Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Hebrew is the official language of Israel. It belongs to the Semitic family of languages and is one of the surviving ancient languages of the world. The passage of Hebrew to its present position of a dominating language of Israel was not one without resistance. The resistance came from within the community and from outside. Within the Jewish community Hebrew was considered to be a holy language therefore it was argued and that it could not be used for earthly needs. Apart from that, Yiddish language (Judeo-German) was used by most Jews in their daily communication. Hebrew on the other hand, was not a spoken language and therefore it was a massive task to make it an all-purpose language.

Hebrew was luckier than any other languages spoken by the Jewish community like Yiddish, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) etc. to get the attention and patronage of the pioneers of Zionism. Till towards the end of nineteenth century it was hardly anybody’s spoken language but with the growth of Zionism the language became the mother tongue of a whole generation of Jews that destabilized the then existing set-up. Hebrew maintained its firm position in the new society. Had it not been with a consistent language policy the situation would have been very different. Hebrew has been crucial for the Jews and its survival and revival runs parallel with the Jewish history. The pioneers of the Zionist movement realized the potential of Hebrew as a vehicle for achieving ideological and political goals. Attempts were made and resources mobilized and allocated to influence all channels that can help create a language policy where Hebrew language could be used as a consolidating factor from different facets of political, economic, social and cultural life. With the Zionist project, Hebrew became the means as well as the goal. The role of Hebrew language was considered necessary as it had far reaching impact on the society.

In the pre-state period the British Mandatory government was mobilized for this end and after the establishment of the state, the Israeli government took care of it. The British Mandatory government bolstered the standing of Hebrew in several ways. First, shortly after General Allenby occupied the country in 1918, the use of German brought by the immigrants of the first Aliya (immigration into Eretz Israel) in schools
was banned and the teachers were interned for a new role. Even before the Mandate was formally proclaimed, the British Government had been persuaded that Hebrew was the language of the Jewish population, and that the British regulations and the mandate itself established Hebrew as an official language alongside Arabic and English. The King’s Order-in-Council of 1920 echoed the Mandate in proclaiming three official languages. The order required that regulations be published in Arabic as well as in English in predominantly Arab areas of Palestine and in Hebrew in Jewish areas. People in these sectors were allowed access to courts and government offices in these two languages. Only after a public campaign was it further agreed that telegrams could be sent in Hebrew as well. Secondly, the British left the Jewish community to conduct its own educational system. This provided the Jews ample space to establish their scheme of things. Hebrew grew thus as the language of instruction in Jewish schools and in the university into a language well equipped to deal with modern discipline. In this, it was helped by the establishment of a language Committee (Va’ad Haleshon) to be renamed The Hebrew Language Academy after independence.

Under British Mandatory rule, while English was the main language of government, the Jewish and Arabic communities remained distinct, with separate school systems. Bilingualism also developed with English serving both communities as a potential language of wider communication. New Jewish immigrants who wished to integrate needed to acquire Hebrew, the language of work and education and public cultural life. Not only this, the new immigrants were required to adopt Hebrew names and discard their earlier names.

In the pre-state period the system of Kibbutzim and after the establishment of the state of Israel both Kibbutzim and military service contributed greatly in promoting Hebrew culture in Israel. The immigration of Jews in 1920s from Eastern Europe went to Kibbutzim, where the strength of communal pressure encouraged them to move from the use of their first language to Hebrew in both private and public domain. Their children, “children of the Kibbutzim” grew up as ‘monolingual’ native speakers of Hebrew, with moderate passive knowledge of their parent’s language. Similarly, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem played a pivotal role in nation building and acculturation of the new society.

Jews have traditionally been multilingual community. For most part of their history they have been using more than one language and the general attitude towards
language had been ‘pragmatic’. Though Hebrew was the most important language because of the religious sanctity and the sacredness it carried on account of the religious texts; it was never ‘the’ issue in the historical discourse. The Jewish population in Palestine and other parts of the world as Diasporic communities were well versed in the regional languages but as a religious commitment they also learned Hebrew. Every Jew learnt in his/her childhood the minimum Hebrew that could facilitate the daily and occasional rites and rituals. The parents too regard it their duty to impart basic religious knowledge onto the new generation.

The religious authority that Hebrew carried promoted its learning. The little and basic Hebrew that one learned was because of the religious obligations. This sanctity and element of holiness associated with Hebrew was also a hindrance in its overall development as a language. Hebrew was not an ordinary language that could be used anytime and anywhere. Its sanctity allowed only its limited use i.e. in religious texts and some literary texts with religious and moral content. This limited the growth of new vocabulary and expressions. Hebrew wasn’t rich enough to express modern and varied topics.

Up till the revival of Hebrew language it primarily served as written text and literature. It was preferably not to be used as a spoken language. Off and on, Hebrew has served as lingua franca between different Jewish communities, particularly in the absence of a common language when they met outside their own locality, as in Jerusalem. Most agree that such conversations were in broken and phrase form as Hebrew was not a fully developed language for everyday use. The Jews too were not versed in Hebrew and was difficult for both the interlocutors. The Ashkenazi community primarily spoke Yiddish or the regional language while the Sephardic community spoke Ladino or Arabic.

It was because of this reason that Hebrew faced initial resistance particularly from the religious groups. The religious Jews spoke and promoted Yiddish. For them the very idea of political Zionism was irreligious and profane. It was unimaginable for them not to protest the use of a holy language for profane and mundane activities. Apart from the religious concern, the practical reason of not having command over the language which in itself was not fully grown justified the resistance to Hebrew. Although they read the religious texts in Hebrew but the language of teaching and explaining those texts was Yiddish. The interpretation and explanations were made in Yiddish and many a times in the language of the mass.
Despite all the shortcomings and hurdles, Hebrew kept growing. It was not so much because of material conditions, rather the strength of motivation arose from stronger ideological commitment that accounted for the initial success of Hebrew language revival. The ideological backing provided a high solidarity value for the language to overcome any power or economic effects of the competing languages. That the ideological arguments for Hebrew were strong enough to overcome not just the ideological arguments for French and German (and, later, for Yiddish), but also any perceived power or economic values of all the competing languages; ultimately, it was sufficiently powerful to overcome some of the inertia condition and to make parents ready to switch to their children’s language, accept with grace the physical and economic hardship that came their way.

By the time, the state of Israel was established Hebrew had already become the principal language of the bulk of the Jewish population living there. The later waves of immigration had little problems adjusting to the dominant Hebrew culture in Israel. Thus the Zionist set-up put Hebrew in a place where it continued to penetrate immigrant groups, succeeding often in a generation or two to replace the original language. The old age immigrants in general could not switch over to the new language. The other sections of the population that largely retained their language of immigration were those immigrants living in a neighborhood with a shared language other than Hebrew. The linguistic homogeneity and the convenience of the common language contributed in preserving and retaining the old language. This may be seen in some earlier groups of German and English speaking immigrants and in groups of immigrants settled in a single neighborhood or on a single cooperative agricultural settlement (moshav). It is most noticeable among immigrants from Ethiopia and the immigrants arriving from former Soviet Union.

To support Hebrew legally the one specific law of the British Mandatory law and regulations that was in effect was amended. English was dropped as an official language, by which it would seem that Hebrew and Arabic were left as the two official languages of the state, but the meaning of this was far from clear. The three languages appeared on coins and stamps. Laws were translated into Arabic and English. Language policy in administration appeared to be set at a local level, each government office deciding what was appropriate. It is clear from a move in 1989 when the Post Office department added Arabic to its signs; and in the same year, the police department dropped it leaving them bilingual.
The Hebrew language policy of Israel also motivated the new immigrants by linking Hebrew with the process of social integration and upward social mobility. This fact is most clearly demonstrated by the ultra-orthodox Jews, most of whom maintain Yiddish as language of instruction in their segregated schools and the language of speech in their closed communities. Of late, the use of Modern Hebrew has grown even among the ultra-orthodox, and there are Hasidic sects who use it at home. But ultra-orthodox education continues to use Yiddish as a language of instruction.

The emergence and revitalization of Hebrew can be broadly categorized into phases of “Nativization” “Normalization” and “Consolidation.” Several agents have worked and influenced each of these phases. Consciously and sometimes even unconsciously Hebrew got nourished from different quarters and the socio-political goals of Zionism were contributing to it in many major ways. Mainstream Zionism, which mobilized the burgeoning Jewish society towards the goals of political and cultural sovereignty achieved in post-World War years, strove for a social revolution that looked both forward and backward: to a modern, secular social-democratic state which at the same time harked back to a Biblical past, sovereign and enlightened. Central to this re-creation of the past were a land, a book and a language: the repossession of the Holy Land, the study of the Bible, and a return to Hebrew speech culture.

Language Policy and its Implications

Most countries around the world have been making choices of language forms and functions for purposes other than narrowly linguistic. Language, language planning and language policy has always maintained its crucial place in any society. A language is made official or changed the way it is written as part of an effort to mobilize larger groups of people in support of their idea of political independence; to consolidate diverse territories and people into a new entity; to facilitate a sense of belonging or to challenge definitions of belonging to a community; to expand, to contract frontiers, or to change qualifications for winning or influencing power, earning money and achieving respect.

Language decisions affect in someway the identity of the community living within the control of the state. It affects patterns of access, or patterns of participation.
Institutional language choice can influence identity and participation, which are basic political concepts, and likewise their choices help understand more about states and public policies. The study of language choice or policy and its implementation or planning shed light on important political processes and political change. It is by no means peripheral to politics or to general public policy making.

Planning and policy making has been a characteristic of modern states and state intervention in the market place has also expanded beyond narrowly defined economic questions into culture, education, communication and family. Language becomes very crucial in such situations particularly for people or society struggling for special identity. It is now more and more accepted position that choice of a language as a symbol of political identity and an instrument in schools, media, and civil services will improve their material and political well being and their place on the scale of regard. This and for several other reasons, there is hardly a country in the world which does not engage in some institutional choice of language. One would expect multilingual countries like India, former Soviet Union, Nigeria etc to face the necessity of language choice, but even countries which appear to be monolingual like Japan, Turkey, Norway, and the US are well engaged in language decision making.

Language policy becomes the social glue through which – by confrontation, accommodation, or benign neglect – governments seek to bond human fissures into a stable political and social whole. Language is both a repository and a vehicle of culture. Not only does language convey ideas between people, but it has a fundamental role in shaping what those ideas are. In linguistically divided communities, it is not surprising that language constitutes both a cultural boundary and a marker of social stratification. To the extent to which language use permit or prevents access to a wider range of political and economic rewards, it is hardly surprising that individuals accumulate languages for use in different social gatherings (diglossia); that language use can change over time; and that the potential for conflict along language lines is greater in cases where cultural concerns are secondary to other priorities, and where language conflict is an indication of broader historical, economic and political change.
Language Policy in Education

Language touches upon all facets of individual and community life. It occupies an important place in the education system. Modern states have taken upon the task of educating their people. Education has become the social policy of the state. Sociologists and theorists too believe that state should have a decisive role in education in order to bring about ‘order’ which is its prime concern. Maintenance of order is intricately linked to the successful transmission of acquired skills, knowledge and values from one generation to the other, which in turn is fundamental to the continuity of any society. The educational institutions share the prime burden of rationalizing and organizing a portion of the enculturation process. So, education performs the important ‘functional role’ of assigning individual roles or the functional role allocation and simultaneously also keeps the cycle going by replacing the older generation by the newly encultured members of the society. The state too plays active role to ensure that the children learn and imbibe values central to the existence of the state and in someway suppress the spirit of questioning established rules and to produce law abiding citizens under already established laws. Several mechanism are devised to eulogies for symbolic manifestation that would serve the purpose of fostering national integration by bringing out shared commonalities.

All forms of Governments have used the education system to legitimize the existing order, be it democratic, monarchial or authoritarian regimes. The Israeli education system too oriented itself towards these functional and political goals. This was true during the *Yishuv* and is true even today after the establishment of the State. The state adopted Hebrew as the language of the state and instruction in the education system. This policy had dual affect on the nascent and fragile Israeli society. Hebrew played a crucial role in binding the Jews and at the same time creating a “us” and “them” with the Palestinians.

Eradication of illiteracy is not the only goal in the minds of Education policy makers of the state. The state, which is the prime provider of education, and its education policy creates hierarchy in the society that suits the larger polity of the state and helps in the smooth running of the state-craft. So, the role of education policy and the language of instruction have direct repercussions on the ethnic, gender and social status of the citizens. The course, curriculum and the evaluation process would all...
decide the final outcome in the society and hence would influence the social mobility. The course content creates curiosity in one to know more of and associate with it while it causes dejection in the others as they cannot identify with the discourses therein. Hebrew got promoted by state mechanism but for the Arab minority learning it was like catch-22 situation. They resisted it but needed it at the same time. This dichotomy cost them the most in the final outcome and overall achievement level. The Arab population that interacts more with the Jewish population are more conversant and fluent in Hebrew than those whose area of operation doesn’t have much direct contact with Hebrew speaking population.

The Jews and the Arabs maintained their fairly independent education streams, used their respective languages for instructions as well. After the establishment of the State of Israel, Jewish State and State Religious schools continued to use Hebrew as a language of instruction for all pupils. The school of ultra-orthodox independent system continued to use Yiddish. In the first year of the state, after some discussion, it was decided that schools in the Arab sector should continue to use Arabic as language of instruction.

The Arab schools taught Hebrew as a second language starting in the second or third grade. Some 40 percent of the children in Jewish schools learn Arabic for three years, from 7th grade to 9th grade; a smaller number start it earlier and continue it till late. The success of teaching Arabic remains questionable as the results fall much below the results of other languages like French. All students in both Jewish and Arabic systems learn English as the principal foreign language, starting in 4th grade and continue to 12th grade. In addition, several other foreign languages are offered to pupil like French, Russian or Yiddish.

In 1995-96 the Ministry of Education came out with a consolidated document outlining language education policy. The prime importance of Hebrew and Arabic as languages of instruction for the two communities was reaffirmed. There is recognition of the need for each community to learn the other’s language and an additional year (10th grade) is added to the teaching of Arabic required in Jewish schools. The place of English as the first foreign language is stated, and permission is given to start teaching it in third grade. French and Russian are encouraged as languages of special significance. This change in government’s attitude to accommodate other languages and give them space in Israeli public domain arises out of belief that Hebrew is firm, strong and self-surviving and need not fear any foreign language. This perhaps is also
because of a pragmatic need of other international languages arising out of the results of Globalization.

Language is intricately intertwined with society and culture and as a policy becomes an important component of it. Language as well as language policy is not simply aimed at imparting a communication tool to a society. It performs functional role from the societal point of view in which his language skill is going to be absorbed. The role of language is not passive rather it has its own dynamism. Language, particularly when it interacts in a society and further more when patronized by state, ignites its own dynamics. Language choice is governed by “interest” at the lower end to better the economic condition and for upward mobility whereas at the upper end of political elites it serves their interest in accumulating and maintaining power.

Fundamental to the continuity of any society is the successful transfer of values from one generation to another. In simple societies, acculturation as well as other basic tasks such as food gathering took place within a relatively undifferentiated social framework but in complex societies the educational institutions share the primary burden of rationalizing and organizing a portion of the enculturation process. Schools are sponsored by authorities in order to impart to youth skills and ideas deemed of central importance. From this point of view a school is an institution established for the specific purpose of exposing persons - assembled voluntarily or by compulsions of law - to formal curricula. The curricula deal with technical and social skills as well as explanations of the past, present and the likely future of one’s role in it. Language and the medium of instruction is no less important to the content of curriculum. In a multilingual society language choice and language promotion draws a line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It has a ‘functional role’ of cohesion and binding together ‘us’ as against ‘them’ and assigning individual role or the function of role allocation of keeping the cycle going by replacing the older generation by the new enculturated members of the society.

Emile Durkheim, who is the main proponent of the functional role of education, maintains that society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity by fixing in child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands. Without these ‘essential similarities,’ cooperation, social solidarity and therefore social life itself would be impossible. A virtual task for all the societies is the welding of a mass of individuals into a sense of
belonging and feeling that the social unit is more important than the individual. According to him, 'to become attached to the society, a child must feel in it something that is real, alive and powerful, which dominates the person and to which he owes the best part of himself. Language and the education of history, provides the vital link between the individual and society. If the language is sanctified with religious believes it becomes even more powerful. The state apparatus forges common identity among people from diverse background; a unique identity is created which leads to solidarity and feeling of oneness. School and Kibbutz in Israel is a society in miniature, which prepares young ones to get used to social relations outside and also performs the function of role allocation. The compulsory military services in Israel works as a final seal to the acculturation imbibed as a youth in different institutions.

Religion is central to Jewish life; religious or secular. Even the secular population draws heavily from religion, rather draws its legitimacy from it. The Zionist interpretation of the covenant with God, a religious belief, is the 'chosen people' to the 'chosen land'. So, the political, social and cultural life of Israel carries strong religious elements and to a great extent draws its legitimacy form it. Religion shapes the mindset of the people and influences their social behaviour. But like any other religion, Judaism too is not monolithic. It too has several streams.

The religious groups have always considered education a prime area of their concern. They realized that education and culture go hand in hand and it is only through education that they can influence the Jewish culture. By influencing the state education system they can influence even the secular population. The religious and secular symbols in Israel are overlapping most of the time and its meaning remains subject to interpretation. The religious group, though a minority in Israel has often been in a better bargaining position. The ultra orthodox schools get full state funding and have the greatest autonomy.

The religious parties have largely secured the ministry of education and culture for themselves in most of the governments. They realized the importance of education for shaping the future of Israel and its culture. It was quite important for the religious groups in order to safeguard their own interest. They well understood the functional role of the state’s education policy. The state asserts its power by shaping cultural hegemony and cultural legitimization. This is essentially achieved through the education system through state’s control over the resources and it is maintained through the effective use of mass media.
The state apparatus is thus used to assert the dominant view. The curriculum reflects the values, ideology and culture of the dominant group. The dominant group imposes their views, beliefs and culture on the rest of the society primarily through education system to establish their world view. Members of the subordinate groups are expected to subordinate their own culture to the values of the dominant culture or at least to respect them. The state ensures this through intervention in public education. The state exercises its power by controlling the schools budget and by supervising every aspect of school life: ideology, curriculum, staff hiring, students admission policies etc. The state is not a neutral entity, and culture is highly contested and biased entity. The bias benefits the dominant group, as it controls the power of the state.

The divide in the Israeli society has resulted in different cultural streams. The Jewish people were divided into many factions and each promoted its own belief through various means including sponsoring education. Each camp had its own justification towards language choice as a means of instruction. In the secular camp, Socialist and Marxists ideas prevailed and competed with the Zionist ideology. Zionism started as a secular movement and was considered sacrilegious by the religious Jews. But gradually, some of the religious Jews accepted Zionism, considering the larger interest of Jews. This change of approach also resulted in change of attitude towards language; Jewish and non-Jewish. Thus amongst the religious people there were those who accepted Zionist movement, those who hesitated like Agudat Israel and the Ultra-orthodox who rejected it.

Although the religious groups came to terms with the Zionist pioneers, it was mostly because of economic needs but the religious groups continued to mobilize and organize themselves for control over cultural affairs and for religious autonomous education system with a curriculum of their choice. Finally they succeeded in convincing the secular camp that assured religious groups substantial autonomy over their schools. Two conditions were attached to the religious school’s autonomy: Hebrew be the language of instruction and a certain amount of general studies be taught. This was the first step in a ‘cultural shift’; the beginning of ‘cultural surrender’ by the secular group and of ‘cultural advancement’ by the religious group.

The two streams, secular and religious, which emerged as a compromise was intended to secure the integrity of the fragile Zionist camp. The secular Zionist camp yielded its status as the dominating force in the Zionist movement and elevated the
political status of the religious groups which drew financial support from the secular camp to retain educational autonomy ever since British mandate. The ultra-orthodox Agudat Israel too received the mainstream Zionist patronage time and again in the larger interest of the Zionist movement.

Despite accommodating the other for the Jewish cause both the secular and the religious feared the influence of the other. The secular Zionists tried to safeguard their interest and at times overstepped inviting criticism in the society. David Ben Gurion after becoming the Prime Minister, planned to merge all the streams into a single national current. This became a subject of fierce controversy. In this background the Education law of 1953 was passed and as a consequence the secular group continued its educational surrender and the religious section continued its cultural advancement. The religious stream accumulated the political advantage by holding the balance of power between the left and the right in the government. This resulted in a steady rise in the financial support they obtained from the state. The religious parties have eventually been a part of any coalition government in Israel. They hold the balance of power because of their electoral strength and also because of their broader influence on the Israeli society.

The role of language in acculturation was well understood by the religious groups. Language comes with its package of ideology and culture that shapes the identity. The religious group had a clear distinction between Jewish language and non-Jewish languages. Among the Jewish languages Yiddish was the most favoured language. Hebrew was avoided in daily use because of its holiness. The attitude in general of this community towards other languages generally depended on relationship of the Jews with the native speakers of that language.

The Jews lived well alongside the Arab counterparts in West Asian countries and hence the Jews had no problem learning and using Arabic. In Europe, particularly after the enlightenment period, West European languages were considered transmitter of a foreign culture. As a result rabbinical authorities increased their strictures against the study of foreign languages. During the Emancipation (mid 18th to 19th Centuries), Jews throughout Europe were forced to teach official local language in their schools, in order to assimilate into the local culture and society. Rabbinical opposition ensued beginning the modern cultural battle for and against language teaching. Some time a decision on language learning was done for practical and local needs like obtaining better employment etc.
Traditionally a Jewish boy is required to learn Torah and some religious leaders feel that learning any other subject including foreign language was a waste of time. Jewish girls are preferably required to refrain from learning Torah and so have a better leeway in terms of secular education including language study. Secular studies particularly English was considered important for groups like Habad for emissary activities. While some fear English study would serve as a conduit for secular culture, the Habad promoted the study of English, which would help carry the Habad culture to the secular Jewish world.

In Diaspora, places where the intervention of the state in education was higher, the Jewish religious schools scheduled secular subjects in the late afternoon, while the best hours were reserved for Jewish subjects. Similar policy is implemented in many Haredi schools in the United States. In schools where non-Jewish languages are taught for pragmatic reasons or due to the local laws, the students are guided to ward off the influence the language might have on them. It appeals to women students who learn non-Jewish languages to financially support their husbands engaged in religious learning. Any cultural interface that takes place at work as a result of their being familiar with a non-Jewish language should be left outside the doorstep of the home, or even the neighborhood. Thus the skill was to be used for most the bare economic minimum.

Bible is central to Jewish life. Despite the divide it remains the referral point for both the secular and the religious. Different Jewish factions refer to Bible with different interpretations. Bible is taught in Israeli public schools with secular curriculum indicating at the centrality of the religious text in Zionist acculturation. For the secular Zionist the Hebrew Bible was a masterful literary creation and powerful national epic. They considered it as the first chapter in the biography of the Jewish people. This approach was “translated” in various subjects and school curriculum. This was considered important in forming a collective national identity. It reinforces the beliefs the nation holds in common and instills historical memories.

The centralized education system ensured a common approach adopted for studying Bible. The goal of this approach is to mold a specific character in the students that correspond to the highest aspirations and ideals of the state. Achieving uniformity between the educational system and public discourse, between the values of the society and the avowed ideology of the Israeli school was very much at the core.

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Bible embodies the essence of Zionist ideology and so Jewish studies are assigned an important place in curriculum, thoughts and ideologies and are demonstrated in public domain. A major shift in the Biblical approach after the Zionist movement is the added emphasis on the study of the Prophets and Writings. This was necessary to provide ideological support and legitimacy to the Zionist movement. The Biblical covenant was interpreted in terms of nation, land and culture.

The Bible created a framework of laws and symbols that were held in common by Jews scattered throughout. At the center of this cultural framework stood Eretz Israel, the ancient homeland of the Patriarch that all Jews revered. The Bible extensively speaks of the Patriarchs, the founders of the nation. In Israel its study means historical continuity and legitimacy over the land. For the state it is such a genuine historical text that the Director General of the Ministry of Education waived off the study of history in fifth grade as the study of Bible sufficed it. The objectives of Bible study were historical, national, literary, linguistic and esthetic.

**Hebrew language Policy and Other Languages**

The Palestinians who lived inside Israel constitute some 19 percent of the population. Arabic is the officially recognized language for education and public use. Despite this most of the Israeli Palestinians are now bilingual in Arabic and Hebrew. The Druze who serve in the Israeli Army are fluent speakers of Hebrew. Despite the rigid “us” and “them” both Arabic and Hebrew continue to give and take in dialectic as well as in literature. The Arab population has started complaining about the loss of Arabic by children attending mixed kindergartens and schools in towns like Jaffa and Haifa. Legal cases seeking to have Arabic used on public signs, moderate pressure to have it used in the Knesset, and objection to the use of Hebrew in meeting of English teachers from Arabic schools and other similar demands and protests are growing from the side of Arabs.

Another marginalized group is of the Haredi (ultra-orthodox) Jews and there are evidences of serious erosion of Yiddish and their children appear to be Hebrew speaking or at best bilingual.

Of the immigrant groups, only the English-speakers, the recent Russian speakers and the Amharic-speakers among the Ethiopians, have been successful in having the schools give a serious place to the teaching of their language. In spite of
the decision to drop English from the list of official languages, it has continued to grow in status and use, bolstered by economic prestige and by the status of English-speaking immigrants.

Israel maintained the pre-State status of Arabic as the language of instruction in the Arab sector. At the same time Arab pupil were expected to learn Hebrew. The result over half a century has been a serious incursion of Hebrew into the Israeli Palestinian Arabic community: Arabic remains the language of the home and village, but Hebrew is the language of tertiary education and of activities outside the community.

Until the first Intifada, Palestinians were linked to the labour market of Israel, generally in agriculture and construction, where the degree of Hebrew knowledge required was light. The Intifada did have an important influence in the spread of Hebrew among West Bank and Gaza Strip Arabs, as the language was taught inside the prisons. It is interesting to note that in so far Arabs are concerned the knowledge of Hebrew is inversely correlated with education. It is mostly the less educated Palestinians who look out for work in Israel. Educated Palestinians who work inside their own community in professional roles are able to continue to function effectively without Hebrew.

Hebrew Language Policy and Politics

The importance of Hebrew in building a Jewish nation and a Jewish state was first realized by the secular political Zionists. Language is very intricately intertwined with politics particularly in modern statecraft where people are sovereign. The ruler and the ruled are very closely linked. Political power can be used to bring about language change, while language change can be used to redistribute political power. In modern democratic set-up, social mobility and political participation of the masses elevates the role of language. For a fruitful communication between different hierarchies it is desirable that the language of the mass and that of the elite be congruent. Language has been crucial in shaping the political consciousness of a community, elevating it and transforming it in the interest of the state.

The Jewish case speaks most aptly the relation between language and politics. The Jewish community in different parts of the world learned the local language and was quite comfortable in the regional languages. Within a very short span of time...
after the establishment of the Jewish state the long history of Jewish multilingualism changed to Jewish monolingualism. This could not have been made possible without a systematic scheme of things. From conceptualization, formulation to implementation all required support and patronage from the elite, particularly political elite and/or from the state.

Banking upon its strength Hebrew could very easily and quickly win over this patronage. The Zionist pioneers, irrespective of the political position, realized the importance of Hebrew language in the larger Zionist project. The political Zionists, spiritual-cultural Zionists or the religious Zionist alike had a special place for Hebrew language though for a different reason. For the political Zionists who were secular in their outlook and approach, Hebrew symbolized continuity and the prime Hebrew text – Bible – was not necessarily a religious text for them. It was foremost a historical document loaded with authenticity. The revival of the language meant the continuity from the antiquity to the present and would justify their legitimacy over the space they were struggling for. The two most important ingredients of the Zionist enterprise was land and culture and Jewish culture without Hebrew is unimaginable. They favoured Hebrew culture across all sections of the society.

For the spiritual-cultural Zionist the cultural aspect was more important than the political Zionism. The political Zionism for them would not sustain itself unless there was strong cultural base of Jews and that could only be achieved through Hebrew. The religious Zionists considered Hebrew a holy language. This is why they used other languages to express themselves including religious interpretations. Rabbi Cook, a revered religious personality, realized the role Hebrew can play in a new set-up and how Judaism can benefit out of Hebrew revival. Deciding in favour of larger Jewish interest he favoured the synthesis of the sacred and the profane. In other words he allowed the use of Hebrew language in non-religious domain which was a major departure from the established traditions. This conceptual basis was a vital requirement for nation building as well as for state building.

Till the start of the Zionist movement Yiddish was the language of the Jews which expressed their ethno-national collective consciousness. But the consciousness had no clear political implications as it was not oriented towards state-building. Hebrew became a vital tool for forging a new identity amongst the new immigrants. It superimposed the other identities that the immigrants came along with. The immigrants gave up, at least initially the language that they were used to and learned
the new language, Hebrew, that was till then not fully developed. Both the immigrants as well as Hebrew adopted itself very smoothly in the changing times. A whole process of Hebrewization took place. People changed their names irrespective of their age to a new Hebrew name. Place names too were changed after the establishment of the state of Israel. Places were given a Hebrew name that was very symbolic in nature. For the local Palestinians population the Hebrewization of place name was a break despite continuity and for the Jewish population it was continuity despite break. The Jewish population could identify themselves with the geographical location strengthening the cohesion between the land and the people.

Today, the knowledge of Hebrew in Israel helps in upward mobility but this was not the case earlier when Hebrew was needed for the purpose of promoting a kind of downward social mobility. Unlike France, where French was used to turn ‘peasants into Frenchmen’, Hebrew in Palestine/Israel was used to turn bourgeois central European and east European dwellers into peasants in Eretz Israel. Language was used to establish a strong bond with the land. This ideological strong hold helped Hebrew established itself and flourished on its own.

Soon after the establishment of the state of Israel, the task of Hebrewization was taken up. It was an effort to dissociate with the past and move into the future and is generally termed as davkaism. The names of places and cities were changed and new names in Hebrew were given to them. Even individuals changed their names irrespective of their age when they immigrated to Israel. In taking up new Hebrew names the common Hebrew names from the immediate past – a period of Jewish subjugation – was avoided. The acquiring of the new names was a symbolic step in explicitly declaring dissociation with the humiliating past and at the same time acquiring of a new identity. The new place names arc meant to impress the landscape with the Jewish national ideology and patriotism.

The pioneers of Zionism projected new slogans and symbols for nationhood. Hebrew fit well to an ideological use of its association with Great Tradition. The Zionist movement’s call for building the new city of Tel Aviv defined it as a first Hebrew city with hundred percent Hebrew inhabitants and Hebrew speakers in the city. The language policy is largely directed to non-linguistic goals, whether political unification or domination or independence or cultural integration or economic efficiency or educational enrichment. Even the father of Modern Hebrew language
and policy maker Eliezer Ben-Yehuda started off as a nationalist before he saw the critical value of language as an instrument of achieving nationalism.

Once its political importance was recognized efforts to promote the language became the policy of the Zionist Movement. The active campaign for the diffusion of the language became a central feature of Zionist and Israeli ideology. A youth Legion formed in 1923 for the Protection of the Language continued its activities until 1936. During this critical period, strong campaigns were conducted against two principal enemies, as they were identified by Ussishkin in his important speech at the 1923 Third National Conference of the Legion, English and Yiddish. The Legion went to the extent of blocking the establishment of a Yiddish chair at the Hebrew University.

The establishment of the state provided an opportunity to reaffirm the place of Hebrew, but this was handled quite modestly by dropping the Mandatory status of English as an official language and leaving Hebrew and Arabic as such. There were other efforts mostly localized, like establishment of Ulpan (schools) to teach Hebrew to immigrants. Special courses are conducted for Hebrew teachers in which the teachers are trained to teach through participatory methods. Language teaching also becomes a tool for introducing the Israeli culture to the new immigrants. The ideological effects were to breed a locally nationalistic disparagement of all but the approved standard language, and a rejection of the seriousness or value of home or ethnic or community or traditional Jewish languages. Even without formal policy, the monolingual Hebrew ideology came to dominate and have its inevitable effects on practice.

Official language policy, while not explicit, has supported "monocentricism", and an associated Hebrew-Arabic bilingualism among the minority Arab-Speaking population. The Hebrew-Arabic bilingualism is highly skewed in favor of Hebrew. Notwithstanding its relatively successful maintenance as a social, educational, literary and cultural language among Israeli Arabs, Arabic remains the language of a minority. In spite of the widespread official and ideological policy support for Hebrew, English has continued to flourish and spread in all sectors of the Israeli population.

Today, nation states are considered the most viable political unit for stability. Nation building and framing national identity became important tasks before any government. Thus in the case of Israel several organizations and institutions, both state and non-state apparatus were put to use for this end. Language choice and
Language policy became the most viable tool to establish, assert and revive an identity. Its symbolic importance was realized by the political elites who were at the helm of establishing a new society after the torment years. The introduction and subsequent extension of compulsory education demonstrate quite clearly that it was intended to be the means of achieving social goals and objectives. The choice of a language as a medium of education and language of instruction had deep and far reaching implications.

**Public Manifestation of Language Policy**

The real strength of a language is derived from its utility in public space. The space and status a language receives is determined by the perceptions about the language and the speakers of the language. There are several agents that define and shape the perceptions and prominent among them is the state machinery. In a pluralistic society, the patronage by the state to a particular language is ultimately going to benefit the speakers of that language. The reverse is equally true that the elevated position of a particular community will elevate the language that they speak. On the other hand, such a patronage adversely affects other languages in the society.

Israel has two official languages: Hebrew, the language of the dominant Jewish population and Arabic, the language of the minority Arab population. The Jews and the Arabs are at conflict. Within the Jewish community there is a divide between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. Prior to their immigration to Israel the Ashkenazim used Yiddish as the language of communication within the community. The sacredness and limited vocabulary of Hebrew restricted its use. As a part of the Zionist project and in the larger interest of the Jews the language revival subsided in favour of Hebrew. Hebrew emerged from ‘dead’ language to become the official and dominant language of Israel. Arabic that was the main language of the erstwhile Palestine and also of the Jews living here, moved to a more secluded place.

The public manifestation of language as an element of identity or association was never an issue with the Jews. A major reason behind it was their subjugated position in the society and Hebrew did not provide any pride or social mobility. The Zionist movement changed the scenario. Hebrew became a core element of Jewish national and individual life. The success of the Zionist movement added prestige to the language and became a source of upward social mobility. The ideological support
encouraged its public assertion and manifestation. Soon the pragmatic, multi-lingual Jews became ideologically mono-lingual.

Another landmark in the history of Hebrew language was its emergence as a spoken language. This was an outcome of the pioneers belief that unless Hebrew becomes the primary and only language of thought and emotion, a Jewish nation would be meaningless. It was felt necessary to connect the language with the soil and land. This made Hebrew part of the ideological base of Zionist movement and later of the Jewish state.

Due to this, Hebrew received patronage from all quarters. Religious groups, political parties and other individuals and organizations published their papers and pamphlets in Hebrew. After several ups and down, today Israel has several dailies, weeklies, fortnightly apart from magazines and journals that cater to the various needs of the society. The spectrum of publications covers from the basic beginners Hebrew to high and specialized Hebrew. There are several channels telecasting their programmes in Hebrew. Many foreign movies and soaps are dubbed in Hebrew or subtitled in Hebrew. Theaters perform plays in Hebrew including those written originally in other language.

Hebrew has penetrated deep into the society and manifests itself from a position of power. Today, when Hebrew finds itself well established, it opens up space for other languages as well in the public domain. It can be seen in marketplace where the reasons behind a particular language choice can be many like identity, economy, skill and at times even fear. The preference for a particular language also depends upon the individual’s background and association. This is best depicted in the display of sign boards, notices, nameplates on private and government buildings, road signs, advertisings, informative signs, commemorative plaques, graffiti etc. The factors behind the choice of a particular language can be simple and at times several and overlapping. At times such decisions are conscious and deliberated and at times it’s involuntary.

Language choice in public is a complex exercise. No matter how spontaneously such a decision is taken they take into consideration the intended reader/s or listener/s skill. Many a times such decisions are motivated by symbolic value attached to the language. At times the socio-cultural and political background of the individual influences the language choice decision. The market place has its own set of factors that influence the language use. The customer becomes the prime...
concern and allows for diluting other ideological positions as political and sociocultural identities.

In Israel, the education policy in general and language policy in particular, has affixed values and status to language. Hebrew carries the highest value associated to it and is used even by those who have reservations towards it. Even in ethnically dominated neighborhood Hebrew remains the prime language of communication in public place and the ethnic languages like Russian and German are kept for use in private domain.

All these developments and promotion to Hebrew language had a negative effect on other languages particularly Arabic. Arabic was the dominant language of the region. Even the Jews here spoke it but with the coming of the Zionist movement Arabic became the marginalized language. Several other factors are attributed for this inferior status of Arabic. The ongoing conflict between the Jews and Arabs put the Palestinians and Arabic language at the receiving end. The Jewish character of the state of Israel is a hindrance in adopting the inclusive character of a pluralistic society. Though there are efforts made in this direction but a lot more still needs to be done. Though Arabic is the official language and several legislations are done at the state and local levels with regards to Arabic, it still is struggling to get its status defined. The laws and amendments thereof demonstrate the policy of accommodating the language needs of the Arab minority while avoiding their national aspect. These rights cater to the individual but do not recognize the collective. There is an underlying anxiety that the recognition of Arabic as equal in status to Hebrew would undermine the character of Israel as a nation-state since nation is often associated with language as a marker of its identity.

It can be summed up that the official language policy, implicitly, has supported ‘monocentricism’ towards Hebrew. Despite the state recognizing two languages, Hebrew and Arabic, as official languages; the Hebrew-Arabic bilingualism is highly skewed in favour of Hebrew. Hebrew has become the high status language and Arabic has become the language of the minority. The Zionist pioneers who took up the task of establishing a Jewish state made the optimum use of Hebrew language in both nation-building as well as state-building. Explicit and implicit policies promoted Hebrew language because of the functional role it performed. Several organizations and institutions, both state and non-state were put to use for this end. Once the status of Hebrew was established; the initial protective attitude of the state
towards it gave way to more openness towards other languages. It was a result of Globalization and growing market needs. In spite of the widespread official and ideological policy support for Hebrew, English is flourishing in all sectors of the Israeli population. Despite this accommodative pragmatism the state retains its ideological exclusiveness which secures the position of Hebrew.