Spoken Israeli Hebrew Revisited: Structures and Variation

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1. Introduction

The language with which we are concerned in this contribution is also known by the names Contemporary Hebrew and Modern Hebrew, both somewhat problematic terms as they rely on the notion of an unambiguous periodization separating Classical or Biblical Hebrew from the present-day language. We follow instead the now widely-used label coined by Rosén (1955), Israeli Hebrew, to denote the link between the emergence of a Hebrew vernacular and the emergence of an Israeli national identity in Israel/Palestine in the early twentieth century.1 Israeli Hebrew is usually regarded as the only successful case of language revitalization. The established view in Israel itself is that a language based on Classical (Biblical) Hebrew has been ‘revived’. This ‘revival’ is often depicted as the initiative of a small group of idealist reformers in the late nineteenth century, led by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. They are credited with having used Classical Hebrew as the basis for the modern language while at the same time engaging in language planning activities centred mainly around vocabulary elaboration.

Recent studies tend to take a more differentiated approach to the issue of revitalization. It is firstly acknowledged that although Hebrew had ceased to exist as an everyday vernacular language around the first century CE, it was still widely used not just in reading, but also actively in writing, and moreover, as a lingua franca on those occasions on which Jews of different backgrounds had to communicate face-to-face (cf. e.g. Glinert 1993; Morag 1993; Kuzar 2001; Bar-Asher 2002). Many features of modern Hebrew usage therefore represent changes that accumulated over centuries.

What characterizes the evolution of Israeli Hebrew is the transformation of the language within a relatively short period of time into the everyday vernacular of a rapidly growing population, with a younger generation acquiring it natively from the 1920s onwards. The term ‘re-vernacularization’ (Izre’el 2002) therefore captures the nature of the process rather more accurately.

Moreover, it is now acknowledged that the emergence of Israeli Hebrew was not simply the product of an initiative and decisions taken by one person and his followers, but that a range of different factors had an impact on the process (see Nahir 1998). Hebrew reading traditions in Jewish communities influenced some features of the vernacular pronunciation and contributed to the phonological differences shaping the two so-called ‘ethnolects’ or ‘ethnic-sociolects’ – the Oriental or Mizrahi Hebrew vernacular, and the Western or Ashkenazi vernacular (Morag 1993). European substrate languages, especially Yiddish, were the native vernaculars of the first Jewish settlers in Palestine who institutionalized the use of vernacular Hebrew, and of subsequent waves of immigrants who ultimately constituted the mainstream establishment and provided the socio-political elite; substrate influence is usually identified in Israeli Hebrew morphosyntax (cf. Izre’el 2002) and especially lexical semantics (cf. Zuckermann 2003). A radical view that has found few supporters, but is widely cited due to its provocative attempt to exoticize Israeli Hebrew, is that the language is not Semitic at all, but in fact a relexified European (Slavic) substrate (see Wexler 1990).

It is clear that a unique set of circumstances shaped the emergence of vernacular Israeli Hebrew as the native language of the younger generations from the 1920s onwards: Unlike other cases of mass immigration, a rapid process of language learning took place without the existence of a native-speaker norm to which learners could accommodate. The role that early Israeli Hebrew played as a lingua franca especially during the peak immigration periods at the turn of the century, in the early to mid-1920s, and then again in the late 1930s, is therefore at least as crucial to its development as its ideological promotion by the political and cultural elite (cf. Nahir 1998). Moreover, a young generation of speakers adopted Hebrew as their primary language having no parental model, nor an obvious peer-group model – a process reminiscent to some extent of creolization (Izre’el 2002: 218). This state of affairs

2 Wexler’s classification of Israeli Hebrew as non-Semitic may create a caricature of the establishment view on ‘revitalization’, but it fails every conventional test of genetic affiliation (see Comrie 1991).
continued well into the immigration waves of the early 1950s, by which time Hebrew was already well-established as the principal vernacular language of Israeli society.

The generation born in the 1960s still had grandparents who were almost exclusively non-native speakers, and parents and schoolteachers among whom many — often as many as 50% or more — were not native speakers, either. This of course is a principal factor contributing to the insecurity felt by the younger generation of native speakers in respect of language usage and the separation of formal and colloquial forms. The absence of vowels as well as of other diacritics, such as those indicating the plosive/spirant contrast in the letters \( b/v, p/f, k/x \), in normal everyday writing (diacritics tend to be omitted in all texts except children’s books, some poetry editions and religious scriptures) allows speakers to maintain proficiency in the formal written style without acquiring the formal pronunciation. This specific feature of the Hebrew writing system means that literacy does not necessarily help speakers resolve common ambiguities between formal and colloquial forms, as in cases like "makir/mekir ‘knows’, mirpaă/marpeă ‘clinic’, or kibēs/xibēs ‘he washed laundry’. Despite the existence in principle of a normative standard, propagated by the education system and partly by the media and the political and cultural elite, SIH is still characterized not just by the transfer of substrate patterns, but also by a massive drive toward internal change and paradigm levelling (cf. Bar-Adon 1971; Ravid 1995; Bolotzy 1999 and 2002; Shatil 2003).

The field of Israeli Hebrew linguistics has been developing in the shadow of a strong prescriptivist tradition in institutions such as the Hebrew Language Academy, the mainstream public media, the school system and the enormous establishment entrusted with teaching Hebrew as a foreign language. This attitude is also self-imposed by academic circles and Hebrew language departments. For many years, the academic study of Hebrew was seen in Israel as synonymous with educational measures aimed at safeguarding "correct" pronunciation, grammar and style, i.e. with the activity domain that is referred to as "hanxalat ha-lašôn, quite literally translatable as ‘language propagation’. One of the best examples of popular language education policy is "rēga šel ivrit ‘A moment of Hebrew’, a brief (one to five minute) radio programme which is broadcast several times a day, and which aims at correcting popular usage by pointing out widespread ‘errors’ and providing the formal, norm-oriented alternatives.
Descriptive approaches to IH usage are largely based on written corpora, albeit of a rather informal nature, or on scripted corpora such as the language of broadcasting (e.g. Kuzar 1992; Tobin 1989 and 1991).\(^3\) Nevertheless, a growing body of literature is devoted to the particular features of Spoken Israeli Hebrew, most of it based on casual observation of individual phenomena (e.g. Bolozy 1999, 2002), or on experimental elicitation (e.g. Ravid 1995). Investigations based on transcriptions of oral discourse are rare, and tend to rely on just a small selection of discourse excerpts exemplifying a particular phenomenon under investigation (cf. Maschler’s 2002 study of discourse markers).

Our aim in this paper is to pilot a corpus-based overall characterization of SIH.\(^4\) Since SIH is multi-layered and stratified, we focus on the vernacular of a small sample of speakers representing a particular subsection of Israeli society. The corpus consists of so-called spontaneous interviews with 40 speakers, containing mainly biographical narratives and reports. The speakers are males and females between the ages of 20–25, of working-class background, with no higher education. They were all born and raised in Israel, and use Hebrew with their parents, siblings and peers, and describe it as their native language and in many of the cases as their only language. The speakers are of different immigration (so-called ‘ethnic’) backgrounds: 25 are Mizrahi on both sides, with parents, or usually grandparents, originating from Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East; 4 are Ashkenazi, with both parental sides of European background; and 11 have mixed background. All are residents of largely working-class towns surrounding the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (Rosh HaAyin, Bat Yam, Holon, Rishon Le-Zion, Lod, Rehovot, Kiryat Ekron, Yahud and Gedera). They are employed in a variety of unskilled or semi-skilled service occupations (including grocer, carpenter, locksmith, electrician, salesperson, caretaker, beautician, waitress and secretary), or unemployed. Recording sessions lasted between 10–50 minutes. The entire corpus covers some eight hours of recording, containing around 55,000 words.

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\(^3\) Work in formal syntax usually deals with isolated sentences and is not corpus-based, but relies on so-called ‘native speaker intuition’, which in the case of IH is a highly problematic notion; see below.

\(^4\) For a more elaborate discussion of some of the phenomena and a detailed discussion of the corpus see Schiff (2005).
2. Sociolinguistic variation in SIH

Variation within Israeli Hebrew is the product of several factors. School instruction is the principal source for the initial transmission of formal Hebrew as a written medium and as a subject of instruction. For many pupils, the only serious exposure to the detailed rules of formal pronunciation of certain derivation and inflection patterns is school instruction in preparation for Hebrew language examinations, which cover the correct choice and placement of diacritic symbols. The language of media is by contrast multi-layered, and exposure to the most formal styles is, for the majority of the public, merely passive. The Hebrew Language Academy remains a powerful initiator of new terminology; the spread of nativized computer terminology is one of its main successes during the past two decades. Language contact continues to play a role in Israel. While the historical immigrant languages, such as Yiddish, Aramaic or North African Arabic are in decline, English and Palestinian Arabic remain sources of borrowing. Internal language change also continues, the spread of innovations correlating with social stratification, age and access to education (see Ravid 1995).

Discussions of variation in Israeli Hebrew tend to agree on a division between what is often called the Oriental or Mizrahi ethnolect, and the General ethnolect shaped predominantly by population groups of Western (Ashkenazi) background (see Blanc 1968; Berman 1978; Devens 1980; Bentolila 1984; Cooper 1985; Morag 1993). It is important to note that the structural features captured by these terms do not overlap entirely with those of the respective (pre-verbal) Hebrew reading traditions. Both varieties employ what is, essentially, the Mizrahi tradition of vowel pronunciation — presence of /a, e, i, o, u/, absence of Ashkenazi /æ/ and diphthongs — and the Ashkenazi tradition of consonant pronunciation — absence of Mizrahi uvular /q/ and pharyngealized dentals /t, s/, but absence also of the Ashkenazi pronunciation /s/ of post-vocalic /u/. The differences in pronunciation that are said to divide contemporary speaker populations of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi backgrounds are found, rather, in a selection of features that are carried over from the respective reading traditions and possibly reinforced by the respective substrate languages. The Mizrahi pronunciation is characterized by the retention of the etymological

5 We use the Hebrew terms Mizrahi, which denotes populations of Middle Eastern and southern Mediterranean origin, and Ashkenazi, which refers to populations of European (and American) origin. Note that some studies use Sephardi instead of the first term.
pharyngeals /ɛ, ɪ/ and sometimes by the use of an apical /r/, both features that are absent in the Western/Ashkenazi variety (cf. Cooper 1985; cf. also Devens 1980), as well as by the tendency to avoid the diphthong /ey/ (not found in the substrate languages Arabic, Judezmo or Aramaic, but present in Yiddish). The General or Ashkenazi pronunciation by contrast lacks pharyngeals, has a diphthong /ey/, and employs a uvular /r/.

Speakers tend to be conscious of this ethnolectal division. There are nevertheless several reasons why it is misleading to assume that it is the principal sociolinguistic demarcation within Israeli Hebrew. It is true that on the one hand there is no formal-stylistic constraint on Mizrahi features, and individuals of Mizrahi background may in principle employ Mizrahi phonology across the entire continuum of styles and registers, including in the most formal settings. In this respect, Mizrahi features may be considered to be indicators of ethnic background and not of social background, nor stylistic markers. In fact, in the most formal kinds of speech, institutionalized prestige is often attributed to the use of pharyngeals as ‘archaic’ and ‘genuine’ features of Semitic phonology, and some radio broadcasters of Ashkenazi background even make an effort to articulate pharyngeals. On the other hand, Mizrahi pronunciation is often associated with the working class vernacular of certain urban neighbourhoods and of the so-called development towns, which grew out of North African and Middle Eastern immigrant settlements. Among speakers of working-class and Mizrahi background, assimilation into the westernized middle class is often accompanied by abandoning Mizrahi pronunciation features. The Ashkenazi variety is thus seen as more prestigious by many speakers. With increasing intermarriage, social and geographical mobility and advanced blurring of immigration backgrounds, the Ashkenazi variety is acquired and used by speakers of various backgrounds. It is therefore regarded as the more ‘General’ form of speech, and it is for this reason that it is referred to by some researchers as the ‘General colloquial’. Finally, even for speakers of Ashkenazi background the use of pharyngeals may be a stylistic marker representing contexts of friction with the middle-class establishment, as in the case of some forms of teenager slang and military slang. Ethnolectal features may thus interact with the continuum of styles/registers, figuring as markers of styles or as indicators of social identity.

A model of variation within Spoken Israeli Hebrew must take all these dimensions — the ethnolectal, the sociolectal and the stylistic — into account. Glinert (1989: 4) speaks of a continuum of varieties characterized by a series of ‘norms’ relating to formal and casual settings, and the activities of writing and speaking (‘Formal

writing’, ‘speech’), and lexico-styles/registers of use. We refer to this model as the four level model of language.

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writing’ > ‘Formal writing or speech’ > ‘Casual writing or speech’ > ‘Casual speech’). Each variety is characterized by the clustering of certain morpho-syntactic and lexical choices. We agree in principle with Glinert’s depiction of a continuum of styles/registers, but wish to elaborate somewhat on their overall character and context of use. We consider what we refer to here as levels or styles to be primarily points of reference on the stylistic continuum, rather than rigidly-defined registers. This means that their components are often renegotiated in a given conversational setting. The four levels are Formal (Normative) Israeli Hebrew, Educated Israeli Hebrew, General Colloquial Israeli Hebrew and Working Class Vernacular Israeli Hebrew.

Of the four points on the continuum, Formal (Normative) Israeli Hebrew is closest to Early Hebrew (pre-verbalization) in word formation and morphosyntax, as well as in vocabulary. It has loanwords primarily in the domain of technical, abstract and institutional vocabulary, but often shows nativevocabulary or loancalques where the more casual varieties rely on loans (cf. formal téker ‘puncture’ vs. casual pánčer, formal mexonít ‘car’ vs. casual ótò, formal macmèd ‘clutch’ vs. casual klač). It is primarily a formal written language, used for most forms of writing with the exception of personal notes and letters, informal literature and some forms of advertising. In speech it is used mainly when reading from texts, on ceremonial and official occasions and in highly-scripted broadcasting such as news bulletins. It is the officially recognized ‘Standard’ Hebrew and the subject matter of the Hebrew language curriculum.

Characteristic features of Formal IH include the retention of Sandhi rules applied to proclitic functional elements (prepositions and connectors) in some phonological environments: u-va-xúc [and-in.the-outer] ‘and outside’, he-xátíl ‘the cat’; retention of synthetic possessive markers in the form of enclitic person markers: beyt-ó [house.CONSTR-3SG.M] ‘his house’; application of the inherited pattern of suffixal stress to proper nouns, neologisms and loanwords: rexóvōt ‘Rehovot’ (name of a town), šmartáfím ‘babysitters’, šney kilogramim ‘two kilogrammes’; and the retention of demonstratives without definite articles: inyán ze [issue this] ‘this issue’.

As Educated Israeli Hebrew we define a speech level containing modified morphosyntax, some modified phonology and more extensive use of substrate and loan influences. Its usage contexts include mainly free (oral, non-scripted) institutional discourse, such as lectures, debates, formal media interviews, academic discourse and spontaneous speeches. Its principal features are the loss of Sandhi rules: ve-ba-xúc [and-in.the-outer]] ‘and outside’, ha-xátíl ‘the cat’; root stress in proper nouns, neologisms and loanwords: rexóvōt ‘Rehovot’ (name of a town), šmartáfím
‘babysitters’, šney kilagromim ‘two kilogrammes’; optional number neutralization with nouns expressing quantities: šney kilo ‘two kilograms’; the presence of analytical possessive constructions: ha-báyít šel-ó [the-house of-3SG.M] ‘his house’; use of demonstratives in conjunction with definite articles: ha-inyán ha-zé [the-issue the-this] ‘this issue’; the optional marking of the definite object of possession by the preposition et: yeš l-i (et) ha-séfer ha-zé [there is to-1SG ET the-book the-this.M] ‘I have this book’; diphthongization of /e/ in selected words, such as téyša ‘nine’ < téša; and occasional analogies mainly in the formation of certain nominals: e.g. the prominence of the pattern marpeá ‘clinic’ < mirpaá for locations (cf. Bolozky 1999: 137–8).

General Colloquial IH is the everyday casual and intimate speech of the largely western-origin or western-oriented middle-class sector and of most script-free popular broadcasting. Some popular writing might incorporate certain features that are typical of the colloquial. It is characterized by strongly modified word formation and morphosyntax, modified phonology, substrate and loan influences. Assimilation rules are completely neutralized and proclitics have only a single form: be-finim ‘inside’ (<bi-finim), be-tel-aviv ‘in Tel Aviv’ as well as be-herushalávim (<be-tel-aviv but bi-yerushalávim). The preposition et is obligatory with definite objects of possession. The definite article is often prefixed with compound nouns in the construct state: ha-oréx din ‘the lawyer’ < oréx ha-din. There is a tendency toward monophthongization of /ey/ in some words: ex ‘how’ < eyx. Analogical formations appear in a selection of verbal paradigms: e.g. makir ‘he knows’, alongside mékir (by analogy to inflection groups like mevin ‘understands’).

As Working Class (Mizrahi) Vernacular IH we define the variety used in everyday intimate speech of the largely (though not exclusively) Mizrahi-origin working class. It is also imitated to some degree in certain sector-specific discourse situations, e.g. the slang of adolescents, and provides the framework for the (largely lexically-defined) military slang. This is due mainly to its association with anti-establishment communicative contexts. In media this variety is present only in interviews with speakers. The Working Class Vernacular shows more radically modified word formation and morphosyntax, distinctive phonology and loans. It is often characterized by the use of Mizrahi ethnic indicators (pharyngeals), even by speakers of western origin, who thereby signal their adoption of a covert prestige form. Some characteristic features include the widespread reduction of syllables and words: šlo ‘his’ < šel-o [of-3SG.M]; the neutralization of gender agreement in numbers: šte kilo ‘two kilogrammes’; the avoidance of the diphthong /ey/: téša ‘nine’, ex ‘how’; and widespread agreement more.

Innovation is present if it is not borrowed from a different source, if it is continuous with older forms, or if it is used in the same contexts as an older form. However, rules could have a greater probability of obsolescence than words, as a general rule for conversation which is increasingly used in the media and, equally, for the time and place of registers.

The regression of Spoke IH is a gradual one. As we go from the 1940s to the 1980s, the variability of Spoke IH decreases, and as a result we can observe a spectrum of the regression of Spoke IH.

SIH stresses the thesis that the inflectional system of Spoke IH was already determined by the time Spoke IH was in the process of becoming a feminine gender system. The system is marked by cases of change in the inflectional system, e.g. mérin ‘name’, mérik ‘address’, mélik ‘job’, mélik ‘goal’, dáfka ‘brother’; the use of feminine gender with nouns that are unique in the inflectional system, e.g. numerals, agreement
widespread analogical levelling in verb inflection: yošénet ‘she sleeps’ < yešenā, and more.

Innovations appear in a hierarchical arrangement on this continuum: those that are present in a ‘higher’ ranking variety will also appear on the ‘lower’ end of the continuum, but not vice-versa. Thus, a style that contains yošénet for ‘she sleeps’ is also likely to contain or at least allow mekir for ‘he knows’, but not the other way around. It is important to emphasize again that our model illustrates a continuum of features, rather than a rigid separation of self-contained registers. While some general rules constrain the appropriateness of certain forms in certain settings, speakers may move up and down on the continuum for stylistic effects even within a single conversation. They may of course have their personal preferences as well. We must equally bear in mind that some speakers may never engage actively in certain registers/styles, that is, they will not make use of certain far ends of the continuum.

The main part of this paper is devoted to a general characterization of the features of Spoken Israeli Hebrew, as represented in our corpus of Working Class Vernacular and General Colloquial speech. All examples cited, unless otherwise indicated, are from the corpus.

3. Phonology

3.1 Stress

SIH stress is characterized by a relaxation of the rule that assigns stress to the final inflectional segment of the word (Weinberg 1966; Bolozy 2002). The basic pattern was already mentioned above: Stress shifts from inflectional endings, such as feminine derivation or plural suffixes, to the root, in proper nouns (šosāna ‘Suzanne’, by contrast šosānā ‘rose’; rexovot ‘Rehovot’, contrast rexovot ‘streets’), in loanwords (métrim ‘metres’) and in neologisms. In more informal styles, the pattern is even more consistent. Thus while the stress patterns in names like šosāna or mālka are the norm in the spoken language, the stress in yoram, mixal or dórón are highly informal and intimate and would be used in a classroom situation, for instance, only by children addressing their peers, but not normally by teachers addressing pupils. In addition to names, stress shifts forward in a series of grammatical function words: káma ‘some’, dáfka ‘by contrast (adverb/discourse marker)’, pítom ‘suddenly’. These include numerals with feminine agreement (i.e. in the default form, lacking a masculine agreement suffix): árba ‘four’, šmōne ‘eight’. Root stress is also common with a
number of person-inflected function words: kūl-am ‘all of them’, kūl-xa ‘you.M (entirely)’ (ātā kūl-xa laviš ‘you.M are all dressed-up’). Lexical items such as institution names, group designations, game labels and so on are treated as proper nouns and similarly tend to take root stress (rather than derivation or inflection marker stress): kényon ‘shopping-mall’, cfjínim ‘Northerners’ (from the northern suburbs of Tel Aviv), kláfim ‘cards’. Initial stress may appear in selected lexical items: rība ‘jam’.

3.2 Loss of Glottals

Both glottal consonants, plosive /ʔ/ (which also assimilates pharyngeal /ʕ/ in non-Mizrachi speech), and fricative /h/, tend to disappear in SIH, leading to the collapse of minimal pairs such as ha-rav ‘the rabbi’ and šarāv ‘Arabia’, both /aɾaːv/, haši ‘most’ and ʃax-i ‘my brother’, both /aʃi/, as well as of pairs like lir ŋot ‘to see’ and lirōt ‘to shoot’, both /lirōt/. The loss of glottals in intervocalic position leads to the emergence of lengthened or double vowels and so to a restructuring of opposition pairs like dati ‘religious’ and daati ‘my opinion’ < daʃatì, or havará ‘syllable’ and haʃavara ‘transfer’ < haʃavara. The process may have its origins in an internal development, though substrate influence is not unlikely; note the absence of /h/ in Judezmo (Judeo-Spanish or Ladino) and in several varieties of Yiddish, and the absence of distinctive /ʔ/ in both languages as well.

‘Aleph-dropping’ (the deletion of both the etymological glottal stop /ʔ/ and the voiced pharyngeal /ʕ/ which it assimilates) may lead to a reduction in the number of phonemes in a word — nišārti ‘I stayed’ < niʃārti — or to a reduction of the number of syllables: lasōt ‘to do’ < laʃasōt, lasōf ‘to collect’ < leʃasof. Vowel assimilation and syllable reduction as a result of aleph-dropping is not unusual: ki-karon ‘in principle’ < ke-ʃikaron, šešmot ‘six hundred’ < šeʃmeʃot. Alternatively, a glide is inserted between the two adjoining vowels, replacing the historical glottal/pharyngeal: odīyu ‘they announced’ < hodīyu.

The phenomenon of ‘h-dropping’ is even more apparent in initial position, where forms like ayîti ‘I was’ < hayîti, itxâlti ‘I started’ < hitxâlti, arbé ‘a lot’ < harbē, u ‘he’ < hu, are the norm in our corpus. Here too, syllable reduction is common: takir ‘to be acquainted with’ < lehalîkîr, nenênu ‘we enjoyed ourselves’ < nenênênu, ba-txală ‘in the beginning’ < ba-ḥatxalâ. There is, however, a variable constraint on h-dropping: Speakers often tend to avoid deletion of two subsequent /h/-segments in adjoining syllables, by maintaining one of the /h/ segments:
In (1) and (2), /h/ is retained in the immediate environment of a deleted /h/ — ha-i ‘that one’ < ha-hi, a-héfex ‘the opposite’ < ha-héfex — and in that of another vocalic syllable — ohévt ‘I-love’. Examples (3)–(4) similarly show that the tendency to avoid a sequence of two vocalic syllables motivates the retention of one of the /h/-segments — here, in ha-horim ‘the parents’ — but there is no consistency as to which of the two /h/-segments is retained, and which is deleted. We can conclude that /h/ is not simply lost, but that it remains in an underlying representation of the word, and is deleted as a result of stylistic choice. Emphasis on certain words may by contrast motivate speakers to retain /h/. In (5), in the word madhím ‘fascinating’, the presence of /h/ is a metaphorical cue contextualizing the exceptional features of the place that is being described. Note that all other etymological /h/-segments — mášehu ‘something’, ha-mekomót ‘the places’, ha-xí ‘most’, hayíti ‘I was’ — are deleted:

(1) ve-ăl a-tkufá ha-i
and-about the-period the-that.F
‘and about that period’

(2) ani mamáš ohévt otó, a-héfex a-gamúr me-a-xavér
I really love.F.SG him, the-opposite the-total.SG.M from-the-boyfriend
a-kódém.
the-previous.SG.M
‘I really love him, just the opposite of the previous boyfriend.’

(3) lo še ha-orim lo yefazrú, yefazrú
not that the-parents not help.3PL.FUT, help.3PL.FUT
‘(It’s) not that the parents won’t help; they will.’

(4) a-horim šélánú aré em báu mi-méntályút àxét bixalá
the-parent ours indeed they came.3PL from-mentality different.SG.F altogether
‘After all our parents came from an altogether different mentality.’

(5) ze nimcá ba-karibim, ze másu madhím,
this.M is.found in.the-Caribbean, this.M something fascinating.SG.M,
xad a-mkomót axí yafím še ayítu ba-ém.
one the-places most beautiful.PL COMP I was in-3PL.
‘It’s in the Carribean, it’s a fascinating thing. One of the most beautiful places I’ve been to.'
3.3 The Status of Pharyngeals

As noted above, pharyngeals are considered to be the most obvious indicator of ethnic background, indicating Mizrahi origin. Among our informants, however, who represent a population sector and age group in which integration of people from different backgrounds is common, the pattern of use of pharyngeals did not, in fact, follow ethnic boundaries. First, we have a group of 17 (from a total of 40) speakers who did not use any pharyngeals at all; they included 12 speakers of Mizrahi origin, and 5 of mixed origin. The remaining 23 speakers, who used at least some pharyngeals, included 11 persons of Mizrahi origin, 9 of mixed origin, and 3 of Ashkenazi origin. Some of them (7 speakers) only used pharyngeals for stylistic purposes, others employed them irregularly.

Variation in the use of pharyngeals has been observed before. Devens (1980) reports that the voiced pharyngeal was realized only in 35 percent of the recorded cases of historical /ʕ/, while the voiceless pharyngeal fricative /ħ/ shows a greater proportion of realization (of 44 instances of the historical pharyngeal /ħ/ recorded via a word-list, 34 were realized as /ħ/ and 10 were realized as /ʕ/ among the Mizrahi test group, while the counterpart General Israeli Hebrew group had /ʕ/ consistently). Devens also mentions ‘intermediate’ varieties, in which pharyngeal /ħ/ is in free alternation with /ʕ/. Our own results are presented in Figure 1 (below p. 156).

The usage patterns of pharyngeals are variable and personal (speaker-dependent), but do not show any significant correlation with speakers’ personal data, nor is there any significant variation among individual words. Moreover, we find not only variation in the realization of pharyngeals both among speakers and within the speech of individuals, but also different kinds of preferences; the identity of the pharyngeal consonant — voiced or unvoiced — and its position — syllable-initial or syllable-final — play a role. We have several groups of speakers (Figure 1). Group A includes speakers who make variable use of both pharyngeals, in all positions. Group B is similar, though here speakers avoid the voiced pharyngeal in syllable-final position (as in šamāʕ ‘he heard’). Group C speakers have /ʕ/ variability, but avoid voiceless /ħ/ consistently, while Group D speakers avoid both syllable-final /ʕ/, like Group B, and voiceless /ħ/, like Group C. Group E consists of a single speaker who has /ħ/, but not /ʕ/. Finally, Group F speakers show a few instances of pharyngeal realization, which we attribute in most cases to stylistic emphasis. Note that, although there are

exception to this.

The motivation here is the background pronoun. It is used in the mixed texts by speakers of pharyngeal

In (6), there is a mixed group of three people, making estimates.

This follows a pattern familiar to us. In (7), the word is first suffixed by a preposition, and is more suitably rendered as an idiom. This is a feature of the language and is not found in other languages. In (8), we insert a verb to denote laughter, but in (9), it is more conventional to use a verb (šovdīm ‘laugh’) to maintain the rhythm of the utterance. We are absent-minded, as is normal for

6 We note that the pronoun is not used in the mixed texts by speakers of pharyngeal
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exceptions, like the speaker who constitutes Group E, or Speaker 25 in Group F, the pharyngeal that is most likely to be realized is syllable-initial /ʕ/.

The use of pharyngeals is subject to both stylistic constraints and stylistic motivation. Firstly, as indicators of Mizrahi ethnicity as well as of working-class background, they are sometimes avoided in an attempt by speakers to accommodate to the General Colloquial or middle-class speech. Take the example of our informant number 24, an unemployed twenty-three-year-old woman from Kiryat Ekron, of mixed ethnic background. We recorded a forty-five-minute conversation with her. There was no use of /ʕ/ at all during the first fifteen minutes, while in the remainder of the interview /ʕ/ was used consistently. Likewise, /h/ was avoided consistently and replaced by /x/ during the first three minutes; it then appeared in alternation with /x/ for the next thirteen minutes, and was finally used consistently for the remaining thirty minutes. As the conversation became more relaxed, the speaker dropped her initial accommodation strategies to middle-class Ashkenazi speech and removed the constraint on the use of pharyngeals.

Another type of stylistic motivation affects individual words in particular contexts. In (6), the speaker employs a pharyngeal to emphasize the conclusion of a point he is making concerning the work ethic at the local market, where he works as a grocer. This follows a more objective, factual report on the work routine. Note that the report is first summarized by concluding that there are no regular working hours (en šaâ bašuk ‘time doesn’t exist at the market’). The work ethic of the market is then evaluated more subjectively, following a hesitation, with the help of a paraphrase, drawing on an idiom which could be deemed slightly misplaced as it evokes religious associations and is normally reserved for more tragic events (en rahämim ‘there is no mercy’). By inserting the pharyngeal, the speaker gives the phrase a humorous touch (note the laughter that follows). The idiom is thus contextualized by de-validating its more conventional contextual associations. The explanation that immediately follows (rovdim ‘one works’), builds a bridge back to the objective, fact-based report, while maintaining the humour, represented here by the voiced pharyngeal. In the final utterance in the excerpt the speaker returns to the report, and here, again, pharyngeals are absent:

6 We note in this connection the occasional use of syllable-initial /ʕ/, but of no other pharyngeal, in the pronunciation of Gidi Gov, lead singer of the popular band Kavéret, in albums released by the group in the mid-1970s. The music is western, and the accent/style of the texts is the General Colloquial. The texts however are humorous, and the humour is reinforced by the occasional insertion of the pharyngeal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Informant serial No.</th>
<th>Length of conversation in minutes</th>
<th>Number of tokens containing etymological /h/ and /ː/</th>
<th>Pronunciation of etymological /h/ and /ː/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/h/ in syll. initial position</td>
<td>/h/ in syll. final position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Realization of etymological pharyngeals /h/ and /ʕ/
3.4 Diphthongs and Monophthongization

Like the use of pharyngeals, the monophthongization of the diphthong /ey/ to /e/ is considered a feature of Mizrahi speech (cf. Peleg 1992). The absence of the diphthong is an overwhelming feature of our corpus, irrespective of the ethnic background of the speakers. From a total of 1,028 tokens containing the etymological diphthong /ey/, 931 or 91% showed monophthongization to /e/, with the proportion of monophthongization for individual speakers ranging between 71% and 97%. Typical and frequent tokens are words like axar ‘after’, lifné ‘before’, ex ‘how’, en ‘there is no’, éfo ‘where’, éze ‘which’ < éyze, šlošté-nu ‘the three of us’, legómre ‘entirely’ < le-gamréy, as well as nouns in the plural construct state: kevé birkayím ‘knee-aches’ < keevé, bne adám ‘human beings’ < bney, raše a-memšalá ‘the prime ministers’ < rasey, and so on.

In fact, it is quite easy to identify those tokens in which etymological /ey/ was retained without undergoing monophthongization. The most frequent of those is dey ‘quite, fairly’ (cf. ze dey kašé ‘it is quite difficult’), which however appears alongside its monophthongized counterpart de. There were some tokens of lifnéy ‘before’ in its diphthongized form (alongside many tokens of lifné), a single token of eytán ‘firm’, a
carry-over from a more formal style, and a single token of xeyfá ‘Haifa’. Apart from those, all etymological diphthongs were contained in loanwords: léydi ‘lady’, stéyšenim ‘station-wagons’, steyt ‘state’, alekséy ‘Alexei’ (Russian name), and okéy ‘o.k.’, the latter alongside oké.

Diphthongization of historical /e/ appears on the other hand primarily in the numeral téyša ‘nine’ < téša. While the sources of monophthongization are to be found in the absence of /ey/ in the relevant ‘Oriental’ or ‘Mizrahi’ substrate languages Judezmo, Arabic, and Aramaic, the diphthongization of /el/ to /ey/ is a typical product of the Yiddish substrate and Ashkenazi Hebrew reading tradition. The westernized General Colloquial tends to retain etymological /ey/ in words like eyx ‘how’, éye ‘which’, éyfo ‘where’, and so on. But only to a limited extent do we find native speakers using /ey/ for historical /el/, even among Ashkenazi Israelis. Such an exception can be found among the kibbutzim of the western Galilee, which were founded in the 1930s by small groups of immigrants, largely from Poland, as well as in other kibbutzim belonging to the Ha Shomer Ha-Tzair movement, whose population kept itself apart socially during a period up to the late 1950s and beyond, viewing itself as a kind of self-sufficient community of the settler elite. Here, the first generation of native speakers, those born in the 1930s, preserve the /ey/-diphthong that was characteristic of their parents’ substrate pronunciation of historical /el/ in stressed syllables in forms like séyfer ‘book’ < séfer, hveyénue ‘we brought’ < hveyenu, koféyc ‘he jumps’ < koféyc. It appears that this legacy only penetrated the more general colloquial speech in a few items, among them téyša ‘nine’, which in turn diffuses even into the (Mizrahi) Working Class Verbal (but not *éyser for éser ‘ten’). The only other tokens containing non-etymological /ey/ in our corpus is the pronunciation, in abbreviations, of the Hebrew alphabet letters hey < he and pey < pe, similarly typical features of General Colloquial speech deriving quite possibly from the Ashkenazi Hebrew reading tradition, which was all but neutralized in its vocalic component, but remained in the much salient, ritualized citation of the alphabet.

### 3.5 Syllable Reduction and Contractions

Contraction is widely recognized as a feature of SIH (see Weinberg 1966, Bolozky 2002). The most dominant contraction pattern is a product of the deletion of unstressed /e/. Commonly affected are inflectional and derivational pre-syllables, which are unstressed: l-dabér ‘to talk’ < le-dabér, mximityót ‘cars’ < mexinityót. Final inflectional segments may similarly be contracted: xošévt ‘thinks’ < xošévet, la-léxt
to walk’ < la-léxet. Word-internal (non-grammatical) unstressed /e/ is also commonly deleted, however, in positions both preceding and following the stressed syllable: xavrá-sli ‘my girlfriend’ < xaverá-šeli. As Bolozy (2002: 243) observes, in fast speech unstressed /e/ may even be deleted in positions separating identical consonants, leading to consonant doubling: mflafón ‘cucumber’ < melafefón. The preposition et, which is never stressed and is usually (except with proper nouns) followed by the definite article, assimilates to the contracted article, giving t-a < et-ha: azáviti t-a-kól ‘I left everything’ < et ha-kól.

Alongside the general principle of deletion of unstressed /e/, we find a series of words that are prone to individual contractions. Especially vulnerable is grammatical vocabulary, while those items that contain phonemes that are generally prone to contraction, such as glottals, and those that contain pro-clitic segments, stand out. Thus among discourse markers and other utterance modifiers we find, bexlét ‘certainly’ < be-hexlét, bemét ‘really’ < be-emét, bëcém ‘in fact, actually’ < be-écem, bidýık ‘exactly’ < be-diyük, kilu ‘as though [also a filler]’ < ke-ílu, as well as xákax ‘then, later’ < axár-kax, stomért ‘that means’ < zot oméret. The series of indefinite pronouns is typically contracted: áf-xad ‘nobody’ < áf exád, mìšu ‘somebody’ < mišehu, màšu ‘something’ < màšehu, exšu ‘somehow’ < éxšehu. Other contracted function words include interjections such as vakša ‘please’ < be-vakaša, the possessive series šlí, šxa ‘my, your’ and so on < šeli, šelsá and the modals cax, cxim ‘must (SG.M, PL.M)’ < carix, crixim. Syllables surrounding pronouns and person markers on the verb are also found frequently in reduced form: t-yodát ‘you.F know.F’ < at yodát, an-ló-ydat ‘I don’t know.F’ < ani lo yódát, ta roé ‘you.M see.M’ < atá roé.


There are also phenomena that may undergo a deletion of /e/ in the past tense, such as sqertá ‘I s…”

The more complex view of the relationship between /e/ and consonant clusters is further supported by the examples such as mitbáx (‘fear.F’). The phenomenon is productive in some speakers and not productive in others and appears to be affected by the prosodic properties of the environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Assimil.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>→ /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>→ /g/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>→ /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>→ /w/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>→ /z/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>→ /g/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Vowel Deletion

With fricatives and dentals, there are generally no cases in the corpus of vowel deletion hierarchy...
3.6 Consonant Assimilation

There are two types of consonant assimilation. Syllable reduction through /el/-deletion may produce clusters of consonants in neighbouring articulatory positions, which then undergo assimilation. We find these frequently in verb stems ending in a dental, in the past tense, where the dental root consonant assimilates to the dental person marker: šeráti ‘I served’ < šeráteti, lamáti ‘I learned’ < lamádeti, oráti ‘I lowered’ < horádeti. The more frequent consonant assimilation is the regressive voice assimilation between neighbouring segments, whereby the preceding segment adopts the voice properties of the following segment: dáfka ‘on purpose’ < dákva, midbáx ‘kitchen’ < mítbáx (cf. Bolozki 2002). Speakers’ behaviour patterns in respect of this phenomenon are highly individual. Some speakers do not show any assimilation, while others show regressive voice assimilation in all relevant positions, with half the speakers showing assimilation in over 35% of relevant tokens. From our data it appears that position and manner of articulation affect the likelihood of regressive voice assimilation (see Figure 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction of Assimilation</th>
<th>Relevant tokens</th>
<th>Tokens affected</th>
<th>Percentage of tokens affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/s/ → [f]</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>(98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/ → [g]</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>(63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/ → [s]</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/l/ → [v]</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/ → [x]</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/ → [d]</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/ → [ž]</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/d/ → [t]</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Regressive voice assimilation in neighbouring consonants

With fricatives, voice assimilation is more likely in front articulation positions (labial and dental), followed by intermediate positions (postalveolar), with no attestation in the corpus of assimilation involving back positions (velar). With plosives, the hierarchy is a mirror-image: back positions (velars) are affected more than front
positions (dentals), with the most front positions (labial) remaining entirely unaffected by the process.

3.7 Levelling of Stop/Fricative Alternation

Formal IH inherits part of the system of stop/fricative allophony of Classical Hebrew: It shows alternation of the pairs /b-v, k-x, p-f/, without continuing the fricative counterparts of Classical Hebrew /g, d, t/. But even the inherited alternation is no longer allophonic, as it was in Classical Hebrew. First, the distinction between short and long vowels, which had been the trigger for the Classical allophony, is no longer present in IH. Second, both the changes of Classical phonemes /w/>/v/, /q>//k/, and often /h/>/x/ and the appearance of initial fricatives such as /v, f/ in European loanwords have obliterated the historical complementary distribution between the pairs /b-v, k-x, p-f/. The IH rule on the appearance of the pairs in lexical roots is thus essentially one that must be learned on a word-by-word basis, or indeed even a form-by-form basis if one takes into consideration inflectional pairs (katáv ‘he wrote’, yítáv ‘he will write’ < k.t.b). At the same time it is obvious to speakers that there is some kind of relation of paradigmatic alternation between the respective pairs. It is this relation, combined with the opacity of the historical rule that regulates the alternation, that gives rise to processes of levelling (cf. Barkai 1978; Bolozyk 1980; Ravid 1995: 39; Idsardi 1997).

One effect of this levelling has been to completely neutralize stop-fricative alternation in favour of just the plosive variant in positions following pro-clitics (connectors and prepositions) (cf. Weinberg 1966): be-kviš ‘on a road’ < bi-xviš, ve-be-fnim ‘and inside’ < u-vi-fnim, be-bet séfer ‘in a school’ < be-vet séfer, be-kitá álef ‘in Year 1’ < be-xitá álef, and often be-kavaná ‘on purpose’ < be-xavaná. Another, much more erratic process of levelling is under way in verb paradigms. Bolozyk (1980) regards plosive-spirant alternations synchronically as paradigmatic incoherences, but maintains that the processes levelling these incoherences are constrained by available models and a tendency to generalize unmarked base forms. Thus, variation will only occur in those positions where different roots appear to form similar plosive-spirant alternations: vitér ‘he gave up’ (Classical Hebrew w.t.r) and bitél ‘he cancelled’ (b.t.t) constitute such a pair, and inspire variation in forms like bikés ‘he asked’ (b.q.š) alongside wikés. However, the future-tense form will appear consistently as yevakés ‘he will ask’ and not *yebakés, since, unlike in the past, there is no inherited alternation model in the future (vitér–yevatér, bitél–yevatél): a plosive
therefore never occurs in this position and there is no opacity (Boložky 1980: 111). For similar reasons, Boložky predicts that, unlike in the pi’él pattern, no variation will occur in pa’al since there are no inherited Classical Hebrew roots in w- (giving IH ν-) in pa’al. This interpretation is also at the heart of Barkai’s (1978) study, who concludes that different plosive-spirant pairs have different degrees of semantic opacity through the potential of alternating models. Thus, the alternation /k-x/ is highly opaque, and therefore highly prone to levelling attempts and so to variation, owing to the merger of historical /k/ and /q/, and the merger in General IH of /x/ and /h/. Less prone to variation is the pair /b-v/, where opacity is triggered by the rather infrequent alternation model caused by the merger of historical /v/ and /w/, while there is no cause for ambiguity in the alternation of /p-f/, and so no reason to curb ambiguity through levelling.

Barkai’s (1978) prediction is not, however, confirmed by our sample. Although the total number of non-standard stop-fricative substitutions is small — amounting altogether to just about 26 word forms — their distribution among the various pairs does not seem to be related to the presence of a direct model for replication involving the identical phoneme pair. Thus we find with the supposedly more vulnerable velar pairs non-standard xisā he covered’ < kisā (cf. as possible model type xikā ‘he waited’), li-ktōv ‘to write’ < li-xtov (cf. as a semantically-related possible model li-kró ‘to read’), and yaqḥāv ‘he will cause pain’ < yaxḥāv (cf. yaxpic ‘he will cause to jump’). With the series of voiced labials, we find vikšū ‘they asked’ < bıkšū (cf. vitrū ‘they gave up’), but also šābur ‘broken’ < šavur (with no model *CabhūC), li-tvōl ‘to dip’ < li-tbōl (a popular substitution, cf. also SIH li-tvōa ‘to demand, to sue’, li-kvōa ‘to state’, but no formal model *li-CvōC), and bat ṭemēṣ edēz ‘a girl wears this’ < bat lovēṣet edēz (but no formal model *CobēCet). Finally, for the pair /p-f/ we find firēk ‘he took apart’ < perēk (the only possible model being loanwords, as in fiksēs ‘he faxed’), li-sfōr ‘to count’ (a common pattern, as in SIH li-sfog ‘to absorb’, cf. sfog ‘sponge’, but no formal model *li-CfōC), šopēk ‘she spills’ < šofēk, nitpās ‘he was caught’ < nitpās, li-kfōc ‘to jump’ < li-kpōc (no formal model for any of the latter).

A valid constraint seems to be Boložky’s (1980) prediction that the derivational pattern pi’él is more likely to attract levelling than pa’al in the past tense; nonetheless, we also find forms in the future tense, the present tense, and the infinitive that are clearly not modelled on any corresponding forms from other roots. From this we can only conclude that while speakers’ uncertainty is especially conspicuous in forms where there are ambiguous models — such as the past tense of the pi’él pattern, triggering forms like xisā, vikšū, and firēk —, and while speakers appear to maintain
the constraint on the appearance of plosives, excluding fricatives, in initial position in past-tense pa‘ál, there is general uncertainty in relation to stop-fricative alternations throughout the system, triggering non-standard forms even in the absence of any direct model for a seemingly random alternation, inspired by the appearance of both stops and fricatives in the same inflectional position in the formal language (as in vitër ‘he gave up’ alongside bikēš ‘he asked’).

In some cases, however, stop-fricative substitution is directly triggered by a local model. In reduplicated roots as well as other roots with consonant repetition or gemination, speakers overwhelmingly tend to unify pronunciation to just one variant, stop or fricative. Thus we find marvevim ‘we mix’ < mearbevim and muryav ‘mixed’ < muryav (root f.r.b.b), taxviv ‘hobby’ < taxbib (root h.b.b), and mebatbēz ‘he wastes’ < mevazbēz (root b.z.b.z). Note that in all these instances, the target for levelling is the second realization of the historical (or underlying) archiphoneme. Other cases of levelling emerge through direct analogy within the paradigm, as in xafim mi-pēsa ‘innocent.PL’ < xapim, from the singular form xaf (cf. xof ‘beach’, PL. xofim; nof ‘view’, PL. nofim).

4. Morphology

4.1 Analytic Possessive

SIH generalizes the person-inflected analytic possessive in šel-, which appears at the expense of the person-inflected construct state: ha-bāyit šel-i ‘my house’ [the-house of-1SG], rather than beyt-i [house.CONSTR-1SG]. This leads in effect to the almost complete eradication of the construct state from the language, and the survival of just one base-form for all nouns, considerably reducing the inflectional potential of nouns (cf. formal Hebrew yeled ‘child’ – yald-i ‘my child’, bat ‘daughter’ — bit-i ‘my daughter’, etc.). There are two groups of construct-inflation of possessives found in the corpus. The first comprises elements of inalienable possession, primarily kinship terms: le-axot-ō ‘for his sister’, ecēl gis-ō ‘at his brother-in-law’s’. The second consists of stereotype expressions, such as le-fi daat-i ‘in my opinion’, for which there is no analytical alternative (cf. *ha-deā šel-i). In addition, speakers occasionally import formal stereotype expressions into informal conversation: a-shīši be-godl-ō ba-ārec ‘the sixth largest [=in its size] in the country’, samēyāx be-nafūs-ō ‘happy [in his soul]’. Formal style may be drawn upon by choice in an accommodation to formal portions of the conversations, such as introductions: šīm-i šāxar ‘my name is Shaxar’.

With plural possessors, the analytic form is more common than an analytic possessive, often added e.g.

(7) bog

‘Be-Godl’

(8) ba-tim in.l

‘At Tim’

(9) a-xofim

‘The Bays’

Similarly, finite adjectives are adapted to the effect doubling

(10) šīm-i šāxar

‘My name is Shaxar’

(11) cīx-i

‘Need’

(12) ba-kīm in.l

‘In the kitchen’
4.2 Nominal Compounding

The decline of the construct state as a productive inflectional resource also affects nominal compounding. Compounds tend to be treated in the corpus as stereotypes, whose two components are synthesized into one. Accordingly, the definite article appears, as it does with plain nouns, in preposed position, rather than internally (preposed to the second element in the compound):

(7) **bogotá ze ha-irá bérá šel kolómbya**

this.M the-city capital of

'Bogotá is the capital city of Colombia'

(8) **ba-bét xolím**

in.the hospital [=house.CONSTR sick.PL]

'At the hospital'

(9) **a-xóser savlanút mícád axerím**

the-lack patience from-side others

'The impatience on the part of others'

With plural compounds, the plural construct is replicated, again as a stereotype rather than an analysable, meaningful inflectional structure, while full plural markers are often added at the end of the compound noun:

(10) **šmona orx-é din-im**

eight.M lawyers [=executor-CONSTR.PL law-PL]

'eight lawyers'

Similarly, fixed definite constructs may be carried over from the formal style, but adapted to the vernacular through the insertion of an external definite article, thus in effect doubling the definite article:

(11) **cix-im e/ káát et-a-šnót a-šísím**

need-PL a.little ET-the-years.CONSTR.PL the-sixty

'We need a little bit of the sixties'

(12) **ba-kór a-klavím**

in.the-cold the-dogs

'In the freezing cold'
The ultimate evidence of construct decline is in the formation of compounds in which the head appears in the base-form, rather than the construct state: xéder šená ‘bedroom’ (formal: xadár šeyná), xéder ambáya ‘bathroom’, báyit komót ‘multi-story house’ (formal: békít komót).

4.3 Nominal Derivation and Inflection

A much-discussed topic in SIH is the levelling of nominal derivational processes (see especially Bolozky 1999). We will limit our own discussion to naming some of the common strategies encountered in the corpus. Essentially we are dealing with conflicting derivational models and analogies that are created as a result. The changes affect almost exclusively the first vowel segment in the derivational pattern, which appears to be the most vulnerable, being normally the distinguishing feature of one derivational pattern as opposed to another, related one. We thus find mocaré basár ‘meat products’ < mucréy basár (cf. the model olaré plástik ‘plastic knives’), kopát xolim ‘public clinic’ < kufát xolim (cf. kómát kárka ‘ground floor’), yélid ‘native’ < yelid (cf. baxir ‘senior’, kacin ‘officer’), yiśiv ‘settlement’ < yeśiv, yiśit ‘service’ < šerút (cf. šifir ‘lesson’, tiyil ‘excursion’, bikór ‘visit’), bašayá ‘problem’ < bešayá (cf. katavá ‘report’).

The other common pattern of analogy involves plural inflection. Here, there is a tendency toward a more regular, almost agglutinative formation in a large number of nouns, replacing the vowel alternation in the root syllable between singular and plural forms by a generalization of the singular form, to which the plural inflectional suffix is added: laxacim ‘pressure’ < lexacim (singular làxac), matosim ‘airplanes’ < metosim (singular matós), baalim ‘owners’ < bešalim (singular bášal). Some analogies are partial: reglayim ‘legs’ < raglayim (singular régel), mocaré basár ‘meat products’ < mucréy basár (singular mucár).

4.4 Enclitic Pronouns

The Hebrew system of enclitic pronouns contains irregularities in the alternation between affixes of the 2.SG.F (it-áx ‘with-you’, el-áyixa ‘to-you’, bišvil-éx ‘for you’, kam-óx ‘like you’), and the PL. (it-ám ‘with-them’, el-éyhém ‘to them’). Although similar alternations may be found in other persons as well (cf. the 2.SG.M it-xá ‘with-you’, el-éxa ‘to-you’, bišvil-xá ‘for you’, kam-oxa ‘like you’), in the 2.SG.F and PL. the absence of a final vowel gives greater weight to the vowel connecting the stem with the consonantal ending – -áx vs. -éx, -ám vs. -ém –, which highlights the irregularity, as in forms such as < ecl-ám.

As a result, they tend to cliticize:

(13) efó s- where yó
‘Where yó’

(14) ani šol
I ask
‘I ask hi

Fully grammatical are the SG.

Unsurprisingly, derivations (e.g., semantic patients (subjectless)

(15) pitú
dismissed
‘I was diss

For all but the imperative tense form: tx the imperative forms are interchanged, found in the c

(16) kax
take.IMP
‘Take m

In the past, ‘was’ is extended
that of a plain
irregularity, and so motivates levelling (cf. Ravid 1995: 47). In the corpus we find forms such as iték ‘with-you.F’ < *it-áx, ot-éx ET-you.F < ot-áx, and ecla-ém ‘at-theirs’ < ecl-ám.

As a result of contractions and vowel deletions, unbound person markers often tend to cliticize to complementizers and verbs:

(13) éfo š-ta
     where COMP-you.SG.M live.SG.M
     ‘Where you live’

(14) ani šöél-to
     I ask.SG.M-him
     ‘I ask him’

Fully grammaticalized forms appear in ha-zoti ‘this one.F’ and kazóti ‘such.SG.F’, where the SG.F pronoun hí has been integrated into the word form.

4.5 Verb Derivation and Inflection

Unsurprisingly for a corpus of spoken discourse, we find few instances of passive derivations (of the derivation types pu‘ál, huf‘ál, nif‘al). Promotion to topic of semantic patients of transitive events is normally achieved by means of an impersonal (subjectless) construction:

(15) pír-ú ot-i
dismissed-3PL ET-1SG
     ‘I was dismissed’

For all but a small number of verbs, the imperative is identical with the future-tense form: txaké po! ‘wait.SG.M here!’. Contractions are very common, especially in the imperative use of the form: čmil ‘listen.SG.F!’ < tīšmeš. For some verbs, future forms are interchangeable with the historical imperative form, and use of both types is found in the corpus:

(16) kax t-a-mispár šel-i, titkašér el-áy
take.IMP.SG.M ET-the-number-of-1SG call.FUT.2.SG.M to-1SG
     ‘Take my number, call me!’

In the past tense, the periphrastic construction involving the auxiliary verb hayá ‘was’ is extended, with a small number of verbs, from its usual habitual meaning to that of a plain or direct past. The affected verbs include firstly those where there is
potential identity (at least in some persons) between the past and the present forms, such as gar ‘he lived/lives’, nimcā ‘he was/is present’, or sam lev ‘he paid/pays attention’:

(17) em ay-ū gar-im be-mabarôt
they was-3PL live-PL in-camps
‘They lived/used to live in makeshift camps’

(18) ay-iti nimc-ēt
was-1SG present-SG.F
‘I was present/used to be present’

(19) tāmēd lo ay-iti sam lev
always NEG was-1SG put-SG.M/heart
‘I always didn’t pay attention/used to not pay attention’

Other verbs affected include modals such as carix ‘must’, an adjectival form that has no direct past-tense derivation:

(20) ay-imā cx-im
was-1PL must-PL
‘we had to’

The verb inflection system is particularly prone to analogies and levelling. A well-established analogy which has been adopted even into some of the more formal styles, and certainly into the Educated IH, is the shift of stress and syllable structure in the past-tense conjugation form of the 2PL, as in kātāvēm < formal kttvēm, cf. 1PL kātāvnu. In the future conjugation, the marker of the 1SG tends to assimilate or partly assimilate to that of the 3SG (cf. Ravid 1995:109), sharing at least its vowel with the latter: imcā ‘I will find’ < emcă cf. 3SG y-imcā, istādēr ‘I will manage’ < estādēr cf. 3SG y-istādēr. This is especially the case in the pi’ēl derivation — esāpēr ‘I will tell’ < asāpēr cf. 3G y-asāpēr — as well as with verb roots in so-called ‘weak’ consonants (the historical and underlying so-called ‘gutturals’ — glottals and pharyngeals): aavōd ‘I will work’ (f.b.d) < eevōd cf. 3SG y-aavōd. Irregular verbs tend to be formed for all persons by analogy to the regular pattern: ilēx ‘he will go’ < y-elēx, t-icē ‘you will go out’ < t-ecē, (y)-irēd ‘he will descend’ < y-ērēd.

Levelling of irregular verbs can be found in the other tenses as well. Common analogies based on regular pa’āl derivations are yaxālīti ‘I could’ < yaxālīti, yošēn ‘sleeps.SG.M’ (and other forms: SG.F. yošēnet, PL yošēnim) < yašēn, godēl ‘grows.SG.M’ etc. < gadēl, while širēt ‘he served’ < šerēt and similar cases show an analogy from

an irregular substituting the regular personā ‘have’. Verbs, as well as
‘I brought’

In this context, ‘defective’ occurs in mexīn ‘present’ (‘looks’), mēn on the other hand, is all counts competing and hīgīā < hetēgīā, roots such as in the corpus alongside formal forms, a so-called hehelāftī, etc.

Typical for
Vernacular
the extension
‘outside’, etc.

(21) ani
1
‘I met
an irregular to a regular pi’él pattern. Particularly common are inflection class substitutions among the ‘weak’ verbs (cf. Ravid 1995: 38). In the present tense we find forms like lokét ‘takes.SG.F’ < lokáhát and konét ‘buys.SG.F’ < koná, based on regular pa’ál verbs (cf. kofécet ‘jumps.SG.F’), but also hypercorrect forms such as soná ‘hates.SG.F’ < sonét. In the past tense we find contaminations among weak verbs, as in milít ‘I filled’ < miléí, sanít ‘I hated’ < sanéí (cf. kanít ‘I bought’), ivít ‘I brought’ < hevéí, but nisít ‘I tried’ < nisíí, hikít ‘I waited’ < hikíti.

In the hif’il derivation pattern, there is widespread confusion among the ‘defective’ roots (i.e. those that are reduced to bi-consonantal roots) due to the occurrence of two distinct patterns, maCiC (cf. makír ‘knows.SG.M’) and meCiC (cf. mexín ‘prepares.SG.M’). Substitution is common, and we find mkír ‘knows’, mbít ‘looks’, mejía ‘arrives’ and mésia ‘drives’, all from the formal pattern maCiC, while on the other hand we encounter mákím ‘estABLISHES’, máxin ‘prepares’, mávi ‘brings’, all counterparts to formal inflections of the type meCiC. In the past tense, the two competing patterns are the regular, ‘strong’ class in hiCCIC (hikíd ‘he took care’, hígiá < hígiíá ‘he arrived’), and the defective class in heCiC/heCeCíC, incorporating roots such as those in initial n- or historical -w- or -y- (e.g. heví ‘he understood’). In the corpus we thus find ivání alongside évání ‘I understood’, as well as egáí alongside igáí ‘I arrived’. While ‘weak’ roots in so-called gutturals tend to keep their formal forms — héemání ‘I believed’, heeváí ‘I transferred’ — those in h-, equally a so-called ‘guttural’ historically, are treated as full, strong roots: ixláfí ‘I changed’ < heheláfíí, ixlánumí ‘we decided’ < hehelátíí.

5. Syntactic Typology

5.1 Location Expressions

Typical for the construction of location expressions in the Working Class (Mizrahi) Vernacular is the tendency toward merger of stative and directional expressions, and the extension of originally stative constructions such as po ‘here’, šam ‘there’, ba-xúc ‘outside’, and even be- ‘at’, to directional meanings:

(21) ani šavá-ti po bigláš še-aní mitgága la-mišpáxá
I moved-1SG here because COMP-1 miss.SG.M to.the-family
‘I moved here because I missed my family’
The model for this extension appears to have been Arabic, which lacks a stative-directional distinction in location expressions of the kind exemplified in (21)–(26). In location adverbs, we find a simplification of the directional expression in le-éfo ‘to-where’ (formal IH le-áñ), modelled on éfo ‘where’.

Another characteristic feature of the expression of local relations is the tendency to omit prepositions. The expression ha-báyít lit. ‘the house’ (example 27) is treated as potentially directional, substituting the formal IH directional ha-báyta, and is therefore not preceded by a preposition:

(27) ex še-at nixn-ést a-báyít
how COMP-you.SG.F enter-SG.F the-house
‘As you enter the house ...’

Elsewhere, there is a general tendency to simplify complex prepositions: In (28), karôv ‘next to’ stands on its own, and is not followed, as in Formal IH, by le-:

(28) karôv šalôš va-héci šânim
close three.F and-half years
‘Close to three and a half years’

Prepositions are often omitted from topocalized indirect objects:
Spoken Israeli Hebrew Revisited

(29) kosta del sol ay-inu yomayim,
       were-1PL day.DUAL
    ‘We spent two days in Costa del Sol.’

(30) diskoterikm ayi-ti it-á paam axád ba-xayim
      discotheques was-1SGwith-3SG.F time one in.the-life
    ‘I was with her at a discotheque once in my life’

(31) xodašim ha-axronim, aní lo makšiv la-xadašót
      months the-last I NEG listen.SG.M to.the-news
    ‘In the past months I haven’t been listening to the news’

(32) cad exád yeš lánu aráb naxdim
      side one there.is to.us four.F grandchildren(M.PL)
    ‘On the one side we have four grandchildren’

(33) a-yladim ze mašpíyáh aki kašé
      the-children this.M influences.SG.M most difficult
    ‘It has the strongest impact on the children’

Omission of prepositions is partly grammaticalized (conventionalized) in expressions of time, such as xoděš a-bá ‘next month’, and, as in (34), in the universal indefinite expression of location, ‘everywhere’:

(34) kol makóm carix edzé
      every place necessary et.this
    ‘This is needed everywhere’

### 5.2 Object Case Marking

The most outstanding feature of object case marking is the use of subject case rather than indirect object case to describe the object of states, promotion to state, and changes of state:

(35) ába šel-i ověd ba-iriýá masgér
      father of-1SG work.SG.M in.the-municipality blacksmith
    ‘My father works for the municipality as a blacksmith’

(36) ani avá-ti ba-xanút yerákt kupašt, u avád ba-xanút sadrán
      I worked-1SG in.the-shop vegetables cashier he worked.3SG.M in.the-shop foreman
    ‘I worked at the grocery as a cashier, he worked at the shop as a foreman’

In the cases of the descriptions of states in (35)-(36), Formal IH uses the preposition ke- ‘as’. In example (37) we have indirect evidence of the omission of ke- in SIH, as
the speaker inserts a hypercorrection accompanying the past-tense copula, whose subject usually appears in the subject case, and not in an indirect object case accompanied by ke-:

(37) ayt-ti ke-pkiða be-kupat xolim
    was-1SG as-secretary in-clinic
    'I was a secretary at the clinic'

Examples (38)–(40) further illustrate the absence of indirect object marking with verbs describing states or promotion to states:

(38) istaher-ti rav-seren
    was.released-3SG.F major
    'She left the military as a major'

(39) nišpat-ti hamëš šanim
    was.sentenced-1SG five.F years(F.PL)
    'I was sentenced to five years'

(40) ze mitxalëk xamišá gvarim ve-arbä našim
    this.M is.divided.SG.M five.M men and-four.F women
    'It is divided into five men and four women'

Here too, as with the expression of local relations, we find a shift in the typology of case assignment in the language, modelled on that of Arabic. While Classical and Modern Standard Arabic mark states and promotion to state in the (indefinite) accusative, in Colloquial Arabic there is no difference between the case-marking of subjects and that of objects of description of and promotion to states; the dominant pattern is thus of the type štagalat mšalleem 'I worked [as a] teacher', which is precisely what we find in (35)–(36) as well as in (38)–(40).

5.3 The Distribution of 'et'

One of the distinctive typological features of Hebrew is the presence of a preposition marking the definite direct object, et. While in Formal IH the function of et is strictly confined to the marking of the definite direct object, in SIH et is extended to other constructions. It is the obligatory marking in SIH of the definite object of possession in impersonal possessive constructions containing yeš 'there.is' and its negative counterpart eyn:

(41) ecl-énu en t-amitá a-zé
    at-1PL is.not ET-the-accent the-this.M

But et also appears in examples accompanying a subject, and from a subject of a

(44) rast-ti ha-rav-sén
    was.released-1SG write.F
    'She left the military as a writer'

(45) hëi'šišš-ti ha-šet
    was.sentenced-1SG write.F
    'She was sentenced to write'

The following extension of et is used to mark non-syntactic possessive agents. He

(46) neeš-ti ha-rav-sén
    was.released-1SG write.F
    'Get out of my head'

Kuzar (2001) attributes this overall

7 Cf. kara et ha-šet, 'head' (Kuzar)
‘We don’t have this accent’

(42) le-kol exad yeš t-a-pxadim šel-ō
to-every one.M there.is ET-the-fears of-3.SG.M
‘Everyone has his own fears’

(43) yeš t-a-mithāx …
there.is ET-the-kitchen
‘There is the kitchen …’

But et also extends optionally beyond the possessive construction. The following two examples are taken from casual observation of conversation outside the corpus (44), and from a radio interview with a government official (45). In both cases, the definite subject of a passive-participle or attributive construction is marked by et:

(44) rašûm po et ha-mispár
written.SG.M here ET the-number
‘The number is written here’

(45) hi gam tovāv še-yihyē katūv al ha-heskēm
she also demands.SG.F COMP-be.3.SG.M,FUT written.SG.M on the-agreement(M)
ha-zē et kol ha-drisōt
the-this.M ET all the-requirements(F.PL)
‘It [=Israel] also demands that all the requirements be included in this agreement’

The following example (46), from casual observation of child language, shows the extension of et to the definite unaccusative subject:

(46) neelām et ha-kof George
disappeared.3SG.M ET the-monkey
‘George the monkey disappeared’

Kazar (2002: 342–3) discusses similar cases, confirming our own observation that et is used to mark not just the object of possession, but also other arguments that are not agents. He concludes that the motivation for the insertion of et is the ambiguous syntactic position of the argument — as a subject, which however lacks some of the more obvious subject properties, namely agentiveness, position at the beginning of the sentence, and often also person, gender and number agreement. While we concur with this overall interpretation of ambiguity as a trigger behind the extension of et, we wish

7 Cf. kara et ha-mikre ‘[ET] the event took place’, and nixonis lexō et ze la-roš ‘[ET] this has entered your head’ (Kazar 2002: 342).
to take the analysis a step further, toward a new characterization of *et* which can take into account both its well-established function, and the new functions that it is assuming in SIH.

We suggest that the preposition *et* is, in fact, undergoing a shift of function in SIH: From a marker of the syntactic direct object, it is on its way to becoming a marker of the semantic patient. This new, semantic-pragmatic function is of course still represented in the ‘old’ function, since the direct object is, consistently, also a semantic patient. The most obvious non-direct-object which is a semantic patient is the object of possession — both on semantic grounds, since it is by definition a patient, and on syntactic grounds, since it lacks agreement with the (impersonal) verbal element that anchors the predication. This is therefore the first point on the continuum to which *et* extends in SIH. It is a function where *et* is obligatory in the spoken language, and in fact quite common nowadays in informal writing and even in some journalistic writing.\(^8\) The next step on the continuum is the position of the subject of attributive passive-participle constructions (as in ‘this number is written’). Here too, the subject is obviously a semantic patient in an underlying transitive predication. A finite verb is generally absent, but there is some degree of agreement, namely between the subject-patient and the attribute/participle. The final position on the continuum is that of the subject of unaccusative verbs. Here, syntactic agreement with a finite verb is not ambiguous, but agent-status is lacking, pushing the patient in the intransitive construction close to its counterpart in transitive constructions.

To sum up, then, SIH displays an ongoing shift in the categorization of participants in the predication, from a system that singles out patients that are the direct objects of transitive constructions, to one that marks out semantic patients regardless of their syntactic status or argument structure. We suggest that one of the crucial triggers for the shift (alongside the presence of impersonal constructions in which agreement patterns are lacking, contributing to the ambiguity of syntactic relations) is the definiteness constraint on *et*. It is this constraint that promotes a semantic interpretation of the conditions for its appearance and contributes to its decoupling from the syntactic argument position and argument structure.

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\(^8\) Thus a sentence like *yeš li ha-séfer ha-ze* ‘I have this book’, lacking *et*, is likely to be deemed ungrammatical by most speakers at least on a spontaneous basis, and accepted only by those with thorough awareness of the formal language.
5.4 Numerical Agreement

SIH generally maintains the Hebrew system of gender, number, and person agreement, where applicable, in the morphological construction of attributes (adjectives, numerals, demonstratives, participles) and finite verbs. However, there are some clear signs of erosion in the system of agreement. Numerals constitute the weakest point in the system of morphological agreement (cf. Schwarzwald 1979); forms expressing gender agreement are retained, but are often used at random. The following examples provide a nice illustration, since the gender of the nouns involved is unambiguous:

(47) anáxnu šté axím ve-šté axayót
we two.F brothers and two.F sisters
“We are two brothers and two sisters”

(48) em e/šlošá áhayót ve-hamísá áhm avál e/šalós áhayót ve-hamés áhm
they three.M sisters and five.M brothers but three.F sisters and five.F brothers.
“They are three sisters and five brothers, but uh/ three sisters and five brothers”

Note that in (48), the speaker is answering a question regarding members of her extended family. She first chooses masculine marking for both nouns (feminine and masculine), then self-repairs the construction, substituting feminine forms for the numerals, yet in both attempts there is no actual differentiation in agreement with the nouns. Such random assignment of gender-marked forms to nouns is just as common with other nouns in the corpus. As for the numeral ‘one’ (Formal IH M exád, F axáít), we tend to find the same absence of any systematic agreement, but a preference is given to the compromise forms axád and exáít, regardless of the gender of the noun.

5.5 Verb Agreement

Erosion of agreement rules also infiltrates the verbal system. It is especially notable in the past-tense copula, with the emergence of quasi-impersonal constructions where Formal IH shows agreement between the copula and the subject:

(49) ayá xodšáyim magnív-im
was.3.SG.M month.DUAL exciting-PL
“It was [those were] exciting two months’
(50) ayá bemét a-tkufá aXi magniv-á ba-xayim šel-i
was.3.SG.M really the-period(F) most exciting-SG.F in-the-life of-1SG
‘It was really the most exciting period of my life’

(51) ayá klitá ba-txalá šel rúsím
was.3.SG.M absorption(F) in-the-beginning of Russians
‘At first there was an absorption of Russians’

Examples (49)–(51) are part of an even more general pattern of agreement relaxation in presentational constructions in which the verb precedes the subject:

(52) pitom nofél al-áy od pcacá ka-zóí
suddenly falls.SG.M on-1SG another bomb(F) such-SG.F
‘All of a sudden another bomb like that falls on me’

(53) nísár l-i rak xodšyim
remains.SG.M to-1SG only month.DUAL
‘I only have two more months’

Past-tense possessive constructions, which employ the verb hayá ‘was’, are also affected by this phenomenon, but subject to some constraints. As in (54), agreement is more likely to be retained when the subject (= the semantic object of possession) is animate, while an inanimate subject is more likely, as in (55), to carry a default (M.SG) form of the verb:

(54) aytá l-i xaverá
was.3SG.F to-1SG girlfriend(F)
‘I had a girlfriend’

(55) ayá l-i mxáberet
was.3SG.M to-1SG notebook(F)
‘I had a notebook’

With plural subjects (= objects of possession) in possessive constructions, the verb may similarly assume just the default form, i.e. lack either gender or number agreement, as in (56)–(57), or show partial agreement, e.g. for gender only, as in (58):

(56) ayá l-i siyútím
was.3SG.M to-1SG nightmares
‘I had nightmares’

(57) lö ayá l-ánu t-a-izdamnuyót
NEG was.3SG.M to-1PL ET-the-opportunities
‘We didn’t have the opportunities’

(58) aytá
was.3SG.F
‘He had’

Indexical expression of various strategies typical of hu/hi/hem for reflexives and for refocusing on the referent of deixis’ (example)

(59) kúl-an
all-3PL
‘Every

(60) bogotá
ze
this.M
‘Bogota
It’s a city’

(61) lifné
before
ve-afxá
and-turn
ze
this.M
ze
this.M
‘Three years
It’s in this year.
It’s a fast
Note that in (60) is exemplified
Similarly, in (6)
5.6 Deictic and Anaphoric Reference and Resumption

Indexical expressions of the types ze etc. (deixis) and hu etc. (anaphora) are used for various strategies of resumption of topics in discourse, and we survey some of the typical strategies in this section. To begin with, there is the 'classic' resumptive use of hu/hi/hem for anaphoric back-reference to continuous topics (example 59), and of ze for refocusing of entire propositional units or states-of-affairs, so-called 'discourse deixis' (examples 60–61):

(59) kūl-am makir-im ot-ā ve i olēx-et le-kōl makōm
all-3PL know-PL ET-3.SG.F and she goes-3SG.F to-every place

'Everybody knows her and she goes everywhere'

(60) bogotā iskir-a l-i bidyuk et nuyórk.
reminded-3SG.F to-1SG exactly ET New York

ze xay-ē lāyā metoraf-im ve-pābim, diskotēkim, ve-baxurōt.
this.M life-CONSTR.PL night crazy-PL and-pubs discotheques and-girls

'It’s a crazy nightlife and pubs, discos, and girls.'

(61) lifnē šalōh šanim a-memšalā ištaltā al-a-i a-zé,
before three.F years the-government took-over.3SG.F on-the-island the-this.M
ve-afxā ot-ō le-i tayaruti.
and-turned.3SG.F ET-3SG.M to-island tourist.SG.M

ze nimcā ba-karibim.
this.M is.found.SG.M in-the-Caribbean

ze māšu madhim.
this.M something fascinating.SG.M

'Three years ago the government took possession of this island, and turned it into a tourist island.

'It’s in the Caribbean.'

'It’s a fascinating thing.'

Note that in (60), ze refers not simply to the topic Bogotá, but to the phenomenon that is exemplified both in Bogotá and New York — that of a buoyant nightlife, etc. Similarly, in (61), it is not just the island as a topic that is the centre of the back-
reference, but the entire setting that it represents. The following example illustrates the upgrading of states-of-affairs to topical participants in a stretch of discourse:

(62) ba-avodá axšav mačenim ot-i.
in.the-work now anger.PL ET-1SG
ze misrád orxé-din meód gadól.
this.M office(M) lawyers very big.SG.M
u a-šiši im ani lo toá be-godl-ó ba-āreč.
he the.sixth.sg.M if I NEG mistake.SG.F in-size-3SG.M in.the-country
'It work they make me angry now.
It's a very big law firm.
It's the sixth largest in the country, if I am not mistaken.'

In the second utterance, ze is used to refocus on the setting introduced earlier as ‘the place of work’, and to introduce an explanation. Once the scene of the work place is established as a well-known law firm, the firm can then be picked up again as a topical entity, and back-reference to it is made with hu. Bearing this in mind, we now turn to another resumption strategy — this one clause-internal:

(63) abá šel-i u soné banót
father of-1SG he hates.SG.M girls
‘My father hates girls’

(64) a-moazin u notén drašót
the-Muezzin he gives.SG.M sermons
‘The muezzin preaches.’

(65) basár ze ayá kcat bafayá
meat this.M was.3SG.M a_little problem(F)
‘Meat was a bit of a problem.’

There is nothing in the intonation patterns in (63)–(65) to suggest that we might be dealing with a form of topicalization or dislocation of the topic in a position external to the clause. Rather, it appears that resumption of this kind allows retrospective exposition of the topic within the clause, and so strengthens the upcoming predicate as one that is attributive to or explanatory of the exposed topic. Thus, in (63)–(64) attitudes and activities of the topic are introduced via the predicates that act as attributes to the respective topics, characterizing them in general terms. In (65), the same kind of retrospective exposition is applied not to a familiar or well-established topical entity as such, but to a state-of-affairs, in this case allowing not attribution, but

an explanatory related: Both unit. In the potentially ag
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(66) ima
mother
‘Mum i
Spoken Israeli Hebrew Revisited

an explanatory definition of that state-of-affairs. The two strategies are closely related: Both involve retrospective exposition of a nominal entity as an information unit. In the first case, the entity is a recognizable and established topic, often potentially agentive, and the purpose of resumption is the linking of the topic to a predication that is attributive; here, resumption occurs with the third person pronoun series hu/hi/hem. In the second case, the entity is typically non-agentive, a non-actor, and the purpose of resumption is the linking of the entity to an explanatory definition; here, resumption occurs with the demonstrative ze (either with or without gender and number agreement).

It is in this perspective that we approach the issue of so-called ‘present copulas’ or pronominal resumption in nominal clauses. Arguments in favour of viewing personal pronouns as non-verbal copulas are presented by Berman and Grosu (1976) and by Li and Thompson (1977): First, the subject argument can be a first or second pronoun, which are thus not incompatible with a third person pronoun ‘copula’. Second, there is no pause separation and so no ground to view this as a topical construction. Third, unlike separated topics, the subjects of tripartite nominal sentences can be the focus of questions. Zewi (1996) however calls the construction by the neutral term ‘tripartite nominal sentences’, and concludes on the basis of an examination of similar phenomena in earlier stages of Semitic languages, that originally it did not seem to fulfil the role of a genuine copula, but should rather be regarded as a kind of extrapolation for purposes of identification. Diessel (1999: 144–6) similarly argues that the so-called copulas develop from identificational demonstratives, not from anaphoric pronouns, pointing out that the demonstratives ze, zot when functioning as ‘copulas’, may agree with the predicate, rather than with the subject, and so they show similar agreement behaviour as identificational demonstratives of the type ze X ‘this is X’.

These and most other discussions of the phenomenon of so-called ‘copulas’ do not normally draw on a corpus of spoken discourse, and so are unable to compare the role of resumptive elements in ‘tripartite nominal predications’ and constructions such as those exemplified in (63)–(65). Nominal clauses are abundant in the corpus; but so are non-verbal predications that show pronominal resumption, of the type referred to in some studies as ‘copulas’:

(66) ima fakéret-báyít
mother housewife
‘Mum is a housewife’
The obvious difference between examples (63)–(65), and the patterns of resumption seen in (66)–(69), is that in the first group of sentences we actually find a finite verbal predicate, while in the second the predicate is nominal. Nonetheless, we regard the two types of resumption as inherently related. Two observations are striking when we examine these nominal predications in (66)–(69): First, it appears that pronominal resumption of the subject is optional, for we find pairs that are very similar in both their overall structure and the choice of subjects and types of predicates, but which behave differently in respect of speaker’s choice of inserting or not inserting a resumptive pronoun. Second, there appears to be a division between animate subjects, which, as in (67), attract resumption by means of a third person pronoun of the series hu/hì/hem, and inanimates, which, as in (69), attract deictic ze (with or without gender and number agreement). We suggest that this distinction is similar to the one discussed above, in connection with examples (63)–(65).

In other words, hu/hì/hem accompany — by speaker’s choice — topical entities, linking them to a (nominal) predicative element that acts as an attribute, while ze accompanies — again, by choice — states-of-affairs, linking them to a predicate noun that serves as an explanatory definition. Consider, as further evidence, the following examples:

(70) kol a-xavrot ṣel-anu em aškenazi-yót all the-girlfriends of-1PL they Ashkenazi-F.PL
‘All our girlfriends are Ashkenazi.’

(71) āba u ben-adám meōd patiāx father he human,being very open.SG.M
‘Dad is a very open-minded person.’

(72) ve-kol a-nṣia a-zót l réva šāa and-all the-trip(F) the-this.F she quarter hour
‘And this whole trip takes a quarter of an hour.’

Note at the same time that noun ‘my mother’ is also be pronominalized, its attributive predicate resuming in an inanimate construction (its subsidiary) —

(73) vēgās Vegas
‘Vegas’

(74) a-xun the-nei ’This is
‘This is the neighborhood’

(75) axvā z e Axva and-mo
‘And me’

(76) ve-ima and-mo
‘And me’

Note at the same time that noun ‘my mother’ is also be pronominalized, its attributive predicate resuming in an inanimate construction (its subsidiary) —

Finally, we would like to return to the language and roles: 

(77) ze this.M
‘This is

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Note that hu/hi/hem typically resume nominal entities that are animate and so more likely to be agent-topics, but that in some cases, as in (72), an inanimate noun may also be promoted to the status of an established topical entity that can be linked to an attributive predicate. Similarly, the following examples show that ze typically resumes inanimate nominals, and is often followed by a kind of appositional construction (v.f. ‘Vegas—a city’, ‘the neighbourhood—a neighbourhood’, ‘Ahva—a subsidiary’) — once again, an explanatory definition:

(73) vēgās ze ir șe-xavāl al-a-zmān
Vegas this.m city COMP-pity on-the-time
‘Vegas is a great city.’

(74) a-șxunā æ xunā șe-kol a-zmān mitxalēf-et
the-neighbourhood(F) this.m neighbourhood(F) COMP-all the-time changes-SG.F
‘This is a neighbourhood that is changing all the time.’

(75) axva ze a-šlūhā șel-a-universita be-beer-šēva
this.m the-subsidiary of-the-university in-Beer-Sheba
‘Axva is a subsidiary of Beer Sheba University.’

(76) ve-ima șel-i ze ūma polani-yā
and-mother of-1SG this.m mother Polish-SG.F
‘And my mother is a Polish Mother.’

Note at the same time that here too, there are exceptions, and as (76) shows, animate entities may also be awarded the same kind of treatment. In this particular case, the noun ‘my mother’ is being treated not as an established topic and potential agent or actor, but as a phenomenon, for which a definition — an example of the genre Polish Mother, a type of characterization alluding to exaggerated care — is offered as an explanation.

Finally, we find, as a particular feature of SIH that is not found in the formal language, a tendency for pronominal resumption in relative clauses to include subject-roles:

(77) ze kēšer șe-ū yotēr e/ ben ūma le-bāt
this.m relationship(M) COMP-he more between mother to-daughter
‘This is a relationship which is more uh/ between mother and daughter.’

9 Contrasting with the absence of such resumption of subject positions in the formal language: cf. Shlonsky 1992.
In (80) the particle bemēt indicates that the predicate is a compler, while the predicative of kaše-nêti is a postverbal phrase, which is a colloquial Hebraic way of saying "I really enjoyed myself". In (81) the particle še-yē is the complementizer for the subject phrase in the-hand, which also indicates simultaneity.

5.7 Subordination

Although SIH does not differ from its more formal counterpart varieties in any major way in the construction of subordinations, there are a few distinctive features that are worth noting. The first pertains to the tendency to generalize the particle še, which we gloss here formally as a 'complementizer', for various modes of subordination. This tendency has its roots, we suggest, in the appearance of še in clauses that are not, formally speaking, subordinated at all, but are posited under a semantic condition:

(80) bemēt še-nêti
really COMP-enjoyed.1SG
'I really enjoyed myself'

(81) še-yē késef ba-yâd
COMP-be.3SG.FUT money in-the-hand
'As long as there is money.'
In (80) the predication that is introduced by še falls under the scope of the sentence adverb, while in (81) it is attached to a modal condition that is not verbalized, giving the predication an optative reading. One of the functions of še in both formal and colloquial Hebrew is to introduce relative clauses. In SIH, however, še may introduce clauses that are generally attributive to the head without the requirement that the head itself figure in the relative clause as an argument:

(82) az yeš l-anú gan ha-ir še-táma os-im pešluyot

then there.is to-1PL park the-city COMP-there do-PL activities

'Then we have the city park, which is where they have activities.'

(83) végas ze ir še-xavāl al-a-zmán

Vegas this.M city COMP-pity on-the-time

'Vegas is a great city.'

In complement clauses, which are also introduced by še, SIH, unlike formal Hebrew, allows the omission of overt equi-subject expressions (cf. Formal IH še-hi lo siprá ‘that she did not tell’):

(84) itachánti še-lo siprá l-i al ze

angered.1SG COMP-NEG told.3SG.F to-1SG on this.M

'I got angry that she didn’t tell me about it.'

On the other hand, we find occasional omission of the complementizer še itself, when the subject of the complement clause is expressed overtly; Arabic substrate influence is not unlikely here, as this construction type is frequent in spoken Arabic:

(85) ani roé em lo báu

I see.3SG.M they NEG came.3PL

'I see that they haven’t arrived.'

The subordinator še also appears in adverbial clauses expressing temporal simultaneity. Here it replaces Formal IH ke-še, though we regard it not as a phonological reduction of the latter, but as an extension of the ‘default’ subordinator which also introduces relative and complement clauses:

(86) še-yéš avódá az ovdim

COMP-there.is work then work.PL

'When there is work, we work.'

(87) še-i mvašél-et, az ani menák-á

COMP-she cooks-SG.F then I clean-SG.F

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A complex conjunction appears in some temporal clauses of posteriority, involving the deixis ze:

(89) axrē ze še-ayimu xaverim nifrad-nu
     after this.M COMP-were.1PL friends split.up.1PL
     'After we had been partners, we split up.'

An oddity, which we attribute yet again to Arabic substrate influence, is the neutralization of tense in temporal adverbial clauses (90). Here, the general or default subordinator še introduces the adverbial predication, which is tense-neutral (and by default, lacking a finite verb, in present tense; cf. Arabic w-ihnā šāb lit. 'and we are friends'). The posteriority reading is derived from the prepositional phrase expressing time:

(90) axrē šanah va-xēci še-anāxnu xaverim avär-ti lagūr po.
     After year and-half COMP-we friends moved-1SG live.INF here
     'After we had been partners for a year and a half I moved in here.'

Finally, new adverbial subordinators appear to express immediate simultaneity – ex-še ‘just as’, see example (27 above) –, and cause:

(91) ani šavār-ti po biglā še-ani mitgagēa la-miśpaxā
     I moved-1sg here because comp-1 miss.sg.n to.the-family
     'I moved here because I miss the family.'

### 6. Conclusion

In popular perception, Spoken Israeli Hebrew is most often associated with the particular ‘slang’ vocabulary that marks out vernacular use. This includes on the one hand numerous loans, many of them from Arabic (e.g. āxla ‘grand’, Arabic āhla ‘better, best’), quite a few from the other contributing substrate languages (e.g. bis ‘bite’ from Yiddish, balagān ‘chaos’ from Polish, džuk ‘insect, cockroach’ from Russian, āskara, a modal particle of affirmation, from Kurdish eskerē ‘clear, obvious’), or from English, alongside Arabic the principal contact language especially during the early period, confined to syntactic and vocabulary intensity (year question phrases má-še mean ‘how much’ fal-a-panim ‘a fantastic sight’, economy is in a-azmān ‘a way’, and fantastic sight in the research deictic, preposition as if’ – as discourse

(92) anāxnu
     we
     'We’re
(93) avāl
     but
     'But re
To those, who add the much as a connector

(94) kal
everything
     'Every
Finally, focus function, and a shift in meaning (normally present in the proposition:

(95) bā-ti
came-l
during the early period of vernacularization. Colloquial lexicon is not, however, confined to loans, and includes numerous grammaticalized items drawn from the native vocabulary. A few examples are the use of malé ‘full’ as an adverb expressing intensity (yarad li malé dam ‘I was bleeding very strongly’), the extension of the question phrase ma-ze? ‘what is this?’ as an intensifier in declarative clauses (avodá ma-ze meanyén ‘a really interesting job’), the extension of the prepositional phrase šal-a-panim ‘on its face’ to a default negative attribute (a-kalkalá šal-a-panim ‘the economy is in a bad condition’), yacáti mi-bet-sóar šal-a-panim ‘I came out of prison depressed/ in a bad mood’), and the extension of a negative phrase such as xaváš šal-a-zmán ‘a waste of time’ to a positive intensifier (ma-xazé xaváš šal-a-zmán ‘a fantastic sight’). Widely discussed in the Hebrew media and press, and recently also in the research literature (see Ziv 1998; Maschler 2002), is the grammaticalization of deictic, prepositional and connective markers of similarity – ka-zé ‘such’, keiltu ‘like, as if’ – as discourse markers:

(92) anáxnu šuv ka-ze beyyāxad
we again like-this together
‘We’re like together again’

(93) aváλ mamáš kilú lo-arbé zmán ayití šam
but really as if NEG-much time was.1SG there
‘But really like I wasn’t there for very long’

To those, which appear to have emerged only in the mid-to-late 1980s, one should add the much earlier, established grammaticalization of the temporal deixis az ‘then’ as a connector:

(94) kol ma še-ani rocá, az ani mkabé-l-et
everything what comp-I want.SG.F then I get-SG.F
‘Everything I want, I get’

Finally, focus particles are undergoing a process of bleaching of their semantic function, and are acquiring the function of more abstract speech-act modifiers. This shift in meaning accompanies the shift in their position, from one that is adjacent to (normally preceding) the constituent that is the point of focus, to a position at the end of the utterance, where they appear as a kind of afterthought, qualifying the entire proposition:

(95) báti itkašár-tí el-áv a-báyta gam
came-1SG called-1SG to-3SG.M home also
Our main goal in this paper was to present an overview of some of the distinctive structural features of vernacular Israeli Hebrew, based on a corpus of tape-recorded conversations. This is, to our knowledge, the first such attempt to pilot a corpus-analysis of spoken Hebrew for the purpose of a comprehensive description. The most striking feature revealed by the corpus analysis is the considerable extent of structural change, following just two generations of vernacular use of the language by native speakers. SIH shows far-reaching patterns of syllable restructuring and phonological contractions, extensive morphological levelling, and restructuring of agreement rules. We view this as confirmation of Izre’el’s characterization of vernacular Hebrew as part of a continuum of contact languages, a language that is subjected to rapid sociolinguistic change triggered by its adaptation to new usage patterns, based only to a limited degree on the particular target variety of Hebrew that might be defined as a superstrate (2002: 218).

While our findings, especially those observations that involve a variationist interpretation, will need to be examined more closely on the basis of a wider corpus representing a broader range of population sectors, we have attempted here to pilot not just the corpus-based approach as such, but also an analysis that pays attention to aspects of syntactic typology. In this hitherto largely neglected domain, we have established two principal tendencies. The first consists of what must be regarded as language-internal developments which involve shifts in internal categorizations. It is best exemplified by two separate phenomena: the ongoing shift in the function of *et*, and the extension of pronominal resumption to a variety of syntactic environments.

Out of context, both phenomena have often been attributed, globally and on the basis of little concrete evidence, to the influence of European substrate languages. It has been argued that the extension of *et* to possessive constructions is triggered by the presence in some European languages, e.g. Yiddish and Polish, of a verb *have*, and the accusative marking of its direct object. Pronominal resumption in nominal sentences — the so-called ‘copula’ — is often related to the absence of nominal sentences and the obligatory presence of copula in existential predications that lack lexical verbs in some European languages. We have shown that both phenomena are part of a wider context of ongoing shifts in grammatical categorizations. For *et*, we have defined an ongoing shift from a syntactic categorization (as direct object) to a

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10 For plans toward a larger-scale corpus analysis of SIH see Hary and Izre’el 2002.
semantic one (as patient). Concerning pronominal resumption, we have established an extension of resumption for the purposes of clarification and classification of nouns from the discourse level to the clause level.

Alongside these internal changes, we have identified instances of ongoing typological change which are in line with an Arabic substrate and where a case might be made for contact-induced shift in categorization. These include the expression of local relations and some case relations, as well as certain aspects of adverbal subordination. We suggest that these observations should justify a re-prioritization in the research agenda of SIH. So far, attention to substrate influence in the areas of morphosyntax and lexical semantics has been almost entirely synonymous with an analysis of the influence of Yiddish and other European substrates (cf. Zuckermann 2003, Wexler 1990). The evidence of an Arabic substrate shows just how important it is to take into account not just the substrate languages of the political elite in the early days of the formation of Jewish-Israeli society, but also those of other immigrant groups. Arabic was the native language of a large proportion of Mizrahi Israelis, who in turn make up a large proportion of speakers of the working class vernacular. It is here — within the socially weaker sectors of Israeli society, that have less access to education, literacy and participation in formal communicative events — that language change in the vernacular takes on its most rapid pace and its most radical shape (cf. Raviv 1995: 173). It is the Working-class Vernacular, we suggest, which is the source of diffusion of many changes into the General Colloquial use. We therefore wish to conclude with an appeal for a revised agenda in the study of Spoken Israeli Hebrew, one that is open-minded both toward the diversity of language-internal phenomena of typological change, and toward the complex mosaic of potential substrate influences whose effects continue to surface in the evolving patterns of vernacular speech.

**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>complementizer/relativizer</td>
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<td>CONSTR</td>
<td>construct state</td>
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<td>DUAL</td>
<td>dual</td>
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<td>negation particle</td>
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