**Language and Conflict in East Jerusalem: Arab Teachers’ Perspectives on Learning Hebrew**

**Abstract**

This study examines East Jerusalem teachers’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the acquisition of and communication in Hebrew as a second language in the context of a complicated education system overshadowed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The education system in East Jerusalem is divided between schools supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education and those supervised by its Palestinian Authority counterpart. The Israeli ministry requires teachers in its East Jerusalem schools to learn basic Hebrew at an Israeli higher education institute. The study’s participants, all Arab teachers from East Jerusalem who had studied Hebrew in this way, were asked about their command and usage of Hebrew via structured, open-ended questionnaires, which were then qualitatively assessed. The study found that the participants were willing to learn Hebrew for everyday communicative purposes, but were primarily motivated to do so by instrumental and utilitarian considerations. The participants’ communication in Hebrew was found to be accompanied by sentiments that they were jeopardizing their sense of Palestinian identity in the process, as citizens under Israeli rule in the context of the precarious status of East Jerusalem. This means that such national identification impedes second language acquisition in this context, something which has important implications for national language policy in this area.

Keywords: Jerusalem, Hebrew, Arab second language teachers; language education

**Introduction**

examinesEast Jerusalem on learning doing so in that part of the cityWhereas studies on Arabs’ acquisition of Hebrew in Israel such as Mar’i and Buchweitz (2021) examine the issues in a general way, this study focuses on the particularities of Arab East Jerusalemite teachers’ experiences with divided educational provision controlled by rival Israeli and Palestinian educational authorities. East Jerusalem educational institutions are supervised by either the Israeli Ministry of Education or its Palestinian Authority (PA) counterpart. The Israeli ministry requires teachers in its schools to study Hebrew at an Israeli academic institution.

The Arab residents of East Jerusalem are a sub-community of the larger Arab minority in Israel, but with a distinct status. They are not fully-fledged citizens, but do have permanent Israeli residency, unlike other Arab communities in Israel, meaning they can vote in local elections, receive the same social security and health benefits as Israeli residents, and work throughout Israel. They may also apply for Israeli citizenship under certain conditions, among which is that they prove they have at least a basic knowledge of Hebrew.

The East Jerusalem Arab population experiences two competing drivers: A desire to participate in the Israeli economy on the one hand and a sense of not belonging to/hostility toward Israeli society on the other. These two drivers are key in their lives, as has already been clearly reflected in the findings in Koren and Abrahami (2017), based as it is on a survey of East Jerusalemite teachers’ attitudes to learning Hebrew.

The present study is a case study on how minorities in conflict with the hegemonic culture perceive the issue of national languages, in particular here by a minority that does not identify with that hegemonic power.divided intomajorities and minorities on groundsprovisionlyeducation provision lys groups and mies

The Ministry of Education and the Education Board (*Manhi*) for the Arab sector in Jerusalem Municipality are responsible for the educational infrastructure in East Jerusalem. The infrastructure is based on three tracks, each representing a different type of school with different targets in terms of Hebrew language acquisition (Alayan, 2021).

The first track concerns the minority of Ministry of Education-recognized schools under Jerusalem Municipality supervision that teach the Israeli curriculum. They prepare students for the Israeli matriculation exam (*te’udat begrut*) and have Hebrew lessons four to five days a week starting in the third grade. Most of the teachers, administrators, and supervisors at these schools are Israeli Arabs. Unlike the Palestinian curriculum, this program prepares students to access the Israeli higher education system and job market.

The second track consists of recognized but unofficial schools that act without the Israeli education ministry’s supervision. They are mainly run by Arab non-profit organizations under the PA that teach the Palestinian curriculum and only part of the Israeli one. Students ultimately take the Jordanian-Palestinian matriculation exam(*tawjihi*), as is the norm in the West Bank and Gaza (Yair & Alayan, 2009). The number of students in these schools has increased by a factor of almost 14 over the last decade. Of those studying in Palestinian curriculum schools, 92 per cent receive only a basic level of Hebrew language instruction (State Comptroller, 2019).

The third track consists of private schools run by churches, Muslim charity (*waqf*)organizations, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They are funded by a variety of bodies and educate around 20,000 Palestinian students, approximately one-quarter of the total. They generally teach very little Hebrew and prepare students for the *tawjihi*, with only two of them teaching the Hebrew curriculum in preparation for the *te’udat begrut* (Alayan, 2021).

Given this context, study of teachers’ attitudes crucially contributes to understanding how national language policy affects second language (L2) educators’ teaching, given theories of L2 acquisition that regard the level of social integration as key in determining how successfully command the language is achieved (e.g., Schumann, 2012). Furthermore, analyzing teachers’ perceptions can also enhance policy development, given their significant experience and knowledge of the complexities of language policy and practice (Levy-Gazenfrantz & Shapira-Lischinsky, 2017, p. 232).

**Literature Review**

Hebrew is the principal medium for conducting

public life in Jerusalem and access to public services, government institutions, employment, healthcare, higher education, and recreational facilities is mostly reserved for those who can speak that. The level of Hebrew among East Jerusalem residents is low, even though they acknowledge that proficiency in Hebrew is a key asset (Alayan, 2019). Provision of Hebrew teaching in East Jerusalem schools is scarce, mainly due to the paucity of professional Hebrew teachers willing to work in East Jerusalem. Educators report that only 17 percent of their students can converse in Hebrew at a high level (Ratner et al., 2019). East Jerusalem residents’ use of Hebrew tends to be limited to necessary communication with governmental and administrative services. Lehrs (2012) reports that per cent ofEast Jerusalem’s Arabs surveyed saying they to-to-standard per centtolow-to-standard per centnot; per centedusinginwork;and per centedfindingcompletingand difficult. However, per cent of those surveyed saidacquire proficiency in, confirming the findings in Hasson (2015) and Stern (2015) that, despite the low level of command of the language, motivation to learn Hebrew is high.

A number of studies have demonstrated that Arabic speakers in Israel attribute great importance to proficiency in Hebrew because of its many social and economic advantages (Abu-Asbah et al., 2011; Amara & Mar’i, 2002; Atily, 2004, p. 342; Ministry of Education, 2015). Ilaiyan and Abu Hussain (2012)’s study of attitudes of Arab students in East Jerusalem toward Hebrew found positive perceptions toward the study of it as an L2 and a willingness to communicate in it outside of the classroom. Some of the parents also supported their children’s Hebrew language studies, mainly in light of the future instrumental-pragmatic advantages the language can give their children.

A low level of fluency in Hebrew impedes access to jobs and social rights (Bassul, 2016). It also affects the level of jobs obtainable and it is common for otherwise experienced and well-qualified people to work as waiters or cleaners, for example, due to their level of Hebrew being inadequate (Jaber, 2020). Young

Arabs in Jerusalem have a higher level of Hebrew proficiency than adults due to their more frequent contact with Hebrew speakers in their daily lives and a greater likelihood of access to expedited courses at private institutions and dedicated Hebrew-language schools(*ulpanim* sing. *ulpan*) (Ha’aretz, 2013). In recent years, many *ulpanim* have opened in Jerusalem’s Palestinian neighborhoods and the number of attendees has grown significantly (Ha’aretz, 2016: 6), although the high cost involved is a limiting factor. Fluency in more than young among young men than of both sexes A key driver for acquiring Hebrew language and studying the Israeli curriculum is it being a prerequisite for obtaining the Israeli matriculation certificate (*bagrut*) recognized by Israeli institutes of higher education (Alayan, 2017).

Government and City Hall have identified the extent of demand and the former’s program for East Jerusalem includes a large budget for encouraging the learning of Hebrew. May 2018’s Government Decision 3790 aims to reduce socioeconomic disparities and boost economic development in East Jerusalem and a large portion of the budget allocated for it is earmarked for Hebrew language instruction (Lavi et al., 2018).

As already indicated, most East Jerusalem students follow the PA-mandated curriculum, the main motivation for this being related to the political conflict and the fear that students will acquire knowledge that might undermine their Palestinian identity and alter their political perceptions in what is perceived as unfavorable ways. Social and cultural factors also influence willingness to learn an L2 when it is perceived as a threat to identity, while motivation and positive perceptions toward the second language highly contribute to its acquisition (Ushida, 2005). The cultural and political distance between minority groups and the target-language-speaking population influences language learning: The greater the divide, the lower the L2 acquisition success rate (Bechor, 1992). Peoples living under foreign regimes tend to wish to preserve their mother tongue because it is an important source of their identity (Taylor, 1994; Obeidat, 2005). The prevalent influence of these factors in Hebrew acquisition among East Jerusalem Arabs is obvious, but the matter is complicated by the economic advantages of learning Hebrew (Lavi et al., 2018). As Schumann contends, learners from socially and psychologically alienated groups find it harder to acquire an L2, but employ specific strategies and techniques to bridge the divide (Schumann, 2013).

Education Ministry and Jerusalem Municipality decision-makers often view studying the Palestinian curriculum as something that undermines Israeli sovereignty (Ronen, 2020). That said, a significant percentage of the Arab population studies the Israeli curriculum, despite receiving threats from political elements in the community (Ronen, 2018). According to a 2017 Jerusalem Municipality survey, 48 per cent of East Jerusalem students’ parents would prefer their children to study the Israeli curriculum. Nevertheless, some in the Arab community still see the Israeli curriculum as a political threat and, following the 2017 survey, a Muslim ruling was issued that the Israeli curriculum must not be taught in East Jerusalem (Yelon, 2017).

Masry-Harzallah et al. point out that many students in East Jerusalem learn Hebrew as a third or fourth language, after Arabic, English, and French or German (2011, p. 92). It is not surprising then that the overall proficiency in Hebrew in East Jerusalem is generally at so a low level that many East Jerusalemites cannot work in the Western part of the city or even hold a basic conversation in the language (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). As already stated, however, there is a shortage of Hebrew teachers working in East Jerusalem and there is also a lack of suitable textbooks. Many Hebrew teachers in East Jerusalem schools are untrained non-professionals and the few Hebrew textbooks available are primarily designed for Jewish immigrants and contain overtly unpalatable political messages for Palestinian students.

East Jerusalemite high school graduates tend to pursue any further studies they follow at Al-Quds University, universities in the West Bank, or academic institutions in other Arab countries because they find it difficult to get accepted into Israeli universities, even with *te’udat begrut*. Even after their studies, many still find it hard to enter the Israeli job market because to do so often requires obtaining further credentials officially recognized in Israel. Many therefore invest significant financial resources in spending a year or more learning Hebrew and attaining their *te’udat bagrut* in the Hebrew University’s or other privately-run preparatory programs in East Jerusalem to be able to enter Israeli academic institutions (Hasson, 2015).

The Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality allot students in Palestinian school programs only a relatively reduced budget, whereas those studying in Israeli school programs are allotted a priority budget, as well as a development budget designed to encourage them to switch to the Israeli programs (Ronen, 2018). East Jerusalem students studying the Palestinian curriculum are thus particularly challenged by the language barrier. According to the 2018 government program “Reducing social gaps and economic development in East Jerusalem,” more than 43 per cent of the Israeli government budgeting allotted to education in East Jerusalem (approximately 193m out of 445m NIS) is contingent upon students switching to study the Israeli curriculum (Ir Amim, 2020).

**Methodology**

The study adopts a primarily qualitative and interpretative, rather than quantitative statistical approach, with analysis partly based on researchers’ intuitions, and its goal is to obtain insights that may lead to a wider understanding of the relevant issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This type of research encourages creativity within the analytical process, while recognizing the relevant limitations. The analysis is inherently limited by the context on which it focuses. The choice to focus on the interpretative approach (Spector-Mersel, 2011) stems from our focus on elements that are politically and socially charged, and which include a narrative aspect.

The study was conducted with 29 teachers, all residents of East Jerusalem having participated in a “Hebrew language and expression” course at one of the Arab colleges in Israel’s central region, who were recruited using the convenience sampling method. The 29 respondents were out of a total of 33 people to whom questionnaires were given, with four not submitting responses. The participants taught various subjects at East Jerusalem schools, from primary- to high-school level. The overwhelming majority of the 33 people to whom questionnaires were distributed were women (91 per cent). One was employed by the Israeli Ministry of Education, four by the Jerusalem Municipality, three by the PA, and the remaining 11 by private institutions. Their experience in teaching years ranged from four to 25.

The participants’ proficiency in Hebrew was generally basic, consisting of letter recognition and familiarity with a few words. They generally found it difficult to construct a simple sentence or conduct a short conversation in Hebrew. They had previously learned Hebrew in the following institutions: In public schools under the supervision of the Jerusalem Municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education, where few hours are dedicated to teaching Hebrew learning, with instruction levels rudimentary; in private institutions in East Jerusalem, at the “first steps toward Hebrew acquisition” level; in elective courses at Palestinian universities and colleges; and through informal channels as a result of working or other contact with Jewish people in West Jerusalem.

The open-ended questionnaire was composed in Arabic by Abd-El-Rahman Mar’i and distributed at the end of the 2018–19 school year after the teachers had completed their Hebrew course. The 10 questions (see Appendix) interrogate key aspects of the teachers’ willingness or otherwise to acquire Hebrew, their perceptions on the issues involved, and the influences on their studies. It was based on a previous one developed for a May 2018 study by Israel’s National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (RAMA) that followed a government decision on reducing socioeconomic disparities and enhancing economic development in East Jerusalem, one that emphasized the promotion of Hebrew teaching as one of its four key goals. This study included an attitude survey distributed to educators of their needs (Ratner et al., 2019, pp. 20–27). The design of the current study’s questionnaire also drew on the authors’ cumulative experience in Hebrew language and literature teaching and was devised after in-depth consultation with two qualitative research experts to ensure the validity of the methods and findings.

The questionnaire was distributed with the college’s permission and participants were assured that their privacy and anonymity would be protected and that they could opt out of answering any part of the questionnaire at any point without explanation. The respondents were given 90 minutes to complete the survey, which was judged to be sufficient time for experienced teachers to do so. N was imposed andfreely own

The data was transcribed by the authors and inspected for reliable transcription by a qualitative research expert and a quantitative research expert. The coding of the data and the identification of valid themes were determined in conjunction with the qualitative and quantitative experts.

Analysis of the answers identified four themes for the data processing stage: The contexts in which Hebrew language acquisition occurred (Q1, Q2, Q6); the involvement of the Israeli Ministry of Education in the Hebrew instruction process (Q3, Q8); the benefit of learning Hebrew based on instrumental considerations (Q4, Q5); the political and identity aspects of Hebrew acquisition (Q7, Q9, Q10).

**Results**

***Hebrew acquisition contexts***

Only half of the teachers in the study had studied Hebrew before enrolling at the college. On the contribution of language institutions to Hebrew acquisition (Q6), a frequent response was that it was minimal, with answers including: “Most institutions serve commercial and economic goals”; “What matters is the money, not the teaching”; “They do not focus on teaching and stay at the basic level of learning the alphabet.” Some respondents said that a significant portion of the instruction had limited practical value: As one respondent put it, “I can read a text in Hebrew, but I cannot conduct a short conversation.”

A few mentioned that they were exposed to and/or acquired Hebrew through working with and/or other contact with Jewish speakers of the language and that they, therefore, did not feel the need to study in institutions. They either learn Hebrew at the *ulpanim* for immigrants in West Jerusalem so as to enter higher education institutions, or do voluntary service where they learn Hebrew at *ulpanim* specifically established to help young people in East Jerusalem participate in academic and professional arenas (Piotrkowski, 2013).

A few participants referred to the positive contribution made by the institutions, with comments including: “They teach very well and it depends on the degree of willingness and motivation of the learner to invest in acquiring the language”; “The instruction is at a very high level and helps the applicants enter Israeli colleges and universities and work in the Israeli job market”; “There are a few reputable institutes in the city that have Jewish teachers.” Some of these respondents also mentioned, however, that the institutions were expensive and that the government should provide free Hebrew courses.

When it came to participants who had not studied Hebrew previously (see Q1), representative responses included: “I went to a private school where there were no Hebrew lessons”; “I do not have the time to learn Hebrew at a private institute”; “My parents do not care about me learning the language.” One teacher remarked that she “does not like learning Hebrew.”

***Israeli Education Ministry involvement in Hebrew instruction***

Reasons cited for why the Ministry is interested in teaching the language (Q3) included: “To strengthen Hebrew education and weaken the status of the Arabic language in the city”; “To foster contact between the two peoples”; “To give Hebrew the status of exclusive, official language in institutions run by the Ministry of Education and make it a given [requirement]”; “To prepare learners for participation in the Israeli job market.” Some also acknowledged that Hebrew is a basic requirement for obtaining public sector jobs.

A significant number of respondents maintained that the Ministry claimed to be supportive of Hebrew acquisition, but did little to encourage it in practice, given the lack of teachers and time and other resources devoted to it. From their explanations for this being the case, the following stood out: “So that the residents of East Jerusalem do not learn their social rights”; “To deepen the discrimination between Jews and Arabs in the city”; “So that the Jerusalem Arabs cannot face the enemy”; “To implement the policy of marginalizing Arab schools.”

Only a few respondents said they were happy with the professional level of Hebrew teachers in East Jerusalem schools and their nationality (Q8). The overwhelming majority were unequivocally dissatisfied in this regard. Frequent responses included claims that East Jerusalem teachers were “not proficient in Hebrew,” “can hardly read or write,” and “spend most of their time teaching the alphabet.” Arab Israeli teachers, most of whom are students at academic institutions in Jerusalem, were seen as “having proficiency in Hebrew, but lacking pedagogical knowledge” or “having a hard time controlling the students and teaching the course material.” The following statements in the responses are also noteworthy: “The passing grade in Hebrew is 50”; “The tests focus on knowledge of the alphabet and a few vocabulary words”; “They pass everyone so that they do not have a ‘fail’ on their grade card.” Likewise, most respondents who had studied Hebrew at school claimed that the lesson content was repetitive, mostly focused on the alphabet, and did not help them learn the language properly.

***Instrumental benefits of learning Hebrew***

Most respondents maintained that Hebrew use had been imposed on residents of East Jerusalem (Q4) following the seizure of control by the Israeli authorities and the transfer of municipal services under the responsibility of the Jerusalem Municipality, and in light of their dependence on the Israeli economy. Participants emphasized the importance of Hebrew in day-to-day life, for example: “Knowing Hebrew gives me more opportunities to work in government facilities in Israel as well as private institutions”; “Knowing Hebrew makes it easier for Arabs in East Jerusalem to know their rights and obligations”; “Hebrew gives me the ability to fill out forms”; “Hebrew helps me manage my personal affairs, read letters, talk to Hebrew-speaking officials, etc.”; “Knowing Hebrew helps me get service at the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, Social Security, etc.”; “Hebrew helps me communicate with Jews in the public sphere.” A few outlying participants presented different reasons for learning Hebrew: “According to Islam you must learn the language of your enemy”; “Knowing Hebrew arms me with tools that make it possible for me to deal with the enemy and understand him.” One teacher claimed that “under the current conditions, they cannot force their curriculum on us. The Israelis want to integrate East Jerusalem into Israeli society, but discrimination in terms of services prevents this from happening.”

The fragile security situation in East Jerusalem, the Israeli West Bank barrier, and the Israeli security checkpoints contribute to the feeling of constant fear and affect the residents’ self-confidence (Q5). A large part of respondents gave serious weight to the link between the language and the security situation, as evidenced by the following examples: “Knowing Hebrew boosts your confidence when you are at a checkpoint or you see soldiers walking around the Old City alleys”; “Proficiency in Hebrew gives me the strength and the courage to defend myself, so I will not end up mute, embarrassed, and tense when facing a Jew”; “Knowing Hebrew breaks down the barrier of fear toward the other”; “The checkpoint is a big problem for young people, so I am studying Hebrew because of the security situation in order to communicate with the military or the border police at checkpoints”; “Knowing Hebrew gives me inner confidence for when I go to the Jewish neighborhood to take care of personal matters.” Only a few respondents saw the matter in a different light: “Fear and confidence are psychological matters, but it is important to learn the language”; “We live in Jerusalem together, the fear is created by security incidents”; “The kids are scared of the soldiers anyway.”

***Political and identity-related aspects of Hebrew acquisition***

The study sought to examine the influence language had on learners’ sense of identity, both directly and indirectly. Participants’ perceptions were first elicited by having them compare themselves to West Bank Palestinian Arabs (Q7). Most respondents stated that there is a fundamental difference in the perception of Hebrew between the two groups. Relevant quotations from the survey in this regard include “In the West Bank, they disregard the language due to their nationalist outlook, because they are under the occupation, and we, the Jerusalemites, are less so”; “Some of the young people in East Jerusalem are proficient in Hebrew and proud of it, whereas in the West Bank being proficient in Hebrew is seen as collaborationism and giving up your Palestinian nationality”; “In East Jerusalem, Hebrew is a necessary part of reality and, in the West Bank, it is considered the language of the enemy that is not required”; “In East Jerusalem people know more Hebrew than the West Bank due to the economic and political realities”; “In East Jerusalem, knowing Hebrew is necessary to know your social rights while, in the West Bank, Hebrew helps them get work in Israel.” A small minority of teachers claimed there was no difference between the two populations. One teacher emphasized that “the two groups are equally interested in learning Hebrew so they can know the enemy from up close.”

The participants were also asked to assess how being offered full Israeli citizenship, like Israeli Arabs, might affect their attitude toward the Hebrew language (Q9). The majority of respondents answered that they were willing to learn Hebrew regardless of citizenship issues, for reasons including: “Knowing the enemy’s language”; “We are under occupation and want to know what the enemy thinks of us”; “To broaden my education”; “To communicate with the other, like people do in English”; and “It is an important local language and you cannot communicate with the Jews without it.” A few participants disclosed willingness to learn Hebrew for the sake of citizenship, citing the following reasons: “It makes it easier for me to integrate into life in the State of Israel”; “I am willing to invest in learning the language and make contact with the Jews, which contributes to proficiency”; “It is an opportunity to be proficient in the language and to meet Jews.” On the other hand, about a quarter of the participants noted that they would refuse Israeli citizenship in all circumstances for the following reasons: “I am unwilling to give up my Palestinian identity”; “Hebrew is the language of occupation, and acquiring it is for the sake of resistance”; “If I had citizenship, it would have a negative effect on me.”

The participants were also asked to state their opinion about whether learning Hebrew impairs their national identity (Q10). Most participants determined that it did not weaken or impair their Palestinian identity, as evidenced by the following examples: “Hebrew is the colonial language designated for conducting the lives of citizens and distancing them from the Palestinian people”; “We are under exploitation and oppression because of the Israeli occupation and the language is part of that system”; “Better proficiency in Hebrew is not an indication of giving up Palestinian nationality”; “Proficiency in Hebrew was designed to hurt the city of Al-Quds and weaken the Arabic language from the start, and I am aware of it.” Only a few teachers determined that it could harm their identity, as evidenced in the following examples: “Knowing Hebrew at a higher level may bolster Israelization”; “It might affect young people more, in that they will worry about their own personal welfare and drift away from the Palestinian people.”

**Discussion**

Based on the respondents’ answers, it is possible to assert that an improvement in the level of instruction would boost the motivation for Hebrew acquisition among students.

Instrumental considerations weight upon the acquisition of the language of “the other,” especially for a minority (Ben-David, 2017; Dubiner, 2012). Most study participants agreed that acquiring Hebrew is valuable in a social space in which it is the dominant language. The motivation to learn Hebrew is, thus, pragmatically driven to facilitate, for example, communication with authorities, obtaining state services, joining the Israeli job market, and studying in academic institutions in Israel.

Whether driven by instrumental or integrative motivation, the degree of language acquisition has social implications, it being the first step toward integration into a society and its culture (Gardner, 1980; Macintyre et al., 2003). One of the teacher respondents said that Hebrew was a bridge toward better familiarity with Jewish culture and that learning a new language and being exposed to the culture of the other expands knowledge. Others, however, resiled from these cultural aspects due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which prevents the learners from accepting the other and assimilating their culture (Bechor, 1992). Still other respondents saw Hebrew acquisition as a religious duty, since Islam obliges worshippers to know the language of those with whom they come into contact.

A significant percentage of respondents said that, while Hebrew is useful for communicating with Israeli Jews, they still considered it the language of the enemy and forced upon them by the occupation. Some teachers in East Jerusalem therefore prefer not to pursue their Hebrew studies too far since proficiency in Hebrew is viewed by some as damaging to Palestinian nationalism and a step toward Israeli citizenship. The complex political reality around them, their ambiguous civic-political status, the divisions between Palestinian and Israeli educational institutions, and discrimination against citizens of East Jerusalem all serve to reinforce their Palestinian identity. They see themselves as part of West Bank Palestinian society and committed to the Palestinian nationalist ambition (Yair & Alayan, 2009). The Hebrew language is perceived by some of them as part of the occupation and hostilities between the communities impede the building of trust and relationships, so East Jerusalem’s Arabs are disinclined to follow the process of Israelization some Arabs in Israel more broadly have, which has included increased levels of Hebrew learning and the adoption of aspects of Israeli culture (Amara & Mar’i, 2002; Mar’i, 2013).

**Conclusion**

The study found that, while there is an inclination among Arabs in East Jerusalem to learn Hebrew, it predominantly stems from instrumental considerations for purposes of practical communication and economic advancement. Contrarily, there is a national-identity-related resistance in this community to normalizing relations with Israel, making identification with the Palestinian nationalist cause an inhibiting factor in Hebrew-language acquisition. The study likewise shows how knowledge of Hebrew facilitates unmediated communication with institutions and individuals in Israel that could eventually lead to a change of attitude toward Hebrew speakers as a whole.

The limitations of the study lie in its status as a preliminary one and in the fact that the 29 respondents participating in the survey may not constitute a representative sample. Follow-up studies using systematic sampling of all the Palestinian teachers in East Jerusalem would, therefore, be preferable to assess how representative the findings here are and to assess any other factors involved. That said, the study is a significant starting point for further research on the influence of national language policy on L2 teachers and on those engaged in teaching languages other than their native tongue.

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# Appendix: Survey questions

Question 1: Why have you not studied Hebrew until now? (If you have please skip to the next question).

Question 2: Have you studied Hebrew before? In what context and at what level?

Question 3: In your opinion, is the Israeli Ministry of Education interested in teaching the Arabs in East Jerusalem Hebrew? And why?

Question 4: What do you think about the following statement: “Hebrew has been imposed on the Arabs in East Jerusalem as a means of handling routine practical matters.”

Question 5: Do you agree with the claim that teaching Hebrew to children in East Jerusalem bolsters their confidence and makes them less afraid when they see Jews or encounter them?

Question 6: There are private Hebrew language schools in East Jerusalem. Do these institutions contribute to Hebrew language acquisition and fluency?

Question 7: In your opinion, are there differences in perceptions and attitudes toward the Hebrew language among Arabs in East Jerusalem and Arabs in the West Bank? Why?

Question 8: Are you happy with the level of Hebrew teachers at the schools in East Jerusalem? What is these teacher’s nationality? Who funds them?

Question 9: If you were given full citizenship, like the Israeli Arabs, would you change your mind about the Hebrew language? Why?

Question 10: How has Hebrew acquisition affected your national identity?