prophecy and grim reading of the current process, he cites the fact that "most Israeli Jewish authors" have already stopped writing about the problem of national cultural continuity and that writing which embraces values, ideals, issues, and "authentic Jewish experiences" has again come to be seen simply as "old-fashioned, redundant, ethnic literature".

According to Amir (1992: 40), on the other hand, the fact that Arab authors write in Hebrew points clearly to the realization of the Canaanite vision. He maintains that it does not show Israel as a melting pot of nations but rather its evolution, over time and with the utmost simplicity, into a national, territorial, secular, democratic society. He goes on to argue that all nations and languages, all national cultures, all cultures of groups with some amount of territorial and linguistic uniqueness, irrespective of religion and race, and with almost no differences associated with ideology, are open to some extent to accepting the "other". The world of nations, especially in the modern world, is no place for a "nation that dwells alone," and in the end no cultures will reject "others" for reasons of religion, race, gender, or ideology.

Amir argues that the present generation is seeing a far-reaching process in which values are being revised and renewed — a process that is due to the acceptance of foreigners into the literary, artistic, musical, and intellectual circles of cultures such as those of Britain and France, which once had a monolithic national and linguistic uniqueness, and of course the United States. In the same way, Muslim Arab culture, whose value and achievements were admired by many, at least prior to the Ottoman Empire, only became what it was thanks to the strengths and skills of the cultures it occupied, oppressed, and digested. Without all these Aramaic, Persian, Greek, and Coptic speakers, the various ethnic groups and sects of the Iranian Zoroastrians and Eastern Christians from India to Ethiopia, as well as Jews and so-called barbarian cultures with their ancient traditions and various cultural appurtenances, there would be no written historic or cultural evidence of the camel riders who appeared from out of the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century under the banner of Islam.

Shammas and Araidi came through an Israeli education system that tried to teach Arabs to identify with the country's goals, even though the country's national ideology made them second-class citizens. Shammas (1986:212) recalls the humiliation of having to display the occupier's symbols. For example, on the school principal's orders, one of his teachers fashioned a giant Star of David from six wooden beams to impress the Jewish school inspector who came to assess the pupils' achievements after their first year in an Israeli state school. Snir (1992:7) maintains that Shammas and Araidi's work is driven by their sense of mission and by a profound belief that they can influence Israeli society. Back in the 1970's, Shammas talked about his younger colleagues who were "breaking through" the wall, beating the Hebrew language barrier, and trying to break into new spheres. The younger generation has the benefits of both worlds: its fluency in Hebrew puts it in touch with new experiences through both Hebrew literature and world literature translated into Hebrew; its knowledge of Arabic, on the other hand, puts it in touch with the newest achievements in modern Arabic literature. Kashua (2002:1) also talks about a new generation which has crossed the language barrier and is trying to make its way in other areas of life:

It is hard for Arabs to write in Hebrew. The problem is not the language but speaking to the Israeli reading public as an equal. Arab writers who write in Hebrew are very aware that they are addressing an Israeli audience. Moreover, it is quite rare to find Arabs who are experts in Israeli culture and know the right language to communicate with Jewish readers. I sincerely hope Israeli Palestinian citizens are not going to be extinct soon, and [if they remain] I am sure there will be a lot of good writers. I believe that repression gives rise to creation or at least the need to be creative. The problem is that Arab society tends to push its successful offspring into the free professions, and doesn't see art and literature as important yet. This

happens in minorities, which concentrate on professions that can help it survive. I believe the second or third generation of the Palestinian enlightenment in Israel will be creative and it will occupy the Israeli cultural platforms. If we continue to co-exist I feel sure we will play a similar role to the American blacks. As for me, I still dream of being the Arab Bill Cosby.

As authors who write in both languages, Araidi and Shammas have each more than once been seen as a steppenwolf, a lone wolf of the steppes, suffering a similar hell to those in whom two cultures and two belief systems intersect.<sup>20</sup> For example, since his earliest days as a writer, Shammas has felt that the path he pursues hides an important statement about his Arab-Palestinian identity. He explains that, although through lack of choice he decided to treat Hebrew as a stepmother-tongue, he feels that deep down it "is a form of cultural trespass for which I might be punished." Because of their identity crises and emotional schisms it is easy to understand their desire to act as a kind of bridge between cultures. This desire is merely latent in the case of the sophisticated Shammas, though there are allusions to it in, say, *Arabesque*, where Shammas shows us his childhood village; Araidi, on the other hand, misses no opportunity to stress that he represents a crossroads between two cultures. We see this emphasis not only bluntly in his collection of poetry *I Return to the Village*<sup>21</sup> (1986), but also in his dual critical and research preoccupation with both Arabic and Hebrew literature. According to Somekh (1993: 41–42) Shammas can handle extremely difficult translation tasks:

Shammas has attempted the impossible translation task of translating Habibi's rather complex works, especially the difficult and complex novel سرايا بنت الغول *Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter*. This is a difficult work because Emile Habibi is not the easiest author to translate since he does not use fusha, the standard modern literary language of our time, but instead writes in a very idiosyncratic style not found to this degree in many Arabic authors.

## Conclusion

The past two decades have seen a gradual process in which novels by Arab authors writing in Hebrew have broken into parts of the Hebrew canon, injecting themselves from the margins of the cultural minority into the cultural territory of the ruling majority. The bulk of this work is a growing body of translations of Arabic works into Hebrew, the culmination of which can be seen in the efforts of Arab authors to write originally in Hebrew, in other words in the majority language. To maximize their avenues into the canonical center, the minority identifies and attacks vulnerable spots in the majority culture, forcing the cultural mechanisms of the majority to give them legitimacy, weight, and importance.

Although it is relatively new to see Arab authors writing in Hebrew, the phenomenon is in no way temporary, or a passing fad. Quite the reverse: the number of Arab novelists writing in Hebrew is growing. Some authors prefer to write novels in Hebrew because they know the language so well and because their a unique way of expressing themselves in this language can sometimes outstrip their capacity to express themselves in their mother tongue, Arabic. In other words, their decision to write in Hebrew is a conscious aesthetic choice.

Given the growing number of Israeli Arab authors writing in Hebrew, it can be assumed that a new generation of such writers is growing up, which in future will conquer Israeli cultural platforms. Their emergence cannot be reconciled with the claim that they are a fairly rare feature of the Israeli cultural landscape, as Hever once maintained (1991: 24)

Many of the best-regarded authors today write their fiction, prose, or poetry in a second language. For some, the second language is linked to personal experiences of exile or colonialism. Some use one language for private or emotional expression and another for public, formal presentation. Others reflect on how the cultural and aesthetic possibilities of a second language present options they could never have experienced in their first language. Most struggle to maintain a coherent sense of self. Taken together, these reflections shed new light on the creative process and complex ways in which identities are forged in the contemporary, globalized world.

## Notes

\* This article is based on the author's PhD dissertation, written under the supervision of Dr. Tsvi Sadan (Tsuguya Sasaki). See Shakour 2010.

1. Amara (2003: 81–88) and Dana (1983: 47–49) discuss the linguistic merger “aldamji algawi” in spoken Arabic. This refers to the adoption of Hebrew words and sometimes full sentences in spoken Arabic — a known phenomenon among Israeli Arabs. An example is: **تافلت ليجا** *tavlat liga* “(football) league”.

2. Amara (1986: 3) points out that Arabic has also borrowed from English. The fact that science and technology developed in English explains why Arabic, like so many languages, borrows much of its science and technology terms from English. Israel's close relationship with the USA has also led to Israelis borrowing from English, which is subsequently absorbed into the Arabic spoken by Israeli Arabs.

3. The main argument advanced by policy shapers of the Hebrew studies curriculum was that Hebrew not only contributes to the financial development of the minority, it also encourages integration with the majority and reduces gaps between Israel's Arab and Jewish communities (Spolsky & Shohamy 1999: 108).

4. See Grossman 1992: 19 and Kial 2006: 15–16.
5. Since Arabic is the mother tongue, the language of religion, language of the Qur'an, language of science and scientists, and the language of history (Marai 2002–2003: 130).
6. See Shakour 2009.
7. It is noteworthy that Arab authors such as Anton Shammas, Muhammad Ghannam, and Salman Natur, whose formal education was via the Israeli education system, are clearly faithful to the original Hebrew text, which can be seen from the mixture of Hebrew used in their translations and the various inconsistencies in linguistic style. This approach, positioning Hebrew culture as the hegemonic culture, served to further distance the translations from the Arab audiences who refused to accept Israel's hegemonic status. It is no wonder therefore that two leading exponents of the policy of translating Hebrew works into Arabic, Shammas and Ghannam, ceased producing translations. Apparently this silence followed the acrid political censure drawn by their work from Arab sources both in and outside Israel and the discomfort that accompanied their efforts to mediate between the two alienated cultures (Kial 2005: 132; Shammas 1985: 18–19).
8. Mansour was born in Gush Halav, a village in Lower Galilee. He studied in Lebanon from 1946–1950. He made his way back to Israel in 1950 as an infiltrator and was only granted Israeli citizenship after ten years. On his return, he spent a year in Kibbutz Shaar HaAmakim where he began studying Hebrew. He worked as a youth instructor and then as a journalist for the magazine *Ha'Olam HaZeh* between 1954 and 1958. From 1958 to 1991, he wrote for the newspaper *Ha'aretz*. Mansour writes in Arabic, Hebrew, and English.
9. Sayed Kashua was born in Tira. His father was a bank clerk, his mother a teacher. He was the second child in a family of four. At the age of 15 he enrolled in the boarding school Jerusalem High School for Science and Arts, reputedly one of Israel's finest schools. On completing high school, he attended Hebrew University, studying philosophy and sociology. After graduation, he began writing for the newspaper *Kol Ha'ir* before becoming a television critic with his own personal column. His charming manner and insistence that he was not a "pet Arab" with a kind of synthetic Israeliness, and various statements he made, placed him and his editors in the "firing line" of Israeli patriotic nationalism, ironically drawing greater esteem for him from the journalistic world.
10. The book describes Kashua's traumatic meeting with the Jewish street. *Dancing Arabs* was high on the best seller list for eleven weeks and sold many copies abroad. It was translated into Italian, German, French, Dutch, and English.
11. In *Let it be Morning*, Kashua portrays the experiences of a young family moving back to the village where the parents were born. Moving back to the village is described as a disaster, the end of all hopes and dreams. The narrator reveals this the moment he arrives in the village, and begins describing his village in very depressing terms.
12. The novel *Zaitunia Streets* (2009, Tel Aviv, Am Oved Publishing) is not listed, as it was written in Arabic by Uda Bsharat, and later translated by the author with the help of Moshe Ron, but is not the sole work of the author, Uda Bsharat.
13. Jurays Ṭannūs was born in 1937. His parents were farmers from Majar village. Since 1956 he has lived in Acre. A senior teacher, for 48 years he was involved in the teaching of Hebrew

language and literature in Arab high schools. He graduated from Haifa University after studying Hebrew and Arabic language and literature. He writes poetry and prose in both languages and has authored three novels and two dictionaries in Arabic, and also two dictionaries focused on similarities and differences between Hebrew and Arabic — one Hebrew-Arabic and the other Arabic-Hebrew.

14. *In the Plum Shadow* is written from the perspective of a child of farmers, whose life largely fluctuates between one prank and another and the punishments that result. Between stealing figs and catching thrushes and releasing them, the abundant episodes of violence in the book — kicks from a big brother or a whipping from a teacher, almost in every page of the book — still have a certain pastoral character.

15. Natur was born in 1949 in Daliyat al-Carmel. He studied philosophy at Haifa University and Hebrew University and is an author, journalist, playwright, and lecturer in Arab philosophy and culture. He is director of the Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian and Israeli Studies in Haifa and editor of the journal *Israeli Issues*, published in Ramallah. Natur has written 25 books, including novels, short stories, critical articles, and documentary literature about Palestinian memory. Natur translated from Hebrew to Arabic David Grossman's novel *Yellow Wind* and *Conversation on Science and Values* by Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz.

16. Tannūs claims that he expresses himself better in Hebrew than in Arabic: "My Hebrew is far more rich than my Arabic.... Hebrew has several synonyms for every word. I felt freer." For Tannūs, writing in Hebrew is not just the product of long years of expertise and a love of the language. It is also ideological. Tannūs explains: "It is not just that I like writing in both languages as your esteemed Jewish medieval writers did. I would also like to contribute ... to sweeten a bitter pill. Many have contributed to this argument, but not to reconciliation." When Tannūs waves hello to his neighbor Ofra and she smiles back at him it is easy to become addicted to the feeling of coexistence that surrounds him. And Tannūs adds: "See how we live here together, this is not just coexistence: it's living together."

17. Poet Mahmoud Darwish (2004: 2–3) sees the question of Palestinians writing in Hebrew in a similar way. Darwish considers it a "fashion" and thinks it may be an attempt at cultural assimilation within Hebrew culture or perhaps even a revolt against the Israelis using their own language.

18. Yosef Oren is a veteran Israeli researcher, essayist, literary critic, and lecturer in contemporary Hebrew literature.

19. Amir argues that this implies that there is no place among us for non-Jews (especially those born in the country and raised in the Arabic language and culture). Not even the offerings and love of "loving step-sons," as Snir affectionately calls them, will be accepted.

20. Hesse 1971: 26.

21. The following lines are from Araidi's collection of poetry *I Return to the Village*, pp. 7–8:

I have returned to the village  
In which I first cried  
I have returned to the mountain  
Where the panorama is nature itself

And there is no place for a picture  
 I have returned to my stone-made home  
 The same stones my ancestors cut of rocks  
 I have returned to myself —  
 And this was the real intention.

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## תקציר

## השפעת הערבית על העברית של סופרים ערבים בישראל

מאמר זה דן בתופעת הכתיבה העברית של סופרים ערבים במדינת ישראל. הכוונה היא לספרות יפה שנכתבה במקור בשפה העברית או תורגמה מערבית לעברית. המאמר מכליל רקע על מעמד השפה העברית בקרב ערביי ישראל, מתייחס למימדי התופעה, לנסיבות היווצרותה, לפעילות הספרותית הדו לשונית של סופרים ערבים בישראל ולקבלתם של הסופרים הערבים הכותבים בשפה העברית בחברה הישראלית. נכון להיום יש עשרה סופרים ערבים הכותבים ספרות יפה בשפה העברית ונראה שתופעה זו הולכת ומתעצמת בקרב הסופרים הערבים במדינת ישראל. בחירת הלק מהסופרים הערבים לכתוב ספרות יפה בשפה העברית היא בחירה אסתטית מודעת המשקפת את הכישרון הטבעי שלהם ואת שליטתם בשפה זו. עשרת הסופרים הם: אנטון שמאס, נעים עראידי, סיד קשוע, עטאללה מנצור, ג'ייס טנוס, מחמד גנאים, אוסאמה אבו גוש, עודה בשאראת, אימן סיכסק וסלמאן נאטור.

## المبحث

## تأثير اللغة العربية على اللغة العبرية في أدب الكتاب العرب في إسرائيل

يبحث هذا المقال ظاهرة الكتابة بالعبرية عند بعض الكتاب العرب في إسرائيل. المقصود هو الكتابة الأدبية التي كتبت في الأصل باللغة العبرية أو ترجمت من العربية إلى العبرية. يحوي المقال خلفية عن مكانة اللغة العبرية بين مواطني إسرائيل العرب، يتطرق إلى أبعاد هذه الظاهرة، ظروف تطورها وإلى الكتابة ثنائية اللغة لدى الكتاب العرب في إسرائيل واستيعابهم في المجتمع الإسرائيلي. هنالك عشرة أدباء يكتبون باللغة العبرية، وكما يبدو فإن هذه الظاهرة آخذة بالتطور بين الأدباء العرب في إسرائيل. خيار بعض الأدباء العرب الكتابة باللغة العبرية جاء لأسباب تتعلق بجمالية وفنية النص الأدبي وطواعية اللغة وذلك بوعي تام يعكس موهبة طبيعية وقدرة على التعبير. أسماء الأدباء العرب العشرة هي كالتالي: أنطون شماس، نعيم عرايدي، سيد قشوع، عطا الله منصور، جريس طنوس، محمد غنايم، أسامة أبو غوش، عودة بشارت، أيمن مسكك وسلمان ناطور.

## Resumo

*Arabaj aŭtoroj en Israelo, kiuj verkas en la hebrea: Nur pasanta modo aŭ persista fenomeno?*

La artikolo raportas pri la fenomeno de arabaj aŭtoroj en Israelo, kiuj verkas en la hebrea lingvo. "Verki en la hebrea" aludas al literaturaj verkoj originale verkitaj en la hebrea aŭ tradukitaj el la araba en la hebrea. La artikolo ekzamenas la statuson de la araba inter israelaj araboj, la skalon de la fenomeno de verkado en la hebrea, la dulingvaj literaturajn verkojn de arabaj aŭtoroj en Israelo, kaj la akcepton fare de la israela socio de arabaj aŭtoroj kiuj verkas en la hebrea. Deko da arabaj romanistoj verkas en la hebrea en Israelo, anoj de kreskanta emo inter arabaj aŭtoroj. La elekto verki en la hebrea estas konscia estetika elekto kaj respegulas ilian naturan doton verki kaj majstri la hebrea. La dek verkistoj estas: Anton Shammās, Naim Arāidi, Sayed Kashua, Atallah Mansour, Jurays Tannūs, Muhammad Ghanaim, Osama Abu-Ghosh, Odeh Basharat, Ayman Siksik, kaj Salman Natur.

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