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Language educational policy in the service of group identity: the Habad case

Michal Tannenbaum[1] · Hagit Cohen[1]

Abstract Attitudes towards language and language education policy (LEP) interact with groups' identities, internal dynamics and intergroup relations. Combining quantitative and qualitative measures, we focused on the Habad community—a Jewish ultra-Orthodox (UO) minority in Israel—exploring its LEP and community attitudes toward languages meaningful to them—Hebrew, Loshen Koydesh, Yiddish and English. Our analysis revealed varying views concerning the main languages associated with their actual and symbolic functions and gender differences regarding ideal LEP and LEP implementation. English emerged as occupying a unique position in Habad, reflecting this group's distinctiveness within the broader UO community and its greater openness. We found that language perceptions, curriculum, and ideology are closely intertwined—the state curriculum is implemented only partially, textbooks are mostly developed especially for Habad pupils, and community members and educators view the superiority of the community's values over the state curriculum as almost axiomatic. Our findings may be extrapolated to other contexts wherein minority groups develop their LEPs and adjust the curriculum to strike a balance between integration and the wish to maintain a distinctive identity. Languages (and LEPs in particular) are a powerful prism for the investigation of these issues.

Keywords Language education policy · Ultra-Orthodox · Israel · Minority · English · Identity

✉ Michal Tannenbaum
mtannen@post.tau.ac.il

[1] School of Education, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv, Israel

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Introduction

In our ever-changing, globalized world, multilingualism is a central topic of discourse, often linked to such matters as identity, language rights, promoting heritage languages, and the like. Language is viewed as a significant socio-cultural resource that nations or ethno-cultural groups may use to unify and separate discrete speech communities, endorsing relevant and adequate language policies to promote their own interests and ideologies (Fishman 1989; Kymlicka 2001; Tannenbaum 2009; May 2012). Traditionally, language policy has been studied mainly at the "macro" level of governmental planning to understand how formal institutions have managed languages as social resources, or addressed multilingualism in ways that accorded with societal ideologies. Such policies are often viewed as comprising three closely intertwined elements: (1) language management—the formulation of explicit plans or policies; (2) language beliefs or ideology, defined as "what people think should be done" (Spolsky 2004: 14); and (3) language practices, referring to actual behavior (Spolsky 2004). Using similar principles and conceptualization, language policies have been explored more recently in various micro-contexts— municipalities, institutions, families, schools, and more. Minorities (ethnic, linguistic, cultural) are highly affected by the policies of the state's dominant institutions, whose decisions reflect the power structure and the interests of different groups (Bourdieu 1991; Norton 2000; Shohamy 2006). Minorities, however, often develop language policies of their own in various micro-level settings, and their analysis may be helpful in the understanding of these groups' inner dynamics and inter-group relations.

Educational systems are of special importance, functioning as social means that leaders use to control their community, with educational institutions serving as vehicles for the transmission of norms and values (Adan 1976) and for the control of the language repertoire (Shohamy 2003; Krakowski 2008; Tucker 2008; Menken and García 2010; Ben-Yosef 2011). Language education policy (LEP) is thus viewed as a key factor in socialization—it develops the language competence of young people but may also brand other languages as dangerous and even come to view them as taboo. As in other domains of language policy, both top-down decisions and bottom-up LEP actions deriving from language practices or beliefs contribute to the actual repertoire of languages taught and used in various contexts and for different audiences (e.g. Cooper 1989; Spolsky 2004; Shohamy 2006).

The present study focused on a specific minority group in Israel – Habad, which is a Jewish ultra-Orthodox community (more closely described in the next section). In view of the close relations between language and identity in general, and language policy and minority identity in particular, we set as our central goal the exploration of Habad's LEP in terms of its ideological, practical and social features. We explored the perceptions and attitudes of community members in Israel toward languages, the association between the explicit and implicit layers of its LEP, its links with ideological features, and the language teaching curriculum, for English in particular (given its stance worldwide and within Israel, as will be further elaborated). We included curriculum aspects because they are central to educational

planning, and due to their dominant role in the discourse on education and in educational attitudes (Pinar 1995; Young 1998; Kelly 2009). Though basically part of school management, decisions and choices related to the curriculum are often influenced by extra-scholastic (ideological, ethical, and other) considerations, reflecting issues in the public domain and other interests (Levin 2008; Rom 2009). The curriculum expresses the community's cultural, social, political, and ideological perspectives, combining past experiences, present positions, and aspirations for the future. It merges the authorities' stance, the society's norms, current trends in the discipline, together with ideological and pragmatic concerns (Olshtain and Nissim-Amitai 2004; Tucker 2008; Rom 2009).

The Israeli language context

Israel's multicultural and multilingual setting is a fascinating locale for the exploration of language policy in general and LEP in particular. Israel has always been an immigration country, absorbing Jews from all over the world. It also includes a large Arab minority constituting close to twenty percent of the population, hence its two official languages, Hebrew and Arabic, though Hebrew dominates in most domains and is spoken by the majority of the population. A significant dimension of the Zionist endeavor was the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. Until the destruction of the First Temple (587 BCE), Jews living in the Land of Israel had spoken mainly Hebrew. Following the Roman destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE), Hebrew lost its function as the vernacular and was reserved mainly for literary-religious usage. In most Jewish communities around the world, Hebrew came to be considered the "Holy Tongue" (termed *Loshen Koydesh*[1]), while the local language, or one of the several Jewish languages that developed in the Diaspora, typically served for day-to-day communication (Poll 1980; Ben-Rafael 1994; Spolsky and Shohamy 1999; Bunin-Benor 2009). Though not an official language, English plays a major role in Israel as a global language and in many domains of business, academia, media, education and the public space (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Shohamy 2014). It is taught in schools as a foreign language from second or third grade (at times even earlier), and is an obligatory subject in the matriculation exams.

Since the focus of this research is LEP, especially with regard to English, a few words are in place about the Israeli Ministry of Education's curriculum of English as a foreign language. The current (Revised) English Curriculum (2013) sets standards for English teaching in all educational streams. It divides language teaching into four interrelated areas: social interaction, access to information, presentation, and appreciation of language, literature and culture. One of its components is 'Information Communications Technology' (ICT) skills, "in order to enable

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[1] More precisely, *Loshen Koydesh* is the language in which the sacred texts are written (and often viewed as the language in which God gave the Torah to Moses). It is essentially Talmudic Hebrew interspersed with varying amounts of Aramaic, and is basically (though not exclusively) a written language that has been used for centuries for prayers and holy studies but not for daily communication. Note that *Loshen Koydesh* differs in various ways from Israeli Modern Hebrew (grammatically, lexically, and pragmatically).

learners to be prepared to cope with the challenges of using modern digital tools" (p. 6). Learners are encouraged to utilize different channels of digital communication, such as e-mail, voice and video chat applications, and Internet tools, and "activities are provided to encourage learners to access online information, according to their language abilities" (p. 14). One of the recommendations for successful implementation of the curriculum is the use of technology as an integral part of the teaching/learning process in the classroom and homework assignments. The English curriculum also calls for encouraging learners to use the language whenever the opportunity arises in activities useful to their lives on the assumption that, when tasks make sense and are personally interesting to the learners, they are more likely to relate to them in depth, both cognitively and affectively.

The ultra-Orthodox (UO) community in Israel

The ultra-Orthodox (also known as *Haredim*), are characterized by strict adherence to Jewish law (*Halakhah*), negation of secularism and Zionism, and a focus on holy studies as a crucial life pursuit among males (Grylak 2002; Caplan and Sivan 2003; Baumel 2006). The UO community is a heterogeneous community, comprising many and varied groups both in Israel and in other countries. Assessing the size of this heterogeneous community in Israel is a hard task given the lack of a clear-cut definition (scholars relate to a range of 5–13% of the population; Romanov, et al. 2011; ICBS 2014). One of the main fault lines within the UO community in general is that between Hasidim and 'Lithuanians'/*Mitnagdim* (literally translated as opponents), known as such because of their ancestors' origins in the European center of opposition to Hasidism (Friedman 1991; Grylak 2002; Loewenthal 2013; Perry-Hazan 2013). UO groups differ also in the measure of their rejection of the state of Israel and in their willingness to collaborate with its institutions (Kook et al. 1998).

As a whole, the UO community is characterized by segregated residence patterns that largely minimize contacts with the broader population. Although economic and cultural interaction with the surrounding society at various levels is inevitable, it is still approached with mistrust and caution by many ultra-Orthodox educators (Glinert and Shilhav 1991; Caplan 2003; Cohen 2015). Most UO religious and political leaders express negative opinions about life in a modern urban reality and have tenaciously sought to maintain segregation. A longstanding issue of contention has been army service, which is compulsory in Israel for all men and women on turning eighteen, except for Arab citizens. UO are exempted, however, and their leaders have persistently fought to preserve this arrangement. Several indications nevertheless suggest that boundaries have recently been shifting and the participation of community members in the workforce and in higher education, is now rising (Caplan and Shtadler 2012; Malhi 2015; Moshe 2016). Even in these contexts, however, attempts continue to do this while maintaining patterns unique to the UO community, including demands for separate programs, often separate buildings, guarantees of gender separation between students as well as between students and lecturers, and so forth.

Most UO educational institutions in Israel are *not* under the supervision of the Ministry of Education[2] (Friedman 1991; Romanov et al. 2011), and (deliberately) promote the community's separation from the broader society (Baumel 2003), which is perceived as a potentially negative influence.[3] Having its own educational system and, consequently, often its own curriculum, enables the community to preserve and transmit its traditions more effectively (Adan 1976; Bekerman 2001, 2009; Erhard and Erhard-Weiss 2007).

Boys and girls study in separate settings from preschool to adulthood. Men are expected to study religious texts while women are expected, by and large, to excel as mothers, to educate their children to be pious Jews, and to become the family's main breadwinners, freeing their husbands from financial worries that could distract them from their studies (El-Or 1992, 2002; Isaacs 1999; Fader 2001, 2007; Baumel 2003; Bunin-Benor 2004; Shpiegel 2011; Ben-Yosef 2011).[4] The importance and centrality of *Torah* studies cannot be overstated. This is the fundamental ideal of the entire UO community, *the* basis of its policies regarding boys' education. It is the purpose of creation, the heart of Judaism, a destination that requires years of socialization, and the key notion in sustaining Jewish identity. 'Secular' subjects, some of them defined as 'core' subjects by the Ministry of Education (including foreign languages) are therefore viewed as secondary. Mainly in junior-high and high schools, they are viewed mostly as optional (especially in boys' schools), assigned far fewer hours, and have very low status in both the school and in the community as a whole (Shpiegel 2011; Weisblei 2013).

The Habad Hassidic movement

The Habad (also known as *Lubavitcher*) movement is a Hasidic stream founded in Russia during the late eighteenth century (Friedman 1994), characterized by a strong intellectual emphasis and by an ideology that synthesizes Jewish mysticism and Jewish law. The movement is known for its extensive educational endeavor, which has taken Habad emissaries to far corners of the world (Baumel 2003; Kravel-Tovi and Bilu 2008; Berman 2009). Habad is more lenient than other Hasidic groups regarding Western dress codes (as long as modesty is preserved),

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[2] Schools in Israel belong to three different streams or networks: "official" schools, "unofficial but state-recognized" schools, and "unrecognized" schools. Official schools, administered by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with local authorities and organized in two systems—state schools and state-religious schools—are the majority. Unofficial schools include special schools (such as schools with an emphasis on the arts), semi-private schools, boarding schools, etc., as well as some primary schools for UO children. Among the unrecognized schools are some UO boys' primary schools, and all UO boys' educational institutions from ninth grade onwards. Many of these UO schools are neither registered nor known to the Ministry of Education. Their inspectors, if they in fact have any, are often themselves members of the UO community, and thus work to maintain and promote the community's values and priorities (Shpiegel 2011; Weisblei 2012, 2013; Perry-Hazan 2013).

[3] Segregation also prevails within the UO community itself. Different sectors tend to study separately, each in their own *heders*, schools, and later yeshivas, enhancing internal (subgroup) cohesion and transmitting the community's unique values to the next generations.

[4] These clear gender distinctions also partly explain the different status of the schools, including the degree of official recognition as well as some features of the curriculum.

and regarding education. Thus, unlike most other Hasidim who devote most of their time to religious studies, Habad Hasidim can also be found in an array of professions, including engineering, law, and medicine (Baumel 2006).

The movement's last leader, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1902–1994), was known as "the Rebbe" and led the movement from 1951 until his death. The Rebbe claimed that, in order to hasten the arrival of the Messiah, all Jews should study Torah, observe its commandments, and increase the number of religious Jews in the world through outreach work aimed at bringing Jews "back to the fold" (Berman 2009; Heilman and Friedman 2010; Ben-Yosef 2011). Habad members are also more willing to establish contacts with secular society and use technology in their outreach mission (Perry-Hazan 2013; Pearl 2014), contrary to most UO groups, which ban its use due to the connection it enables with the secular world (Rashi 2011).

Habad's language education policy

Habad schools in Israel fit the state educational system more than those of the UO community in general (Krakowski 2008; Perry-Hazan 2013). Most Habad primary schools belong to the state-religious system and are therefore under the Ministry's supervision (Perry-Hazan 2013). Boys and girls are in separate educational settings from preschool and also follow different curricula (Bunin-Benor 2004). Contemporary Habad women, however, are active participants, expected and encouraged to be full partners in the movement's world mission, and often even more active and involved than their husbands (Heilman and Friedman 2010; Pearl 2014).

Many Habad schools teach also secular subjects (Perry-Hazan 2013) as part of an explicit strategy of the Rebbe aimed at attracting non-Orthodox children (Maoz 2007). Most of them teach in Hebrew. Yiddish, considered by the Rebbe as the Jewish people's L1 (Baumel 2006), is taught in many schools. In some of the boys' schools it is optional but, for girls, at least one year of Yiddish as a foreign (heritage) language is compulsory (both as a spoken and written language. Generally, however, its teaching is not regulated and schools develop their own materials independently). English is generally viewed negatively and, as stated earlier, most UO schools do not teach it (Baumel 2003; Tannenbaum and Ofner 2008; Shpiegel 2011). Habad's position, however, is ambivalent. On the one hand, English is considered 'a foreign language', the language of Gentiles and of the modern (and threatening) secular world. On the other, it is very central to the wider Israeli context and is also viewed by many as a worldwide *lingua franca* for UO Jews. Officially, Habad schools teach English as a foreign language and follow the official English curriculum of the Ministry of Education, but adapted to the spirit of the community (Baumel 2003; Caplan 2003; Erhard and Erhard-Weiss 2007), that is, mainly as an instrumental and mobilizing tool to assist Habad emissaries in their work (Abraham 1999; Baumel 2003).

The present study

Our aim in this research is to focus on Habad's LEP, exploring perceptions of community members toward the languages potentially meaningful to them and searching for connections between ideology and practice. Hebrew and *Loshen Koydesh* are central in the community's repertoire of languages in daily use. Most UO in Israel, Habad included, use Modern Israeli Hebrew as their main language of communication, both inside and outside their community, which is equivalent to UO mastery of English in the US or French in Belgium, where they live as a minority group and view these languages as the *lingua franca* of their external reality, aware of their importance for their survival and social mobility (Isaacs 1999; Fader 2001). Some of the more extreme UO subgroups relate to Hebrew as a holy tongue to be reserved for praying and for the study of traditional texts. They view Modern Hebrew as corrupting this holy tongue and thus try to avoid using it for daily communication, choosing Yiddish instead (Isaacs 1999; Baumel 2003; Hamburger 2005; Tannenbaum, Abugov and Ravid 2007). This pattern is less relevant in the Habad context, but does highlight the unique interplay of LK and Hebrew in the Israeli context, different from that of UO minority groups in other societies.

Yiddish is considered an important language in Habad, representing heritage and closely associated with the Rebbe. Nevertheless, our main focus here is on *English*, whose position in the Habad community is entirely unique. The gap between the attitudes toward English in the UO community and in every other group in Israel is striking, and Habad's attitude toward it *within* the UO community singles it out even further. Of the four languages considered, English in many ways symbolizes the "mainstream," the majority; from the perspective of the Ministry of Education, English is a "core" subject to be taught at school—unlike Yiddish and LK—and Hebrew is prevalent in any event. Educational and pedagogical decisions about English teaching, then, do indeed bear potentially significant outcomes for the younger generation. As such, English attracts specific attention, and its study holds a potential for revealing unique features and dynamics within the group and its interactions with others.

Addressing language policy leads to the exploration of its different levels, i.e., management, practice, and ideology (Spolsky 2004), which was translated in this study into questions about language behavior, ideas about language planning, ideologies at the basis of language policy, and curriculum analysis. Since explicit written policy may not necessarily be implemented practically, we analyzed both explicit declarations regarding language curriculum as well as perceptions, preferences, attitudes, and actual behaviors of pupils, parents, teachers, principals, inspectors, and people developing teaching materials. Looking into the interplay between ideology and practice and inquiring into Habad's handling of the Ministry's instructions beside the community motivations may lead to further insights into the internal dynamics related to group identity, into the community's relations with other UO groups and with the secular majority, and to further understanding of other minority groups' contexts. Finally, given that gender

differences are a salient feature of all UO communities, Habad included, we included this aspect in our study.

In light of the above, our research questions are the following:

(1) What are the perceptions of Habad community members in Israel concerning LEP in their educational institutions (with regard to Hebrew, LK, Yiddish, and especially English)?
(2) Are there age and/or gender differences with regard to these perceptions?
(3) What is the interface between Habad's English LEP and the official English curriculum in terms of both explicit and implicit features?

Method

We used a mixed method research design, combining quantitative (questionnaires), and qualitative (semi-structured interviews and curriculum analysis) components, in order to deepen our understanding of the issues explored (Givton 2001; Perakyla and Ruusuvuori 2011). An initial, qualitative pilot study helped us develop a final version of the research instruments and also corroborated the perception of English as playing an important and unique role in this community's language repertoire.

Participants

Participants were selected from locations with a high concentration of Habad members (e.g. Kfar Habad, neighborhoods with high percentages of Habad members in several cities), with the assistance of rabbis, educators, and other community members. The snowball sampling technique was also used to recruit participants who were acquaintances of those already in the sample (e.g. Dörnyei 2007). The quantitative study included 148 participants: 86 high school students (57 girls, 29 boys) studying in Habad institutions (seminars and yeshivas), as well as 62 adults (32 women, 30 men). Most participants are Israeli born, and all reported being fluent in Hebrew. The qualitative study included 25 interviewees— community members, educators, rabbis, representatives from the Ministry of Education, writers of English teaching materials, and publishers of English textbooks for Habad schools.

Research tools

1. A questionnaire was developed to explore the perceptions of community members and their attitudes toward the current and the ideal LEP for the community. Besides a few questions about their sociolinguistic background, it consisted of 25 items for each of the four central languages in use within the community (LK, Hebrew, Yiddish and English). These included three central dimensions of LEP: time and resources allocation, both actually and ideally (e.g., *My school devoted a lot of time to learning English*), the importance

ascribed to each language in the educational system, addressing boys and girls separately (e.g., *It's more important for girls to master Hebrew than for boys*), and class practices (e.g., *In Yiddish classes at school we use Yiddish only*). In addition, we asked about the perceived beauty of each language, its use, its position within the community, and its general importance. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with the various statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1-"strongly object" to 5-"totally agree").[5]

2. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with community members and educators (inspectors, principals, and teachers). The interview focused on their attitudes toward the languages central to the community, especially toward English, on their view of the language, their current or past experience in school and their view of the ideal LEP. Additional interviewees included key figures in the educational system (the Ministry of Education's chief inspector of English, the chief inspector of the recognized-unofficial schools, and the inspector of state-religious schools), representatives from the two leading publishers of English teaching textbooks in Israel, and the writer of the first English textbook for the UO community, who were asked about current policy in Habad regarding English, interface with the official English curriculum and teaching materials.

3. For the analysis of the English curriculum in Habad's educational institutions, we reviewed the regulations concerning the UO sector and its language teaching policy. Regulations relevant to this research were compared with our findings from the interviews and questionnaires to ascertain their implementation in the community's educational institutions.

Procedure

To recruit participants for the quantitative study, we met with school principals and heads of educational institutions. Following their approval, we distributed the questionnaires in several schools making up a representative sample of the Habad community, e-mailed questionnaires to community members, used the Habad website and the snowball sampling technique. Questionnaire completion took 10–15 min.

Interviewees were contacted personally, both randomly (for the sample who took part in the quantitative study), and deliberately, when intended subjects— leading educators, school principals, and inspectors—were involved. Interviews were conducted personally by one of the authors and lasted 30–50 min. Although the researchers were women and outsiders,[6] the relative openness of this community to

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[5] This study was part of a larger research project, exploring attitudes of community members toward the four central surrounding languages, which will not be reported here due to limited space. This paper's focus is on the LEP angle regarding the different languages, as well as on English.

[6] Suspicious attitudes towards outsiders, researchers in particular, is an issue that concerns all those involved in the study of the UO community (see, e.g. El-Or 1992; Tannenbaum and Abugov 2010; Shpiegel 2011).
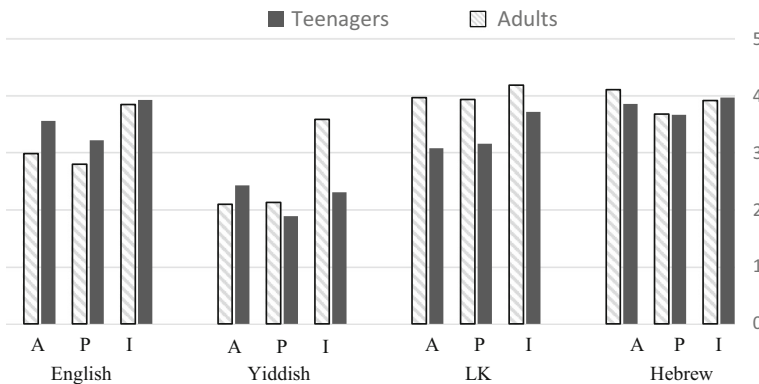
Figure 1 LEP for the four languages (according to dimension*, age, and gender). * *A* allocation, *P* practical aspects, *I* importance

secular society helped in terms of their general cooperation, their willingness to assist, their help in recruiting participants and conducting the study as planned.

Findings

We analyzed the LEP questionnaire, creating summary scores of the three central dimensions explored (importance, practices, allocation). Means (and SDs), within each language, are presented in Figure 1, separately for the two age groups.

The figure shows all languages are important to members of the Habad community in Israel (though Yiddish to a lesser extent), an overall view that also emerged from the interviews. Thus, Hebrew and LK were reported to be highly dominant in the community's educational institutions and more prominent than Yiddish and English. Hebrew is the medium of instruction and LK the language of holy studies, more dominant in the boys' schools but also evident in the girls' schools. Hebrew, as the dominant language in Israel, is perceived to be important; its closeness to LK and its use in the Bible and in Hasidic books gives it additional status. Quoting one of the teachers: "Hebrew is in the first place, and most hours at school are allotted to it." Yiddish is taught to enable students to understand the Rebbe's talks and books, as well as due to its status (for some) as a Jewish language.

Regarding English, according to the chief inspector:

> Up until now, the Ministry's negotiations to make the core subjects (such as English, Hebrew and mathematics) part of the ultra-Orthodox schools' curriculum have reached a dead end. The only ultra-Orthodox schools that have accepted these as part of their curriculum are those doing the matriculation or Meitzav exams,[7] and many Habad schools.

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[7] *Meitzav* is a state-administered test in several subjects, including English, targeting fifth and eighth graders. Its central aim is to assess the school's success in that subject, and the attainment levels of the expected goals according to the curriculum.

The chief inspector of state-religious schools and Habad primary schools reported "an ongoing dialogue about the importance of language learning (especially English) in Habad schools". Some teachers expressed negative or indifferent attitudes toward English: "The school doesn't invest a great deal in teaching English and doesn't care too much about the students' success" (a primary school teacher).

Most interviewees pointed to recent indications of the language's improved status, both in its perception and in the actual LEP. Thus, the Ministry's chief English inspector pointed to a change in the attitudes of UO schools, specifically Habad, and noted that many members of the community take extra-curricular English courses. "They need English to find a job because many of them are going out to work now, and awareness of English has increased." The inspector of state-religious education emphasized the link between English and Habad's outreach endeavor. Some of the interviewees, who had themselves been emissaries, said that English was a great tool for communicating with local populations: "The motto of Habad is to use everything possible as a conduit for spreading Judaism around the world, and languages play a great part in it."

Several interviewees related to English as an international language useful for global communication. Others said they use it when visiting the Rebbe's house in New York. Several interviewees noted that the Rebbe knew twenty-six different languages, so all languages are acceptable, including English, and some related to English as the language of business, cellphones, and computers.

Contrary to these positive views, however, others were less tolerant. One interviewee, for example, claimed that "English is like the devil." English is for her a Gentile language and therefore unimportant. "English is useful, but not so important," said three different teachers. And some seemed to associate knowing English with a foreign culture that should not be taught in schools.

Going back to the quantitative analysis, repeated measures ANOVAs revealed a main effect for language ($F_{(3, 143)} = 83.56$, $p < .01$). Post-hoc analysis indicates no significant differences between Hebrew and LK across all participant groups. Both languages, however, were viewed as significantly more central to the community than Yiddish and English, and English scored higher than Yiddish. Analysis also yielded a significant main effect for age ($F_{(3, 426)} = 8.84$, $p < .01$)—adults viewed LK as a language that had been used and taught in their schools more than in the present and considered it more important than the younger group, whereas the opposite findings obtained for English. Yiddish was viewed as more important by adults than by the younger generation, and no generational differences emerged regarding Hebrew. There was also a main effect for gender ($F_{(3, 426)} = 55.11$, $p < .01$): males tended to rate the LEP dimensions of LK and Yiddish higher than females, whereas the opposite emerged regarding LEP dimensions of Hebrew and English. Detailed analysis of gender differences, including t tests results, are presented in Table 1.

We further calculated means (and SDs) of participants' attitudes specifically towards English, in line with the study's focus, according to age and gender (see Table 2).

Independent sample t test indicated that affection toward English was significantly higher ($t_{(60)} = 3.12$, $p < .01$) among women than men. On use of English,

Table 1 Means and SDs on LEP dimensions (according to age and gender)

	Age	Gender	Mean (SD)	T value
Hebrew				
Importance	A	F	4.40 (.58)	4.87***
		M	3.37 (1.06)	
	T	F	4.01 (.78)	.55
		M	3.90 (.89)	
Practice	A	F	4.03 (1.24)	2.36*
		M	3.28 (1.28)	
	T	F	3.77 (.73)	1.32
		M	3.49 (1.18)	
Allocation	A	F	4.40 (.48)	3.18*
		M	3.79 (.96)	
	T	F	4.03 (.77)	2.26*
		M	3.54 (1.23)	
LK				
Importance	A	F	4.11 (.98)	−.83
		M	4.28 (.53)	
	T	F	3.51 (.95)	−3.10**
		M	4.12 (.66)	
Practice	A	F	3.70 (1.26)	−1.83
		M	4.21 (.86)	
	T	F	2.75 (1.05)	−5.26***
		M	3.92 (.79)	
Allocation	A	F	3.94 (.90)	−.26
		M	4.00 (.93)	
	T	F	2.64 (1.27)	−4.71***
		M	3.88 (.83)	
Yiddish				
Importance	A	F	3.17 (1.23)	−3.10**
		M	4.07 (1.04)	
	T	F	2.40 (1.12)	.98
		M	2.15 (1.08)	
Practice	A	F	1.76 (1.09)	−2.65*
		M	2.55 (1.27)	
	T	F	1.90 (.81)	.16
		M	1.86 (1.11)	
Allocation	A	F	1.79 (1.02)	−2.63*
		M	2.45 (.94)	
	T	F	2.68 (.93)	3.49**
		M	1.97 (.82)	

Table 1 continued

	Age	Gender	Mean (SD)	T value
English				
Importance	A	F	4.32 (.84)	4.36***
		M	3.52 (1.38)	
	T	F	4.02 (.92)	1.05
		M	3.76 (1.32)	
Practice	A	F	3.37 (.79)	5.75***
		M	2.10 (.92)	
	T	F	3.74 (.80)	6.60***
		M	2.25 (1.25)	
Allocation	A	F	3.75 (.90)	6.39***
		M	2.14 (1.08)	
	T	F	4.23 (.77)	8.72***
		M	2.29 (1.26)	

$* p < .05$; $** p < .005$; $*** p < .001$

Table 2 Means (and SDs) of attitudes towards English (according to age and gender)

Age group	Gender	Affection[a]	Use	Importance
Teenagers	F		2.51 (.57)	3.92 (.72)
	M		2.30 (1.11)	3.48 (1.04)
Adults	F	3.85 (1.09)	2.29 (.70)	3.82 (.51)
	M	3.00 (1.04)	1.87 (.79)	3.08 (.86)

[a] Affection was examined only among adults because some principals and rabbis opposed these items in the teenagers' questionnaires

teenagers reported using English significantly more than did adults ($t_{(144)} = 2.62$, $p < .01$), and females more than males ($t_{(144)} = 10.74$, $p < .01$). As for importance, teenagers view English as significantly more important than adults ($t_{(144)} = 2.12$, $p < .05$), and females more than males ($t_{(144)} = 12.53$, $p < .001$).

Furthermore, given the centrality of gender differentiation in this community and the well-known links between language, identity, and socialization, we used MANOVA to calculate a specific comparison between items asking about the relevance of a language to *girls* versus its relevance to *boys*, exploring the gender effect from the target perspective. Means (and SDs) of these scores are presented in Table 3, according to the participants' age group and gender. Analysis yielded a significant age effect ($F_{(1)} = 16.34$, $p < .001$), a significant gender effect ($F_{(1)} = 8.90$, $p < .001$), and a significant age × gender interaction ($F_{(1)} = 2.45$, $p < .05$). Exploring between-subjects effects within each language shows a significant age effect in LK, Yiddish, and English. Teenagers view LK and Yiddish as more important for boys to study than for girls, English as more important for girls than for boys. The opposite picture emerged for adults. No age differences emerged regarding Hebrew on that matter.

Table 3 LEP implementation (according to age and gender)

	Age	Gender	Mean (SD)	F (between-subjects effects)
Hebrew for girls	Total		3.71 (1.40)	Age: 1.00
	T	F	4.11 (1.01)	Gender: 1.49**
		M	3.52 (1.48)	Age × gender: .66
	A	F	4.03 (1.33)	
		M	2.76 (1.60)	
LK for boys	Total		3.64 (1.23)	Age: 6.60*
	T	F	3.80 (1.03)	Gender: 8.48**
		M	3.79 (1.35)	Age × gender: 8.97**
	A	F	3.94 (1.17)	
		M	2.82 (1.25)	
Yiddish for girls	Total		2.54 (1.53)	Age: 58.81***
	T	F	1.96 (1.11)	Gender: .35
		M	1.86 (1.16)	Age × gender: .84
	A	F	3.63 (1.61)	
		M	4.00 (1.33)	
English for girls	Total		3.40 (1.32)	Age: 8.00**
	T	F	3.96 (1.07)	Gender: 32.48***
		M	3.10 (1.42)	Age × gender: 2.40
	A	F	3.64 (1.19)	
		M	2.38 (1.12)	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .005$; *** $p < .001$

Generational differences were also corroborated in the interviews. Adults reported that more emphasis, time, and resources had been placed on LK at their schools compared with schools today, probably reflecting a different LEP, while teenagers reported that their schools now place greater emphasis on Yiddish and English. Rather than as a separate subject, LK is currently learned by reading religious texts. Some adult male interviewees recalled that, in their childhood, religious texts had been discussed in Yiddish to avoid using LK or Hebrew, whereas teenagers now use Hebrew both routinely and for religious studies.

Gender also proved significant in the MANOVA: females thought that Hebrew and English were more important for girls, while males thought that Yiddish was more important for girls. As for LK, adult females viewed it as more important for boys than did young teenage girls, while teenage boys thought LK was more important for boys than did male adults (see Table 3).

Interviewees broadly agreed that English is taught because some schools (in fact, girls' schools) need it for national and matriculation exams and also because "girls need it for their future as breadwinners in the home based on Torah study they are about to build" (teacher). A girls' English teacher noted: "We have the same curriculum as the secular community, so we have to follow it." The principals that were interviewed claimed that hours are allotted according to the Ministry of

Education's requirements. One added that his (male) pupils are supposed to study English four hours a week, but they do not consider it important and only a few attend classes. Similarly, a few male students said that boys can actually choose whether they wish to study English. A teacher in a girls' primary school noted: "Languages are not so interesting here. We study more languages than boys, but they are less dominant than religious subjects." In boys' schools, basic English is taught 1 or 2 h a week at the end of the day. Most interviewees thought that boys should not learn English at all because "it is a waste of the time that should be devoted to religious studies." An emissary who was interviewed said: "Boys don't need to study English at school, they learn it when they fly to another country, and they learn it in the field, from life."

Another gender-related aspect touches on the materials used for English teaching at the girls' schools. Although inspectors noted that "they are free to produce their own learning materials," the English books in use were similar to those used in the secular sector. Not so in the boys' schools, however, where pupils are given photocopied pages from approved workbooks and from talks of the Rebbe translated into English. The teachers noted that, when teaching Yiddish, and although there are books, they also use photocopied materials and the Rebbe's talks and writings.

Most interviewees also mentioned that instruction methods in Habad (at least in girls' schools) are fairly similar to those found in secular schools, except for restrictions on the use of the Internet in schools and in many of the homes. As a teacher in a girls' high school pointed out: "Since you are not exposed to the media, you definitely have to be creative and inventive to enhance learning. We have to adjust our materials to the values and the spirit of the school". In preschools, teachers use food (such as Hebrew alphabet pretzels), prizes, or other materials to teach the letters "in a fun and enriching way."

In addition to our questionnaires and interviews, and given our focus on *English* within the various LEP aspects, we also reviewed the official English curriculum and collected information from educators and community members on its uses, searching for gaps between (explicit) declarations about LEP and its (implicit) implementation. As described in the literature review, one component of the current English curriculum in Israel (2013) is ICT skills. The rationale behind this element highlights the links between English and the digital, virtual features of modern life presently so widespread and, therefore, strongly encourages the use of technology as part of classroom teaching and learning as well as in homework assignments. Our analysis, however, showed that many in the Habad community and some Habad schools prohibit the use of technological devices such as computers and the Internet for fear of their negative influence on the children. The English teachers that were interviewed mentioned this as a problem, leading to their students encountering English only in the classroom. According to a publisher's representative, only one English reading comprehension workbook is available for the UO community, but "given their many subgroups, materials suitable for one are not necessarily suitable for another."

The English curriculum encourages learners to use English in various activities, aiming to make it more relevant to students and emphasizing its importance in day-to-day life. Many Habad students, however, do not perceive English as useful to

them. Many male participants, both teenagers and adults, insisted that they can learn English abroad or in the year before they go on a foreign mission, a perception that, in turn, affects motivation and achievements. The official English curriculum, as noted, also emphasizes social interaction, access to information, presentation, and appreciation of language, literature and culture, but our analysis shows that all of these features are viewed rather negatively and members of the Habad community do not seek exposure to foreign cultures for their children. They prefer to use their own Hasidic texts for teaching English rather than using English literature, which might include cultural signs and values they would prefer to avoid. One of the English teachers explained: "The girls are not exposed to English through the media, as in the secular sector, so we use a lot of Hasidic stories translated into English. I thereby connect Habad philosophy and our way of life to what we teach in English lessons."

Finally, most interviewees agreed that "the attitudes of the community are connected to the teaching methods and materials used in the different subjects taught at school because the topics and the teaching materials are supervised by educators from our community, so they have to reflect our values" (the head of the yeshiva). When the community's values are at odds with the curriculum recommendations, it is the community values that "win." As expressed by some teachers: "the curriculum is dictated by the Ministry of Education, but we adjust it to our views and values."

Discussion

This study focused on Habad's LEP in Israel, as a significant reflection of the values, ideology, and beliefs to be transmitted to future generations. As stated by Baumel (2003), in "ethnic or religious communities, the educational framework is often … an extension of the community in question, a vehicle for strengthening ethnic heritage and religious beliefs by expanding the pupil's knowledge of these fields" (p. 62; see also, Adan 1976). Our multidimensional analysis pointed to different views concerning the main languages used by the community as well as to gender differences regarding the ideal LEP and regarding LEP implementation. We focused on English, given its position both worldwide and in Israel. English indeed emerged as occupying a unique position in Habad relative to what we know about other UO sectors, reflecting Habad's distinctiveness within the broader UO community and its more open ethos. We saw how language perceptions, curriculum, and ideology are closely intertwined—the state curriculum is implemented only partially, textbooks used for boys are mostly those developed especially for UO pupils, and community members and educators view the superiority of the community's values over the state curriculum and agenda as almost axiomatic.

Habad's LEP: generalizations and specifications

Spolsky (2004) refers to three steps that may influence a speech community deciding on a language policy: (1) The habitual language practices of the

community members. (2) Its language beliefs or ideology. (3) Any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning, or management. All three components emerged in this study as interrelated, leading to a language education policy that reflects and affects the community's ideology and specific identity.

Hebrew, LK, and Yiddish are in a complex interplay involving issues of holiness, emotional attachment, representation of previous generations, symbolization of the Rebbe, and other issues. Hebrew is used as the vernacular and as the medium of instruction in all Habad schools. Boys study religious texts (largely in LK) much more extensively than girls (see also Baumel 2003; Bunin-Benor 2004; Fader 2001, 2007; Shpiegel 2011). Adults are more positive about LK than teenagers, perhaps reflecting their actual experience of its centrality in their daily lives. At the same time, Hebrew is less central than LK in adult educational institutions, possibly due to the tendency of UO society as a whole, Habad included, toward self-segregation to preclude foreign, non-Jewish, and often non-Orthodox religious influences. Although Hebrew is obviously related to LK, it is not only a holy tongue but, as some participants stated, "a language that includes colloquialisms and slang, and thus less important."

Hebrew may be needed to manage life in Israel but Yiddish emerged as necessary for the perpetuation of Habad's values and their distinctiveness from the outside secular world (see also Fishman 2002; Tannenbaum and Abugov 2010). As Spolsky (2004) noted, when foreign elements intrude into a language it may be viewed as corrupted, which is precisely the case with Hebrew. Although most Habad members in Israel use Hebrew on a daily basis, thus potentially opening the gate to secular Israeli cultural influence, many of them (especially adults) wish to know Yiddish and pass it on to the next generations, perhaps reflecting their will to strengthen their positive self-identity and preserving what they perceive as the language of the Jewish people. In this context, the finding about age differences in its perceived importance (greater for girls than for boys) merits note. This gap may reflect a process of maturation among community members, who have come to realize the function of Yiddish as the conduit for transferring important values to the next generation, and thus feel an increasing need for girls to learn it.

Yiddish is considered a quasi-sacred language in Habad (Bunin-Benor 2004; Baumel 2006). Yet, surprisingly, its position in the community's LEP is rather low compared to the other languages explored. According to the community's explicit LEP, girls study Yiddish from an earlier age and for more years than boys, but Yiddish is also taught to boys, either implicitly through the Rebbe's videos and scripts or explicitly through workbooks developed for the school's internal use. *Yeshivas* hardly allocate time to Yiddish as an independent subject, so it can only be learned implicitly by watching the Rebbe's talks or from Yiddish-speaking friends (see also Perry-Hazan 2013). Given the Rebbe's view of Yiddish and the perception of it as a pure, Jewish, heritage language (Isaacs 1999; Fishman 2002; Tannenbaum and Ofner 2008; Assouline 2012), however, its apparently low status as it emerged in this study seems to reflect a bottom-up process, perhaps reflecting a new trend within the community.

Within this LEP exploration, our focus was on English. The importance ascribed to English in the educational frameworks was unexpectedly high and significantly higher than that of Yiddish. One explanation could be found in the affiliation of Habad's educational institutions (unlike the rest of the UO sector) with the state-religious educational system, which has (or is supposed to have) the same English curriculum as the non-Orthodox population. Nevertheless, this is a delicate line to tread. Most UO groups are opposed to the study of English, which they view as a Gentile, foreign language that leads pupils (especially boys) to 'waste time' they should be investing in religious studies, and offer it mostly as an optional course. At the same time, Habad's outreach mission clearly increases the motivation to learn English. The fact that the late Rebbe was a super-multilingual who believed that everything was trivial except for the true purpose—to spread Judaism (Laufer, Brod and Roderman 2012)—adds to this positive approach.

In the past, the importance of English in academia gave rise to negative attitudes toward it among UO members, Habad included. The concern was that girls would choose to attend secular institutions of higher learning (e.g. Baumel 2003; Tannenbaum and Ofner 2008). As a result, community leaders decided to open up courses on subjects that UO institutions had not originally offered as part of their programs (Perry-Hazan 2013; Baum et al. 2014; Cohen 2015). People generally wish to learn English to increase their chances of social mobility and thus seek "venues and channels to learn it" (Shohamy 2014: 281). As this study indicates, such views are now widespread in Habad as well.

Economic factors presently encourage married *yeshiva* students as well to join the workforce, at least partially (see also Perry-Hazan 2013; Moshe 2016). This approach of Habad members toward English can also be linked to their linguistic pragmatism, which is directly connected to their outreach mission. Some Habad members became ultra-Orthodox after growing up in secular homes, where the importance of English had been a given. Overall, this pragmatism is in line with the Rebbe's belief, adopted by most community members, that the media and the world of technology (even in foreign languages), can be useful to the community's mission (see also Baumel-Schwartz 2014).

In sum, Habad as a minority (indeed, a minority within a minority sustaining an intricately complex relationship with the wider society), emerges as having developed its LEP while explicitly and implicitly taking into account the three steps discussed by Spolsky (2004). First, its habitual language practices—including the languages they speak, the school's medium of instruction, the language of Scripture, the language of the videos they watch, and so forth. Second, its language beliefs or ideology, related to the sanctity of languages, pushing away 'foreign' languages and promoting self-segregation and distinctiveness from the secular majority, but also from other UO groups. And third, various efforts to modify or influence their language practices by specific decisions about inclusion and exclusion of languages, appropriation of language education to gender, modification of textbooks, adjustment of teaching methods, and the like.

LEP in the service of group identity construction

Analysis of the attitudes toward languages and toward LEP in the Habad community, together with the analysis of the language curriculum, contributes new insights to the understanding of this group in particular but also of the broader topics explored, including the position and function of languages in the identity of minority groups and the use of LEP for a range of social and emotional purposes.

The English curriculum as implemented by the Habad community constitutes an example of 'Adjusted Curriculum' (AC) (Olshtain and Nissim-Amitai 2004), integrating content, process, and product in compatibility with the special needs of a specific community. In a sense, it reflects the view of "curriculum as practice" (Young 1998), an approach that emphasizes the social construction of the reality affecting the curriculum. An AC also incorporates teachers' education and beliefs, viewing teachers as key agents in promoting the relevant educational framework—in this context, language education. The study revealed a perception shared by teachers, students, and stakeholders in the community who, together, create a support system for the continuous maintenance of their ideology. In a language curriculum, especially a foreign language, the Content Domain is particularly significant because of its role in presenting the socio-cultural content of the cultural and linguistic groups associated with the target languages (Olshtain and Nissim-Amitai 2004). Language curricula usually relate to content selection as a direct representation of discourse worlds. They view the cultural encounter and cross-cultural interaction mediated by content as leading to an increased awareness of plurilingual perception and to respect and appreciation for "otherness." In the general LEP discourse, these dimensions are viewed very positively, leading to an effort to merge authentic materials from the target cultures. In the present context, however, and for the very same reasons, the LEP (especially concerning English) seeks to avoid these aspects as much as possible. Avoiding authentic materials may ensure that students are *not* exposed to other cultures, while abstaining from actual or virtual interactions with English speakers ensures that students do not become open to otherness.

Habad's LEP can also be understood from a wider historical perspective. Since its early days, the Habad movement engaged in a constant struggle to protect its younger members not only from modern, secular society but also from the influence of the *Mitnagdim* (the Lithuanian UO stream), who differ from Habad in their study routines, central values, relationships with the majority and more (Friedman 1991, 1994; Caplan 2003). This was true in eighteenth-century Europe, and remains so in twenty-first century Israel. Including secular studies, even partially, in their educational institutions, and merging English into their LEP, may be yet another way of differentiating Habad schools from their Lithuanian counterparts.[8] Future

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[8] This is also related to the concept of 'horizontal hostility' (White and Langer 1999), referring to "a prejudice shown by members of a minority group toward members of a similar minority group that is perceived to be more mainstream" (p. 538), probably because similarity with the out-group threatens the unique social identity derived from membership in the in-group. In this case, Habad members and community policy-makers seem to be using language (not necessarily consciously) for a clearer differentiation between themselves and the other.

research explicitly focusing on such a comparison may shed further light on this suggestion.

Certain similarities can be pointed out between Habad and other minority groups in the world that struggle to maintain their uniqueness within a multicultural, globalized context. Maintaining a minority identity often demands the activation of separate educational institutions (including LEP and adjusted curricula) that, as suggested by Shpiegel (2011), may be viewed as special "free spaces" (see e.g. Polletta 1999; Polletta and Jasper 2001). These enable the transmission of unique norms and values to the next generations, and seemingly provide institutional anchors for cultural challenges possibly in conflict with structural arrangements. In such contexts, minorities can implement the ideology and the cultural norms that supply incentives for cohesion while developing alternative or even oppositional ideas and identities, which prove particularly strong when backed by religion, as is the case here. This study provided instances of using LEP in the service of cultivating such free spaces, with languages functioning to shape and reflect identity issues and intergroup relations. The uniqueness and the nature of this group in this conceptual perspective deserve further exploration.

Concluding remarks

Most of the studies that explore LEP in minority contexts focus on assisting minority members to maintain their languages or on resisting neo-liberal policies that ignore the individual. The current study is innovative in the sense that, while exploring a minority group, it illustrates a different stance, both among minority members and in the majority group. First, English is viewed in this community as a foreign language that is not necessarily crucially important, immediately distinguishing it from most groups or societies regarding their LEPs. Even more striking is the overall approach of the majority, as perceived by members of the minority, which is generally not opposed to Habad keeping its unique language repertoire and overall distinctiveness, despite some pressures to adopt the mainstream curriculum. Given the delicate balance of power in Israel between UO political factions and others, and the ongoing effort to sustain the current equilibrium (Kook et al. 1998; Grylak 2002; Caplan and Sivan 2003; Ben-Rafael 2008), language policy emerges as yet another aspect in these complex socio-political relationships. In his extensive writing about language, Bourdieu (1991) elaborated on the symbolic value and importance of language and how language allows dominant social groups to maintain their position (see also Norton 2000). In the context explored here, however, we see a minority group sustaining its position, both vis-à-vis other UO sectors and vis-à-vis the majority, using languages for its own benefit and empowerment. It attributes symbolic value to minority languages (LK, Yiddish), and does not accept the importance of the other languages (Hebrew, but mainly English) to the degree the majority population does.

The linguistic repertoire of Habad reflects their unique LEP, which in turn enhances group cohesion. As a segregated group, Habad developed their distinctive curriculum and education policies, erecting walls to keep themselves apart (see also

Adan 1976). At the same time, as changes unfolded in the economy, in technology, and in science (Caplan and Shtadler 2012), the LEP and its related curriculum express their embrace of past and future considerations, adjusting them to the community's needs and to the needs of the individuals within it, reflecting but and also strengthening ideological and practical features.

Our understandings can be extrapolated to other contexts and other circumstances wherein minority groups develop their LEPs and adjust the curriculum to strike a balance between the majority and its drive toward integration on the one hand, and the efforts to maintain a distinctive identity on the other. Serving as a common symbol of identity, languages and LEPs in particular are a powerful prism for the investigation of these issues.

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Michal Tannenbaum senior lecturer and the head of the Program for Multilingual Education, School of Education, Tel Aviv University. Her research interests include linguistic patterns of minority groups, psychological and emotional aspects of immigration and language maintenance, inter-group relations, and translingual writing.

Hagit Cohen holds an MA degree in language education from the School of Education of Tel Aviv University. Works as an English teacher, at all school levels.